



How can therapy assist me in returning to work?

How will therapy assist me return to work?

After a period of absence from work, you may be thinking that you just need to get on with things. But sometimes we need support to do this. If we have a physical injury or illness, we have the support of treatment, physiotherapist, medication, rest and time to heal. We get this from our GP, hospital, or our physiotherapist.

Your mental wellbeing may need similar support. If you have been off work for stress, a bereavement, burnout, anxiety, or depression you may find therapy can help you return to your day-to-day life, including a return to work. It is normal to be anxious about returning to work. Can you remember feeling anxious on your first day back after annual leave? When you are emotionally strong it seems to be just a slight worry, but if you are, or have been struggling with your wellbeing, that anxiety can be make you feel like a return to work is not even possible.

When we feel that the demands placed on us are more than our ability to cope, we feel stress.

There are three parts of stress:

- The demand placed on us currently.
- What we think about or tell ourselves about the demand or situation.
- How able we think and feel we are to manage the demand or situation.

The more stressors we have placed on us at one time, the more we need to draw on coping resources.

There are many resources that different people have. Here are a few:

- social ties with family, friends, or colleagues
- hobbies we enjoy that take us away from the demands,
- being outdoors in nature or enjoying leisure amenities
- exercise or yoga
- looking after pets, plants, or a garden

Situations that are likely to cause stress are those that are unpredictable or uncontrollable, uncertain, unfamiliar, or ambiguous, involve conflict or high expectations.

Here are some examples of stress situations:

- **Too much to do:** *Work, family commitments, chores, caring responsibility.*
- **Health / bereavement:** *Poor health, death, or poor health of a loved one*
- **Major life changes:** *Marriage, divorce, new baby, promotion, lockdown restrictions*
- **Financial:** *Responsibility of mortgage or debts, job security, unexpected expenses*
- **Conflict:** *With partner, co-worker, neighbor, friend*
- **Personal characteristics:** *Perfectionism, cannot say no, inability to prioritize.*

Therapy can help you:

- To feel more in control of your emotions, thoughts, and reactions to situations
- Open your eyes to learning skills to manage your stress
- Support you re-entering regular routine.
- Rebuild your resilience toward stressors you have been able to avoid while off work
- Normalise your reaction to the stress.
- Have an independent view of your situation.
- Have support if your symptoms impact you at work
- Discuss recommendations to support you back to work and help you to remain in work.
- Develop a plan to help keep you well and support you to sustain attendance in the workplace.