

TIPS ON MANAGING STAFF WHO ARE ANXIOUS

We find ourselves in a dramatic and difficult situation that is unfamiliar to most of us. It is entirely natural to feel anxious in these times. Contributing to a satisfactory work environment is one way in which you, as an LU manager, can help your employees. Here are some tips on what you, as an LU manager, can consider if you have employees who are feeling anxious:

Listen and provide support

- **Listen to the employee and take the anxiety seriously.**
- Contribute to **normalising the anxiety**.
- Consider whether individual solutions are possible

Take the employee's anxiety seriously, and show respect for their experience. Try to normalise their anxiety by talking about anxiety as a normal response in a difficult situation. People who are anxious often just want the opportunity to talk about it. Therefore, allow employees to express *their* concerns without you providing solutions and suggestions. However, if the person is anxious about the circumstances in the work situation itself, you will need to manage this together. Try to find flexible solutions where possible. Otherwise, try to support the employee in managing the work situation despite the anxiety.

- **Clarify your responsibility** as a manager

Listen to and support your employees, however, you should also try to set limits on where your responsibilities end. As an LU manager, you are not responsible for your employees' entire wellbeing in this situation. Primarily, you are responsible for your employees having the best work environment possible given the prevailing circumstances.

Provide information

- It is better to provide too much **information** than too little, even if you do not have much new information to provide.
- **Encourage** your employees to **follow** the public authorities' **recommendations**.
- **Do not speculate** with the employee, stick to known facts.
- If you are able to, encourage the person to limit their accessing of information, e.g. to a specific time during the day.

You can contribute to easing the anxiety of your employees by providing them with continuous information about the situation from your organisation's perspective. In addition, encourage employees to follow recommendations from relevant public authorities, as these actually contain suggestions on what employees can influence themselves, which can be important to focus on to ease anxiety. Be careful not to contribute to speculations or hype surrounding the situation and, instead, try to stay calm and stick to the facts and official recommendations.

Hold regular meetings

- Keep or start brief **regular** (virtual) **group meetings**.
- Also book in social time, such as **digital coffee breaks**

Regular meetings can provide a forum for the exchange of information and thoughts on the situation. Your and your employees' anxiety can be reduced if you, as an LU manager, ensure that you manage and maintain social contacts at work, despite not meeting in the same physical location. Carefully consider how you can do this in the best way in your working group. In addition, be clear about what applies to your specific workplace. This reduces anxiety, which can otherwise easily increase if you are sitting at home all alone.

Maintain work ethic and procedures

- Help the employee to **work alongside the anxiety**.
- **Maintain procedures** and provide the employee with clear tasks that are regularly followed up

Maintain your work procedures as far as possible as this contributes to reducing the anxiety. As an LU manager, it is important to convey that it is possible to continue working despite feeling anxious. The individual may believe the anxiety is a problem that must be resolved first. However, we can still do things alongside the anxiety, and maintaining procedures and having concrete work tasks to tackle helps people to dispel their thoughts.

When to seek additional support

- If an employee is feeling **anxious about circumstances in the work situation** and you are unable to find ways to manage it, you can **turn to the Occupational Health Service** for advice and support.
- If an employee is experiencing general anxiety that is not related to the work situation there may be opportunities for support in primary health care. In these cases, the employee can turn to their healthcare centre for further guidance.