

# Emotionally Surviving COVID-19:

## An informational and self help guide provided by your Lighthouse Telehealth EAP team.

SUMMER 2020  
ISSUE 4

Summer is in full swing and for many of us July typically means a month of things like barbecues, swimming at the beach, family reunions, vacationing, and baseball. Unfortunately COVID has disrupted many of these summer activities we look forward to all year long. That doesn't mean however it has to be a bad summer. If you allow yourself to stop and smell the roses you might find that there is a lot of joy and happiness to be found in a slower paced lifestyle. When life slows down it allows us to find a new appreciation for the simpler things in life, like a trip to the ice cream store, a walk in the park, planting flowers, or camping out in the backyard with your children. Take this time to enjoy and be present in these small moments for these moments are the heart of life.



### Creating and Maintaining an Emotional Wellness Work Culture

I think everyone can agree that we are living in a moment of extraordinarily stressful times. For many, an added stressor is returning to work after a period of working from home or being laid off. As employers and employees, we need to remember this and show more empathy and compassion towards one another in the workplace. A lack of civility in the workplace is a growing problem. In 2016, a global, annual poll on workplace incivility by McKinsey & Co, found that 62% of employees were treated rudely at work at least once a month. Since the poll began in 1998, rude behavior has increased at an alarming rate — which means that every year, chances go up that your leaders and employees are being dismissive, demeaning, and discounting to one another. A lack of civility in the workplace can cost a company hundreds of thousands of dollars in human resource hours with regards to conflict management, as well as in turnover from employees who choose to leave a toxic workplace. Everyone, at all levels, can be part of the solution.....it starts with YOU! Civility is contagious in that people often adapt to the behaviors, words, and actions within a sub culture such as the work setting. Remember you never have to wait to be kind to others and a little kindness goes a long way.

Resources: (<https://www.randstadrisemart.com/blog/trends-civility-creating-respectful-workplace>)

## Here are some simple ways you can develop an Emotional Wellness Work Culture:

### For Employees:

- Before acting, consider the impact of your words and actions on others.
- Show interest in others' opinions and ideas.
- Take the time for simple courteous gestures like saying hello, giving a wave, or asking how someone is doing.
- Offer help if your workload is light for the day and you see someone struggling.
- Listen to others without interruption and use eye contact to indicate you are paying attention.
- Respect that everyone brings different skill sets to the workplace as well as different communication styles. Sometimes we have an unrealistic expectation that everyone should share our same skill set and do things the exact way we do them. Usually there is more than one way of completing a task.
- Self-monitor the respect that you display in all areas of your communications, including verbal, body language, and listening.
- Adopt a positive and solution-driven approach in resolving conflicts. Don't just complain about a problem but offer practical solutions.
- View today's difficult situations from a broader (big picture) and more realistic perspective by considering what they mean in the overall scheme of things.
- Understand your triggers or "hot buttons." Knowing what makes you angry and frustrated enables you to manage your reactions and respond in a more appropriate manner.
- If you find yourself talking to your coworkers about another coworker who is not present, ask yourself if you would be saying those same things in front of that coworker. Gossip is a form of workplace bullying.
- Rely on facts rather than assumptions. Gather relevant facts, especially before acting on assumptions that can damage relationships. In others words "check yourself before you wreck yourself".

### For Managers and Supervisors:

How can you be sensitive to individual diverse employees' needs during this time while still making sure you thrive and succeed as a company? Well, we know that happy employees lead to better work outcomes like increased productivity, creativity, and loyalty so first it is important to recognize that supporting employees' emotional health is a win-win.

**Support grief.** Understand that most of your employees are in a period of grieving at the present time. Simply acknowledging their pain and suffering can be powerful and lets them know you understand. Communicating your own struggles with them will also help develop a sense of togetherness.

**Ask how you can help.** What do they need from you in order to be successful? It might be something as simple as flexing their schedule one day a week due to lack of childcare or needing a computer monitor to make working from home easier.



**Communicate!** Employees are often left to fill in the unsaid blanks, making assumptions of what work silence means. Continually keep employees abreast on upcoming changes to policies and procedures and if you have uncertainties let them know that as well.

**Be flexible.** In an ever-changing work world, don't just make changes for the sake of change itself. Be thoughtful about the changes and transitions you have to make and determine if there is wiggle room. For instance, if there are staff that were working from home due to COVID-19 and the office has now re-opened, can some of the staff still work from home a couple days a week if they choose?

**Encourage creativity.** If you think you know exactly how something should be done without asking your staff for their input, you have reached a growth ceiling. Your employees likely have very creative ideas and solutions. Create solution focused meetings where everyone is expected to bring their ideas, even ones that seem far-fetched. Employees are likely to develop a deeper sense of belonging and loyalty for the company when their ideas and input matter.

**Be patient.** Understand that during times of significant stress, we process information differently and often are more focused on the negative information. You may need to give more reminders, simplify steps, and acknowledge the frustration and stress you are causing if a major change in policy does need to be made.

**Boost morale.** Find creative ways to show your employees work can be a place of fun and that you appreciate them. Things like hand written notes from management, a quarterly food truck or breakfast buffet, office door decoration contests, or an employee of the month peer nomination, shows employees you appreciate the work they do and that having fun at work is okay. A peer-based morale committee is a good way to come up with creative budget friendly ideas.

**Create safety and civility.** This seems like a no-brainer but it is one of the most common workplace issues we see in EAP and the number one reason employees tell us they hate their job. Everyone in the workplace must feel safe and be treated fairly. No one should ever be subject to bullying or discrimination. One of the biggest forms of lack of civility we see in workplaces is in harmful gossip about

other coworkers. Management must do their part to communicate that the workplace is not a setting for this and it is harmful to the employees and the company.

**Embrace individuality.** Realize that everyone has different skills and interests. Your staff will be happier if they are allowed to do more of what they enjoy doing. For instance, if someone enjoys running and analyzing reports and their counterpart prefers calling customers allow the trade-off.

**Encourage the use of EAP.** An EAP program is an excellent way to show your employees you care about their mental health and well-being. Many employees avoid reaching out for professional help when needed due to the costs associated with deductibles and copays as well as the need to present with a clinical diagnosis in order for insurance companies to cover the services. With EAP the expense is paid for upfront by the employer, there is no clinical diagnosing in EAP, and there is no issue too big or too small to talk with an EAP professional about. If you are in need of an EAP, know someone who is in need of an EAP, or want to expand your EAP services, please contact Marcia Kane, LPCC, SAP, CEAP at 419-214-1169.

Remember your staff are probably struggling right now in one way or another and they are likely spending more time at work than with their immediate families. For many employees, work can actually be a healthy distraction from all the other stressors in their life but for so many, work only exacerbates these stressors. Change starts with action steps so ask yourself what you can do today to create a healthier work environment.

“It’s not stress that kills us, it is our reaction to it.”

- HANS SELYE

**THE MOMENT YOU TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR EVERYTHING IN YOUR LIFE IS THE MOMENT YOU CAN CHANGE ANYTHING IN YOUR LIFE.**

- HAL ELROD

“Enjoy the little things, for one day you may look back and realize they were the big things.”

- ROBERT BRAULT



## Accountability Exercise:

I realize Civility in the Workplace can be an uncomfortable topic. We are often met with resistance when we bring this topic into workplaces. One of the reasons that makes this topic uncomfortable is that it shifts the focus off of how others act and forces us to take a hard look at ourselves. It takes more emotional energy to admit when we are wrong than to double down on our wrongdoings. Two wrongs don't make a right and we should strive to be a good person regardless of how other people around us act. We cannot control how other people act but we can control how we act. Being kind has numerous health and wellness benefits that are actually linked to living a longer and happier life. We must do better as a society to treat all people equally and with compassion and kindness. So, I challenge you to this difficult homework assignment:

Review the article above and identify at least one way in which you contribute to a lack of civility in the work place (yes, lack of civility.....no one said personal growth was easy).

Now, identify 3 specific things you can do to correct this behavior:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

## Gratitude Scavenger Hunt:

1. Find something that makes you happy.
2. Find something to give someone else to make them smile.
3. Find one thing that you love to smell
4. Find one thing you enjoy looking at.
5. Find something that's your favorite color.
6. Find something you are thankful for in nature.
7. Find something that you can use to make a gift for someone.
8. Find something that is useful for you.

