

Returning to the Workplace:

Tips to Ensure a Successful Return

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted the lives of Caterpillar employees and families worldwide. Caterpillar people worldwide should take pride in our flexibility and resilience during the pandemic. But now, many will be challenged by a second wave of change during the return to our workplaces, schools and resuming full interactions with our communities.

Recent [surveys](#) have identified some common concerns and challenges shared by many of us, including:

- Worry about personal safety upon return.
- General and social anxiety. Discomfort in large groups.
- Being required to return against personal preference or comfort level.
- Excessive workload and work-life balance challenges. The need to “recreate” habits and routines.
- Having adequate support for social and emotional issues.
- Feeling uncomfortable asking for help for personal and work problems.
- Blending “essential” and remote employees. Differing perceptions of policy or the pandemic.
- Mental and physical fatigue in the early days of returning.
- A sense of “loss” of the positive that came with working remotely.

Tips for making the adjustment

Some may be enthusiastic about returning. Others may be anxious or reluctant. But for all us, one of the biggest mistakes we can make is underestimating the emotional, physical, and social impact of returning to the office. If we are unprepared and have not planned, we may be more susceptible to stress during the return.

Here are some suggestions to help you prepare for the return to the workplace.

1. **Take time to assess your thoughts and feelings about returning.** Don’t judge yourself. Be honest about your level of readiness.
2. **Take stock of the changes** that will take place with schedules, kids, and daily routines. Make lists of things to do and organize. Even issues with pets, making meals, or work wardrobes can cause unexpected stress during the return. Make a plan. Be prepared.
3. **Take on a “change mindset.”** Even if you are reluctant or anxious, seek to own the change and make it successful for all.
4. **Reflect on everything you’ve learned during the pandemic.** We’ve all learned new ways to work and live, and many are things we should celebrate and retain, like using technology, digital communication skills, being self-directed, new family routines, and maximizing flexible schedules.
5. **List the positives and negatives of working remotely.** Recognize the things you will miss and the things you will gain back after returning. Involve your family. Accept the unpleasant feelings (grief) but avoid overfocusing on the negative.



Returning to the Workplace:

Tips to Ensure a Successful Return

Tips for making the adjustment (continued)

- 6. Inventory your worries.** Can these be resolved now through taking action, behavior change, or gaining more information? If not, let them go for now. Be present. Focus on what you can control.
- 7. Start practicing now.** Set new sleep schedules, work schedules, and family routines in advance. Prepare for commute time, work wardrobes, childcare, pets being left alone, or any other change you've identified. Build extra time into your routine.
- 8. Expose yourself.** Work to get out of the house and spend time in public places to help prepare for the return to a busy workplace. If you can access your workplace early, set up your workspace in advance. Even practicing your commute can make "day one" feel more comfortable.
- 9. Be prepared for mental and physical fatigue at first.** This is normal. In the days/weeks prior to returning, try moving your workspace in your home. Take fewer breaks. Work more structured work hours in the days prior to the return. Create some "fake commute time" to rebuild the transition to/from work.
- 10. Collaborate.** Increase contact with your team and co-workers. Share experiences and plans. Learn from others. Not only will this help develop plans for the return, but you will be rebuilding your workplace support network.
- 11. Create a communication plan with your family.** Your availability will likely be reduced once you are no longer working from home. Set expectations in advance.
- 12. Celebrate the accomplishment!** In one year, the global Caterpillar team has risen to the challenges of essential work and transitioned a large percentage of our team to home and flexible work. We've redefined work-life balance and been disciplined in taking ownership of our daily schedules. We've mastered new technology and gotten to know our co-workers' families and pets. We have endured the pandemic and met the needs of our customers!

There is still more change to come. But with some preparation for the future and celebration of the past, we can all successfully manage our return to the workplace.

For confidential support, free of charge, contact Caterpillar's **Employee Assistance Program (EAP)**:

📞 1-309-820-3604

🌐 EAP.cat.com

📞 1-866-228-0565

🌐 CaterpillarEAP.com

For global access numbers by country

