Covid-19 Pandemic – From Physical Health To Mental Health Crisis: The 2nd Wave That Will Affect Us All

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As things start to settle down, with the peak of Covid-19 hopefully now behind us, people are starting to return to some sense of "normality" in their day to day lives. I think we all recognise that things will never be the same again after this pandemic, which has effected everyone, through loss of loved ones or battling through the immediate threat to our physical health, employment and financial worries and stress, triggered by a situation which truly brought the world to a standstill.

In the wake of this unprecedented global event, as we begin to feel more relaxed about the threat to our physical health, it is our mental health which will now be a concern for many of us. The impact of Covid-19 on our mental health will likely have been building throughout lockdown.

As we return to social interactions and the general business of everyday life, many people will start to recognise signs that they are struggling mentally with the readjustment. Meeting up with family and friends and participating in social activities again may be challenging for some people. Coping again with the pressures of commuting, time management, targets and office politics, while balancing work/home life, finding time to relax and the difficulties managing these stressors, will also return. Sadly, many people have lost loved ones and will also be experiencing the grieving process for those no longer with us due to Covid-19.

How these events will impact on our mental health will, of course, differ for each of us. Regardless of what stresses we face; it is our ability to cope with them, combined with what support we have around us, that helps us to manage when things get particularly difficult for us. It is likely that many will experience anxiety around returning to work or social activities and so important that we all recognise this as we go back into the workplace, ensuring that we are supportive and kind to all of our colleagues, as we may not know what they have had to overcome in order to be there. Many more of us will be struggling with our mood. Isolation, loneliness and stress are the main causes of depression and it is likely that this situation will have had a profound impact on people who were already experiencing problems with depression and anxiety.

Supporting everyone in the workplace with a positive and open culture around mental health is more important now than ever. Employers can do so much to help their employees to maintain good mental health and it is in the interests of everyone for them to do so. The financial cost of mental health to employers has increased to more than £45 billion a year in the UK but the true cost is in the impact that poor mental health has on individual lives.

Wise employers are no longer saying "leave it at the door" when it comes to mental health in the workplace. They recognise that, to get the best out of their employees, they need to invite them to bring their whole self to work. A culture around acceptance that provides non-judgemental and supportive responses to mental health in the workplace improves outcomes for all. Earlier intervention when mental health problems do develop, increase recovery rates, and protect over-stretched NHS services. Where employers provide proactive support around staff mental health, they also see a return on investment of £6 for every £1 spent, through reduced absences and improved productivity, satisfaction and retention. As we return to work and our stressful, busy lives, making mental health support the top priority for workplaces is no longer a choice for employers, it is a must.

Please visit our website at www.mindmapswellbeing.org.uk to learn more about ways we are helping employers to support their staff with mental wellbeing and please get in touch to see how we can help in your workplace.