

CORONAVIRUS AND EMPLOYMENT:

WHAT IS CORONAVIRUS?

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a contagious disease caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). The disease was first identified in 2019 in Wuhan, the capital of Hubei China, and has since spread worldwide, resulting in the 2019–20 coronavirus pandemic. The transmission of this virus can also take place amongst unemployed and co-workers, through infected respiratory droplets (Wikipedia. 2020).

The effect of this pandemic can affect the physical and mental health of people, as many are experiencing fear, uncertainty and anxiety. Additionally, while the general population is largely vulnerable to feelings of stress, helplessness or hopelessness, people with pre-existing conditions (elderly, HIV, cancer, TB or disabilities), frontline and healthcare workers, taxi drivers, retail workers, journalists and those with mental health are particularly more vulnerable (Alan J Flisher Centre for Public Mental Health 2020).

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMSWORTH CONSIDERING:

- Fever
- Tiredness
- Dry cough
- Fatigue
- Coughing up slime (producing sputum in the lungs)
- Shortness of breath
- Sore throat
- Headache
- Body chills

- Diarrhoea
- Intensely red eyes, watery discharge from the eyes, swollen eyelids and light sensitivity (Discovery, 2020).

WAYS FOR EMPLOYEES TO PROTECT THEMSELVES FROM CORONAVIRUS AT THE WORKPLACE:

WHAT CAN BE DONE?

- Reducing transmission among staff (i.e. covering your mouth with an elbow when coughing and sneezing, avoiding hand shakes and touching your face)
- Protecting people who are at higher health risk (OH&S, 2020).
- Encouraging regular hand-washing with soap or the use of hand sanitizers
- Performing routine environmental cleaning and disinfecting
- Actively encouraging sick employees to work from home
- Stopping travel plans of employees
- Sharing best practices with employees
- Encourage the use of medical face masks and hand gloves
- Employees should have enough knowledge about the disease (education)
- If you feel sick and you need information on what to do, you can call the **COVID 19 24-hour hotline number on: 0800 029 999/ WhatsApp on: 0600-123456 (World Health Organisation, 2019).**

COVID 19 HAS A NEGATIVE IMPACT ON UNEMPLOYMENT

The COVID 19 crisis has caused significant economic and labour market shock. The adverse consequences include major job losses, lay-offs, cutbacks, ill-health, the loss of crucial skills through death and decline of productivity levels from employees. The supply levels of goods and services will eventually diminish against the increasing demand levels of consumption and employment (International Labour Organization - ILO, 2020).

The business sector in general across the country have seen their revenue streams become depleted and penniless as the country experiences a State of National Disaster and Lockdown to limit the spread of Covid-19 (Kretzmann, 2020).

The Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) may be able to access funds to protect the loss of income and to provide monetary relief to companies that will 'close shop' for a short period as a precautionary measure (Kretzmann, 2020).

- *DEL frontline officials will be inundated with UIF & COIDA requests*
- *Productivity SA will have to innovatively generate turn-around strategies*
- *PES will have to exercise a serious mind shift responsive to the current and aftermath of the reality.*

WAYS TO GUARD YOUR MENTAL HEALTH DURING THE COVID-19 OUTBREAK

These are challenging times for our mental and emotional well-being. The stress and uncertainty of the COVID-19 outbreak have been difficult enough (traumatic). The sudden adaptation in social distancing requirements has led to profound changes in our daily routines. People may be feeling overwhelmed and strained already. Generally, it's hard to find a good balance when everything suddenly feels upside down. Every life situation is bringing its own unique challenges during this time, amongst others:-

- ✓ Countless students are at home again
- ✓ People are separated from their friends and partners.
- ✓ Parents are doing their best to home school their kids while working from home themselves.
- ✓ Single people are struggling with the unprecedented social isolation.
- ✓ People are faced with daily uncertainty about how long this crisis will last and where it will take us, individually and collectively.

Now that our lives have been stripped down, we need to be very intentional about protecting our mental health. Here are **five key practices** to guard your heart and mind during this crisis.

1. **Be Good to Your Body** – Mental health starts with physical wellness. Make sleep a sacred priority. Feed your body and mind.

2. **Follow a Schedule** – Develop a daily structure. Spend time in the sunshine. Follow a predictable work schedule.
3. **Be kind to your mind** – Recognize that your mind is constantly entertaining stories, myths and fantasies. Practice gratitude.
4. **Find moments of stillness** – Create your own quiet time. Release tension. Breathing and muscle relaxation. Unplug and spend time in nature.
5. **Share love** – Exercise your true nature as a being of love. Invest time and energy in the people that matter most. “Being with” might be virtual for now, through texts, emails, and Skype or FaceTime. Forgive and serve others. It is more rewarding in doing something to improve someone’s life.

More than anything else, give yourself some grace. This is a difficult and stressful time as you adapt to a completely new situation. Do the best you can to manage your mental health.

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