

COURAGEOUS *artistry*

Returning to the Office

DC BAR LUNCH and LEARN

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courageousartistry.com

About Me

Ingela Onstad, MM, MA, LMHC, BCC

Professional classical singer and former voice teacher

Licensed Mental Health Counselor in NM

Board-Certified Coach

High Performance Coach for Professionals in the Public Eye

Works with attorneys and other professionals who have a presentational aspect to their work

Why "Courageous Artistry"?



Goals For Today

Mental Health Statistics

Challenges of Returning to the Office

Benefits of Returning to the Office

4 Steps: Self-Care, Anxiety Management, Boundaries, Seeking Help

Time for Q&A



Current Stats on Depression and Anxiety

“Rates of anxiety and depression among U.S. adults were about 4 times higher between April 2020 and August 2021 than they were in 2019. Some of the sharpest increases were among males, Asian Americans, young adults, and parents with children in the home, according to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data.”

<https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/covid19/pulse/mental-health.htm>



ANXIETY

7.4% – 8.6%

Range of average monthly percentages of U.S. adults reporting symptoms of anxiety, January–December 2019 ¹

28.2% – 37.2%

Range of average submonthly percentages of U.S. adults reporting symptoms of anxiety, April 2020–August 2021 ²

1. <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nhis/mental-health-monthly-508.pdf>.

2. <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/covid19/pulse/mental-health.htm>



DEPRESSION

5.9% – 7.5%

Range of average monthly percentages of U.S. adults reporting symptoms of depression, January–December 2019 ¹

20.2% – 31.1%

Range of average submonthly percentages of U.S. adults reporting symptoms of depression, April 2020–August 2021 ²

1. <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nhis/mental-health-monthly-508.pdf>.

2. <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/covid19/pulse/mental-health.htm>



The Challenges of Returning to the Office

Write some of your concerns about returning to the office in the chat box .



A Multitude of Challenges

Social

Emotional/Mental

Physical

Situational

Financial

Familial



Social Challenges



- Workplace relationships may have changed or shifted
- We may have co-workers we have not met in person
- Boundaries
- Dealing with issues that were ignored during WFH
- Interpersonal drama/challenges
- Disagreements/different levels of comfort and safety with protocols
- Managing other employees: worries about productivity, motivation, wellbeing
- Social anxiety
- Social pressure to be more “productive”



Social Challenges: Boundaries



While WFH, we may not have had to:

- maintain awareness of our boundaries
- communicate our boundaries to people
- pay attention to the shifting nature of boundaries (i.e., what we once found tolerable may no longer be tolerable)
- or we may have had poorer boundaries between work and home



Emotional/Mental Challenges

- We may feel:
 - Anxious
 - Overwhelmed
 - Afraid
 - Angry
 - Sad
- We may be suffering from:
 - New or increased mental health struggles
 - New or increased substance use struggles
 - Other mental health concerns
 - Burnout from work and life stressors
 - Impact of social/political/cultural/environmental issues that happened concurrently with the pandemic
- Our Scope of Control is larger at home than in the Office



Physical Health Challenges

- Fatigue
- Low energy
- Concerns about virus exposure
- Long Covid concerns
- Appearance concerns: weight gain/loss, other major changes to appearance, lack of professional clothing
- Mental health issues may manifest in physical health changes: sleeplessness, headaches, stomachaches, body aches



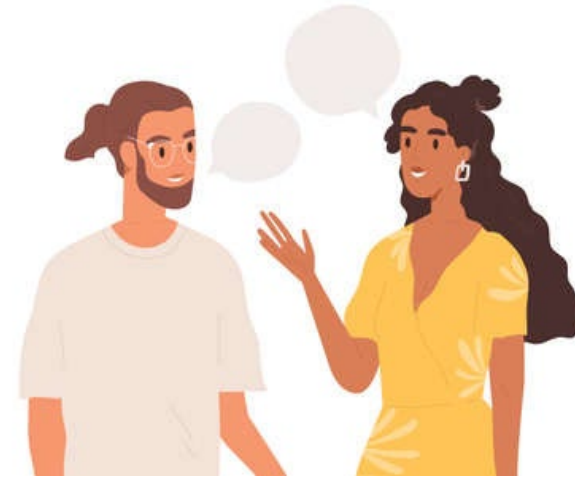
Situational/Financial/Familial Challenges

- Increased costs due to:
 - Professional clothing
 - Transportation and parking
 - More meals out
 - More childcare or eldercare
 - Housework/yardwork
- Less personal time due to commuting
- More time away from loved ones



Are there any benefits to returning to the office?

Take a moment to identify something that you are looking forward to.



Benefits to Returning to Work

- Increased social interaction
- Ease of communication
- Dedicated work space
- Better boundaries between work and home life
- Fewer distractions than at home
- Ability to bounce ideas off colleagues (i.e., popping briefly into someone's office or running into them in the hall)



How to manage the challenges of Returning to Work: 4 Steps



Step One: Assess and Improve Basic Self-Care

- But first: What does self-care mean to you?
- Assess your levels of basic self-care:
 - Sleep
 - Nutrition
 - Movement
 - Media Diet
 - Hydration
 - Relationships



Step One: Assess and Improve Basic Self-Care

- To start, pick ONE area where you would like to make improvements
- Set small goals in this area:
 - One 10-minute walk at lunch
 - Two more glasses of water at work
 - Going to bed 30 minutes earlier than usual
- Give yourself 4-6 weeks to implement one healthy new habit and then choose one more small habit



Step Two: Managing Anxiety

The Biology of Anxiety

- Our brains are constantly scanning our environments for threats.
- Social interactions are another type of threat – it is important to our health and safety to be liked by others.
- New situations and circumstances can also be perceived as a threat (novelty may introduce danger)
- Symptoms of Fight/Flight/Freeze: cortisol, adrenaline, muscle tension, digestive issues, loss of blood flow to prefrontal cortex, sweating, shaking, racing heart, etc.



Different Types of Anxiety

State Anxiety

Induced by a specific situation (i.e., a courtroom appearance, a speech)

Vs

Trait Anxiety

Occurs on a more regular basis across situations

- It is possible to have both, or one without the other
- Symptoms: Excessive worry, irritability, sleep disturbance, poor concentration, restlessness, muscle tension, fatigue



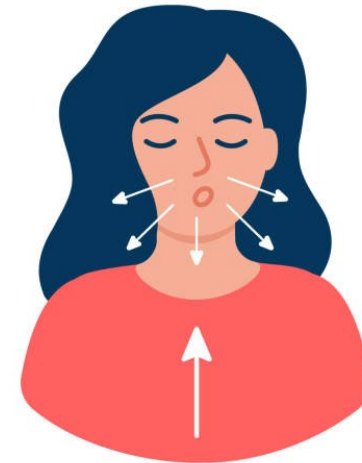
Step Two: Strategies for Managing Anxiety

- Visualizing positive outcomes: how do I want to feel?
- Grounding techniques: 5 senses meditation, legs up the wall yoga pose
- Managing negative self-talk
- Mindfulness Apps: Headspace, Calm, Insight Timer
- Journaling
- Breathing exercises
- Medication: talk to a mental health professional
- Professional help



Tips for Managing Anxiety: Breathing

- Breathing for calming or for energizing
- In “fight or flight”:
Hissing breath (calming, 1:2 ratio of inhale to exhale)
- In “freeze or fatigue”:
Big inhale breath (energizing, 2:1 ratio of inhale to exhale)



Step Three: Setting Boundaries with Ourselves and Others

- In order to set boundaries, we first have to be aware of what our boundaries are
- To increase awareness, we can ask ourselves these questions:
 - What are my core values?
 - How did I feel after that interaction/situation/etc.?
 - What are my non-negotiables?
 - What are some situations/circumstances where I may feel uncomfortable?
 - What are my needs in this situation?
 - How might my needs or boundaries have changed during the pandemic?



Step Three: Communicating Boundaries

- Once we have identified our needs/boundaries, we can learn to communicate them
- "I" Statements:
 - I need....
 - I would like....
 - I want....
 - I do not want....



Step Three: Communicating Boundaries

- Making requests of others:
 - Would you be willing to....?
 - May I ask for.....?
 - I would appreciate if.....
 - Can we compromise on.....?
- Working with a mental health professional can help us both identify as well as learn to communicate boundaries



Step 4: When to seek professional help

- How do we know when to seek professional help?
- these feelings are overwhelming and causing significant distress
- these feelings are affecting us in multiple areas of our lives (social, occupational, relationships, etc.)
- these feelings are affecting our ability to function on a day-to-day basis
- Friends, colleagues, and/or loved ones are commenting on our well-being
- JUST BECAUSE! There's no harm in asking for help and learning new coping strategies



Where to look for help

- Local counseling agencies (google “counseling near me”)
- Visit www.psychologytoday.com, www.therapyden.com, or www.goodtherapy.org and search for services in your State
- Contact your insurance agency for referrals and preferred providers
- Online therapy services: BetterHelp and TalkSpace
- Insurance coverage: call the # on your insurance card to ask about coverage
- Look for resources provided by your State’s Bar Association
- Ask your PCP for referrals



Be aware that.....

- Looking for a therapist is slightly different than looking for a doctor, as therapists do not have a way of knowing when appointments will become available, as our clients may stay with us for longer periods of time or may leave suddenly
- Make multiple calls and get on multiple wait lists
- Be an advocate for yourself: If you do not hear back within a few weeks, call the agencies again
- Finding the “right fit” with a therapist is akin to dating: we need to have the right “chemistry”
- It is perfectly acceptable to have a first session with multiple therapists before you decide who is right for you
- You do not have to stay with a therapist if you feel uncomfortable or if it isn't a good fit



Types of Providers

- The labels and terminology can be confusing, but if you are looking for traditional talk therapy, you may see a:
 - Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW)
 - Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor (LCMHCA, LCMHCA, LCMHCS)
 - Clinical Psychologist (PsyD, PhD)
 - Marriage and Family Therapist (MFT)
 - Licensed Art Therapist
 - Or even an Intern from any of the above professional categories
- Psychiatrists are physicians who generally prescribe mental health medications and rarely do talk therapy (with some exceptions)
- Coaching: some individuals prefer to work with a coach, but be sure to vet your prospects, as coaching is an unregulated industry



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Questions/Comments/Free Content:

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