

Period of Reflection: Take Care of Yourself!

Your employee assistance program is constantly attentive to your psychological and physical health, especially during these difficult times. The pandemic is still going on; however, many factors can impact your personal and professional daily life, thus draining all the energy you managed to store.

We just have started 2022, and for the second year in a row, controversy and complexity are still there. Our good resolutions are behind us. Wear and tear take their toll. Of course, everyone should be mindful of the warning signs of emotional or relational difficulties that can set up in our lives. We need to recognize them to counter them.

We often identify the pandemic as THE first reason people are living in distress. Nonetheless, other factors are as important, whether it is work satisfaction or some individual, cyclical, or organizational causes.

First, let's take a period of reflection to evaluate our work satisfaction. Are the projects or the tasks I have satisfying? Do I find a sense, or do I feel useful? And what about the relationship with my colleagues?

Second, let's take a look at what weakens us from an individual point of view, like the intensity and the stress quantity we can live during a specific period. Our adaptation mechanisms and our personality can make all the difference. The other life requirements (finances, marital or familial issues, illness, mourning, unexpected changes), the anxiety we impose ourselves because of unrealistic expectations (not being as good as we would like to be, feeling of incompetence), the experienced events, and our difficulty to set boundaries or wanting to please everyone are critical in this context.

Another element that we must consider to continue our reflection or our mental health auto-evaluation is the cyclical and organizational causes. It is a hot topic. We have no control over these, but they cause more havoc than expected!

The new regulations and processes that came into force after the apparition of Covid did challenge our professional and personal routine. Teleworking, the governance model that can sometimes be constrained, the lack of support regarding tasks or the staff force are all factors strongly associated with the development of emotional distress of employees. Pression regarding productivity, the lack of materials, the prohibitive costs, the weight of the task, an excessive workload, the lack of support, the staff turnover, inexperienced workers, or even hostile attitudes are other important elements of the recent years.

Be alert! Be able to detect your distress symptoms!

- At the emotional level: anxiety, irritability or anger, loss of interest, crying, dark thoughts, sense of helplessness, tears, burnout, suicidal thoughts...
- At the physical level: sleep disorder, fatigue, exhaustion, gain or loss of weight, panic attack, shortness of breath...
- At the interpersonal level: isolation, little or no listening capacity, attention or concentration deficit, limitation of social contacts...

- At a behavioral level: impatience, unusual aggressive or impulsive behaviors, a decrease of empathy, attitude or personality changes...
- At the work level: decreased productivity, absenteeism, loss of motivation or interest, divestment regarding tasks, use of the cellphone increase, taking longer pauses...
- At the spiritual level: reassessments, conviction abandonment regarding work, life, family, and our well-being...

If confronted with these signs of distress, DO SOMETHING! Set up strategies to take care of yourself.

Your employee assistance program BRIO EAP is there for you and with you!

Here are a few concrete tools to set up right now:

- Seek professional help (1 888 799.0303 / www.briopae.com)
- Develop your support network / Connect with your relatives, friends, or work colleagues (since you spend more than half of your day with them)
- Set your boundaries!
- Limit your contacts with social media or other media!
- Manage your day offs, weekends, or holidays. Think about yourself!
- Be aware, and most importantly, have an objective view of your mental or physical health.
- Be careful regarding your life hygiene: nutrition, physical exercise, sleep...

Taking care of ourselves is the ability to store all the necessary energy we need to face daily life. It is choosing our mental, emotional, and physical health when living challenging situations.

*From Isabelle Le Pain doctorate thesis on emotional issues and professional relationships. Université Laval. 2020