

THE-ICE Webinar Series 5

Supporting staff & colleagues
through COVID-19

A Human Resource Perspective



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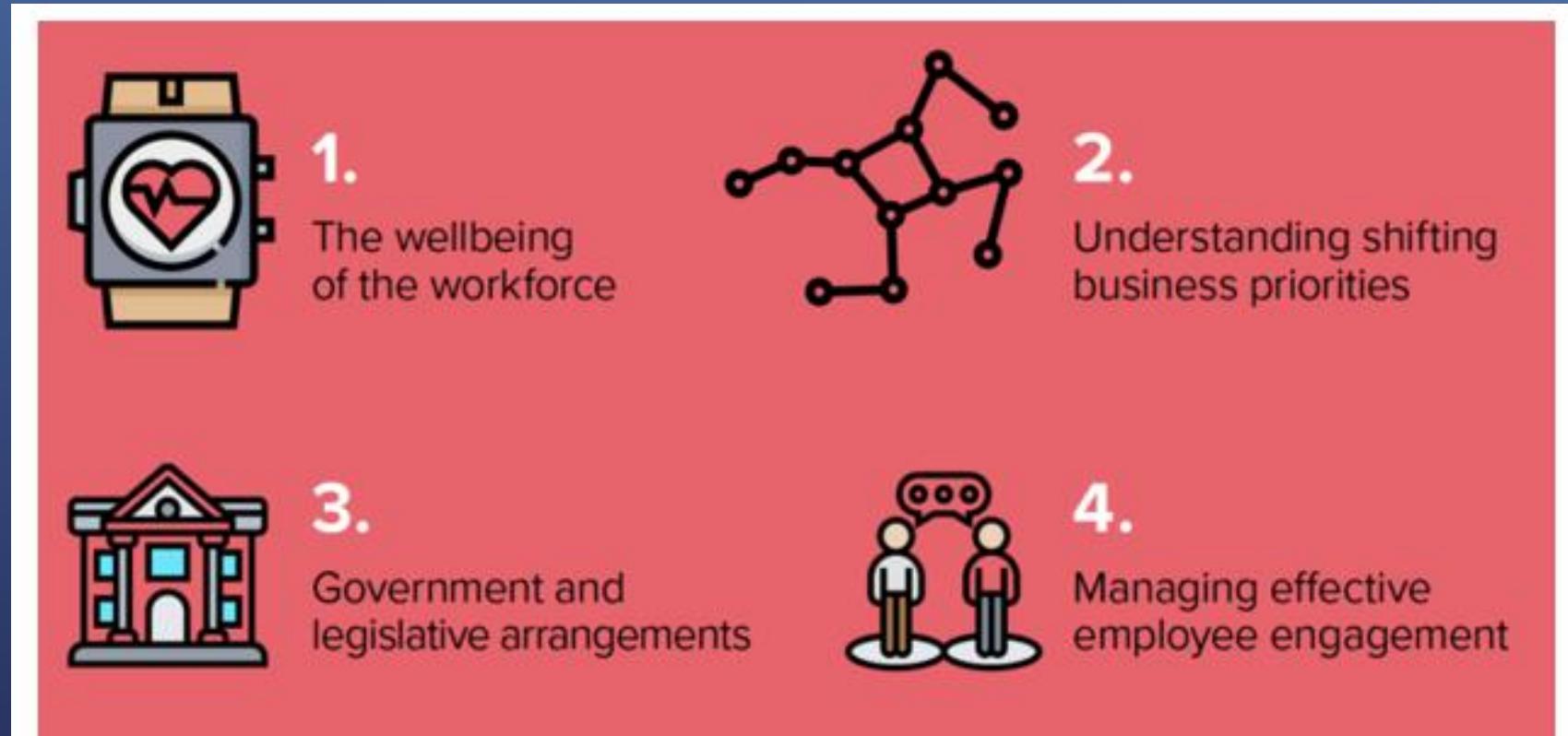
Dr David Kessler - world's foremost expert on grief:

“The precautions we’re taking are the right ones. History tells us that. This is survivable. We will survive. This is a time to overprotect but not overreact.

When you name it <grief>, you feel it and it moves through you. Emotions need motion. It’s important we acknowledge what we go through”

[Click here for an additional resource on the grief we are feeling by Dr David Kessler](#)

New research has found that 93% of leaders are finding managing the wellbeing of staff during COVID-19 challenging



Source: Impact of COVID-19 on the Australian HR community: pulse survey results. AHRI, April 2020.

“We’re in an ongoing, chronic situation and we’re getting reminders of that grief everyday. People struggle with a life that feels out of control and unpredictable, which is 100 per cent COVID-19.” – Dr Jo Lukins

Experts say what we are experiencing is grief.

There's denial: ***This virus won't affect us.***

There's anger: ***You're making me stay home and taking away my activities.***

There's bargaining: ***Okay, if I social distance for two weeks everything will be better, right?***

There's sadness: ***I don't know when this will end.***

There's acceptance. ***This is happening; I have to figure out how to proceed.***

Then comes meaning.

Acceptance and control

- Try to maintain perspective
- Find a healthy balance in relation to media coverage
- Create a sense of community wellbeing
- Seek support - Set up additional counselling resources, information, advice and coping strategies
- Maintain social contact and routines
- Physical exercise and fresh air

According to Dr Jo Lukins (organisational psychologist) as managers, we need to look out for the following signs of potential grief, or other mental health conditions:

- If people seem irritable
- If they seem detached
- If they're speaking more negatively than usual
- If they're more preoccupied than usual
- If you're less likely to see/hear them laugh
- They might report feeling tired
- If they're talking about drinking every night

"There are different expressions of sadness. That might be tears or screaming, but it could also simply be withdrawal."

Dr Lefteris Patlamazoglou

To support staff and colleagues, AHRI recommends:

- Implement a buddy system, so it's not all on the manager to check in and people know who else they can reach out to.
- Instead of getting straight down to business in a meeting, make more time for the personal stuff.
- Wellbeing: Make sure staff are having lunch breaks/not working over time, that they are getting up & moving
- Have some levity in the week. Recognise that humour and fun are very important.
- We're all making 'just in time' decisions, and if we can improve that through coaching, support and advice in a timely manner, that will be a big help.
- We've all got our own area of expertise & it's easy to narrow down into your own bunker, but we need to look up and support our colleagues.
- Now is not the time for stringent KPI's and attempts at remote micro-management

To summarise, what we can do to help staff & colleagues

- Avoid making blanket statements that we're all going through the same thing
- Recognise that we are going through a form of grief
- Focus on what you can control....Let go of what you can't
- Perform acts of kindness
- Create a single source of truth for all
- Stay engaged with staff
- The 6th stage of grief is 'Meaning'

BEYOND BLUE TOP TIPS FOR LOOKING AFTER YOUR MENTAL HEALTH WHILE SELF-ISOLATING

- Remind yourself that this is a temporary period of isolation to slow the spread of the virus.
- Remember that your effort is helping others in the community avoid contracting the virus.
- Stay connected with friends, family and colleagues via email, social media, video conferencing or telephone.
- Engage in healthy activities that you enjoy and find relaxing.
- Keep regular sleep routines and eat healthy foods.
- Try to maintain physical activity.
- Establish routines as best possible and try to view this period as a new experience that can bring health benefits.
- For those working from home, try to maintain a healthy balance by allocating specific work hours, taking regular breaks and, if possible, establishing a dedicated work space.
- Avoid news and social media if you find it distressing.

Reference list

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Beyond Blue 'Top tips for looking after your mental health while self-isolating'

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Beyond Blue 'Ways to look after your mental health amid the coronavirus pandemic'

<https://coronavirus.beyondblue.org.au/managing-my-daily-life/coping-with-isolation-and-being-at-home/ways-to-look-after-your-mental-health.html>

Harvard Business Review, 'That Discomfort You're Feeling Is Grief' by Scott Berinato

<https://hbr.org/2020/03/that-discomfort-youre-feeling-is-grief>

DEMOGRAPHICS AHRI Survey (survey only available to AHRI members)

The Australian HR Institute surveyed 1170 HR and business leaders between March 30th and April 6th 2020, on their experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The majority of respondents resided in Victoria (30.6%) and New South Wales (27.7%), in a Metropolitan area (79.8%).

The greater part of the sample were HR practitioners (76.3%), however there were external HR consultants (12.3%), HR academics (1.5%), as well as those in a non-HR role (9.8%).