

Manager Resource:

Supporting the psychological wellbeing of your team during the coronavirus pandemic

The outbreak of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an unprecedented event which is rapidly changing and we learn more about it every day. Australia Post has strong plans in place to keep our people and customers safe and these plans continue to evolve as we learn more. As a manager, you play a critical role in supporting the psychological wellbeing of your team.

What are the typical reactions people may have?

As a leader, it's important to create a safe working environment where your team feel comfortable speaking up about any concerns, worries or reactions including:

- Feeling stressed or overwhelmed (from media overload or increased workload)
- Anxiety, worry, or fear
- Sadness or tearfulness
- Loss of interest in usual enjoyable activities
- Frustration, irritability or anger
- Feeling helpless
- Isolating or withdrawing from others, and/or fear of going to public spaces
- Difficulty concentrating or sleeping
- Physical symptoms, such as increased heart rate, stomach upset, low energy, or other uncomfortable sensations
- Uncertainty of how things will unfold

Specific to this event, the fear and anxiety may be more directly related to, for example, fear of interacting with customers, fear of self or family contracting the disease or fear of attending the workplace.

As a leader, it's important to notice if one of your team member's behaviour is out of the ordinary, (e.g. less or more communicative, distracted, aloof, teary, short-tempered, catastrophising, irritable) and support them adequately.

How can I help my team minimise these typical reactions?

As a leader, it's important to create a safe working environment where your team feel comfortable speaking up about any concerns, worries or reactions by:

- First and foremost, keeping yourself calm.
- Impart the message that you are open and available for anyone to approach you for further support.
- Check in with your team daily – make “R U OK?” a daily question.
- Continue regular communication and updates with your team via face to face meetings (including by Skype and Webex), email communication, and teleconferences.
- For team members working from home, hold regular meetings solely for the purposes of social connection. As much as possible, utilise video technology to enhance connection and to allow you to monitor your teams' reactions more effectively. Use platforms like Yammer, WhatsApp, Facetime and Houseparty to connect socially and check in regularly. Team coffee meetings, regular digital social catch ups, and exchanging daily news ensures teams stay cohesive and feel supported.
- Remind your team of the importance of looking after themselves. There is guidance material on [OurPost](#) and the [HealthyMe](#) portal to assist you, and the EAP/WAP is available for support.
- Ensure you remain up to date with the latest information and guidance from federal and state government and from Australia Post on our dedicated Coronavirus portal on [OurPost](#) so you can help to provide clear guidance and combat misinformation and unhelpful speculation.

What can I do if a team member displays any typical reactions?

- Have a private and confidential conversation about their concerns.
- Talk to them about accessing the support of the EAP/WAP ph. 1300 687 327.

Sample script:

- > This is a stressful time and we want to support all staff as much as possible. I've noticed you seem different/anxious, how are you feeling? **(shows support and care that you've noticed)**
- > What do you understand about the current situation? Is there more information you would like explained? **(checks the person's perception; be aware that people don't know what they don't know)**
- > What strategies have you found helpful in the past, when you've felt worried/distressed?
- > Have you thought about learning about some (additional) coping strategies? EAP can help you with this. They can provide you with calming and coping techniques.

What if I'm particularly concerned for an employee who is working from home?

For some people, working from home has the potential to create risk in other parts of their lives. If you are concerned about an employee working from home, due to increased risks around illness (including mental ill health), social isolation, domestic and family violence, caring responsibilities or any other risk, please contact the EAP on 1300 687 327 to discuss the support available through the Employee Isolation Program. [Click here](#) for further details.

How do I look after myself?

It is vitally important that you look after yourself. To be able to support others effectively, it is important that you are feeling well and thinking clearly. To do this, it is important to identify what causes stress for you and put in place some steps to reduce stress.

As a first step, consider speaking with your manager or a trusted peer. Other resources to support you include:

- The coronavirus page on [OurPost](#).
- The coronavirus support resources available on the [HealthyMe](#) portal.
- The EAP Manager Assist service provides coaching and support in managing any people-related issue. Call 1300 687 327 to be connected to a specialist management consultant.
- The EAP also has a free resource hub with a range of helpful information about coronavirus. You can find this page by clicking [here](#), clicking 'portal log in' on the top right-hand corner and logging in with the details below.

Username: **AUSPOST**

Password: **eap**

URL: **<https://www.convergeinternational.com.au/>**