

Restrictions are starting to ease across the UK but as we start to come out of lockdown you may be feeling anxious about leaving the safety of your home. You are not alone in feeling this way. Whilst it's great that the world is opening back up, it's also anxiety provoking for many people. You may also be worried about returning to a faster pace of life after enjoying more downtime. Many people are also concerned about the possibility of further lockdowns.

Returning to Work

You have probably been working from home for over a year now and going back to the workplace will feel like a big change. You may already be worrying and feeling anxious about your return and this transition will be a difficult one for many people.

Returning to the workplace may make you feel anxious for several reasons. You may feel worried about the risk of coronavirus, uneasy about mixing with lots of people, uncertain about changes in your workplace and nervous about doing your job.

There are many positives of returning to work, including, being able to see colleagues again, separating your home and work life and getting back into a routine that you may have missed.



If you are worried then, talk to your line manager about your concerns, hopefully they will be able to put measures in place to support you. It's unrealistic to expect things to feel 'normal' on day one, so take things slowly and be kind to yourself.

You may be concerned as you're unsure what to expect on your return, so find out what changes have been put in place to make your workplace COVID-secure. These may include, a one way system, several anti-bac stations, temperature checks as you enter

the building, a rota to use the coffee making facilities and use of screens or barriers to reduce contact between people. Knowing about these measures will give you a clearer understanding of what to expect.



You may also be concerned about a change to your routine, you may no longer be able to regularly do the school run, walk the dog or look after your elderly relative.

With returning to the workplace, you may have to make use of the before and after school club, re-employ your dog walker or use a care agency to help with your relative.

All of these extra worries, will be putting extra pressure on yourself and potentially adding to your anxiety.

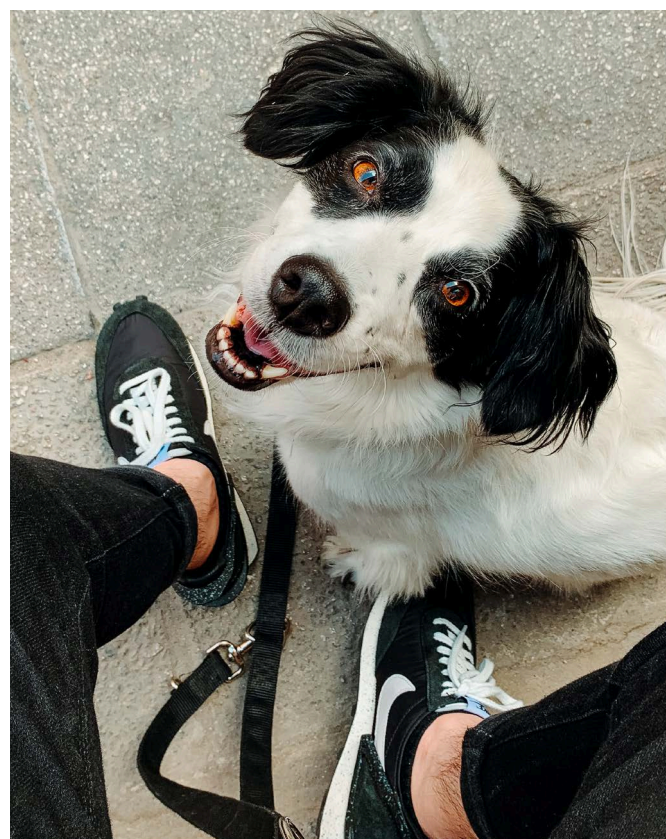


When you do return to work and your daily routine changes, your children and pets may struggle with the change, as their routine will also be different.

With regards to your children, communication is the key. Ensure they know what is happening and when. Where possible give them as much notice as you can. Tell them the details, whether its concerning the before and after school club or the childminder. Make sure you listen to any concerns they may have and answer all of their questions. Keep talking about the change, after the first day, the first week and month, discuss what they liked and didn't like about the new routine. Consider what changes you could make to ease their dislikes.

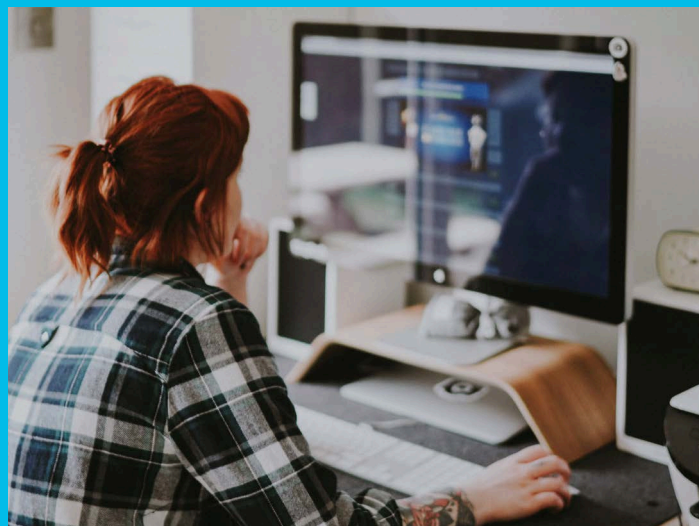
With you no longer working from home your pets may be left alone for longer periods of time, going back to doggy day care or will need to get used to being walked by a dog walker. They may begin to show signs of separation anxiety or boredom. There are some things you can do now in advance to prepare your dog for the change including:

- **Gradually get back into your new routine** - this may be connected to what time they get up and go to bed or when they have their meals or are taken on a walk.
- **Show you dog its fine for them to be alone** - whilst you are still working from home, don't spend all of your time with them, put them in another room for a while and gradually increase this time.
- **Ensure you dog is happy** - which will include ensuring they still have good quality exercise and they have toys to keep them occupied when you aren't with them which will reduce boredom.
- If you are worried then monitor what they do when they are alone with a camera or seek professional help from a vet or dog behaviourist.



Many workplaces are introducing a hybrid scheme, where you spend half the week in the office and the other half working from home, it may be worth speaking to your manager to see if this is a possibility for you or you may also want to consider a change to your hours to give you more flexibility.

Before you return to the office, you ideally need to plan your return with your manager, as well as the practicalities of what date and time you will return, you will be interested in other things like, will your work priorities change, will you stop doing some projects and re-start others? Will you be based in the same office at the same desk with the same colleagues or will this change?



Social occasions

While people around you may be ready to get straight back to their pre lockdown routine, this isn't the same for us all. So don't think you're alone, it's ok for you to ease yourself into things at a pace that feels comfortable and works for you. It will take time for many of us to get back to how things were for us before the pandemic.

If friends or family members ask to meet you in a pub garden or to go shopping, and you don't feel ready, it's ok to say no. You don't want to feel anxious about social events you want to be able to enjoy them. This is an unprecedented situation and there's no rule book regarding how you should feel. Be honest, open and polite with your friends and family and they will understand. There are some simple things you can do to ease yourself into this new world without feeling overwhelmed.





How to deal with crowded spaces

Feeling worried about being surrounded by people after a pandemic is a totally normal and natural response. We have all been told to avoid other people for the past 12 months, so feeling wary is to be expected. It may take you some time for them to feel normal again.

If you do find yourself in a situation you find overwhelming, **practising deep breathing** can help keep you calm. Make sure you tell one of the people you are with how you are feeling.

When out you may feel more comfortable by wearing a mask, maintaining distance from others and carrying hand sanitiser, even if this is no longer required.

If you feel your concerns may be more than this and you may have **agoraphobia** you should speak to your GP.

Eating out in restaurants

If you're feeling worried about eating with others in enclosed spaces, take things slow.

Currently in the UK we can now eat inside, but this doesn't mean you have to, if you don't feel ready, go to a restaurant with an outside terrace or a pub garden. If you still feel uncomfortable eating in a restaurant, maybe suggest a picnic, BBQs or ordering a takeaway instead. Your friends will understand.



Travel

We've been told repeatedly for over a year to stay at home and not to travel. So feeling anxious about travelling is perfectly understandable. Car journeys are less covid-risky when only travelling alone or with people from your bubble. If you're renting a car, wipe down any 'touch points', including the door handles, steering wheel and gearbox before driving.

When using public transport, a good tip is to go first thing in the morning as planes, trains and buses will have been cleaned and disinfected overnight. On a train or bus you may be able to open a window if you can to improve air circulation. On a boat, you could stand outside on the deck.



Regularly use hand sanitiser and always wear a mask when in communal travel-hub spaces.

Where possible, avoid eating or drinking until you've arrived at your destination (so you can keep your mask on and limit contact with surfaces).

For shorter distances, the best ways to get from A to B is walking or by bike.



Your wellbeing

Many of us have created a routine during lockdown which has provided us with time for ourselves, just because we are coming out of lockdown, it doesn't mean you have to lose this. Find ways to adapt your current lockdown routine to fit it in to your new routine. Give yourself time for self-care, have regularly well needed breaks, make time for your exercise and continue with your wellbeing habits.

There have been some positives to lockdown and one of those is definitely having more downtime. The world seemed to slow down and, by necessity, so did we. The thought that it'll speed up again and we'll lose the time we found for ourselves will be concerning for many.

As we get back to 'normal' don't forget to take care of yourself. Making time to look after your own wellbeing can really help ease feelings of anxiety. Allow yourself regularly time each day for self-care, activities that can help you unwind and relax, it's recommended that this should be at least 20 minutes a day.

These might include:

- practising **mindfulness** and breathing techniques (there are several Apps you can use)
- doing something you find relaxing like reading, listening to music or taking a bath
- doing some gentle exercise, such as going for a walk, or trying yoga or pilates.

If you are one of the people that have slipped into bad habits during lockdown. This might include being less active, drinking more alcohol or having a poor sleep routine. Getting back into a good daily routine before returning to the workplace can also help you to feel better, both physically and mentally.

This includes:

- keeping active – even taking a short walk on your break, or incorporating walking or cycling into your commute
- getting a good night's sleep
- eating a balanced diet with regular meals and snacks
- staying hydrated
- limiting your intake of alcohol and caffeine.



Seeking help for anxiety

If you feel your **anxiety** is becoming a problem, ask your GP or health professional for support. There are also some charities that can offer help and advice:

- [Mind](#)
- [Samaritans](#)



Police Mutual Services

Our Care Line Service provided by Health Assured can offer advice and information, helping with a range of concerns including emotional support. Take a look at the e-portal or download the APP.

Health & Wellbeing e-portal

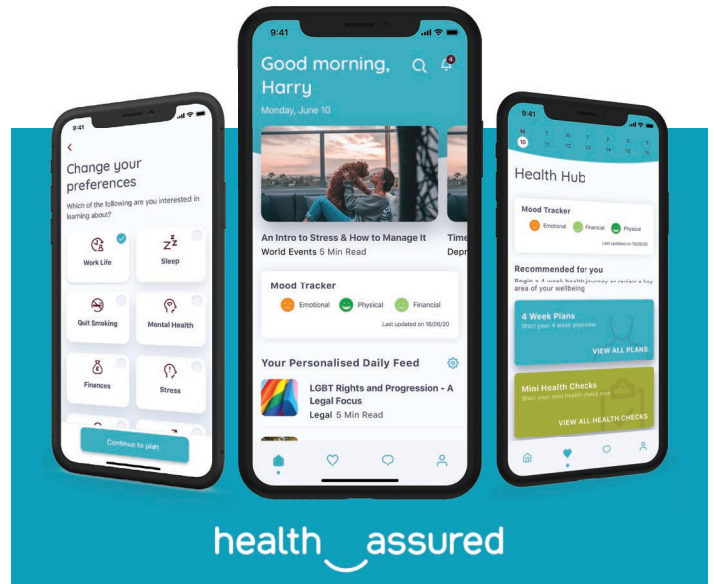
<https://healthassuredeap.co.uk>

Username: policemutual Password: careline

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They're able to advise you on a range of debt solutions suited to your individual circumstances, helping to protect you and your family with a sustainable way to manage your debt.

Get free and confidential help to combat your debt, call **PayPlan*** on 0800 197 8433.



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For more information on how Police Mutual are supporting you during the coronavirus pandemic click [here](#).

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We're open from
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