

Five *on*
Friday

Musings on Mental Health

[Is A Shadow Pandemic Brewing?](#)

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The COVID-19 pandemic has abruptly caused the largest and most rapid disruption to how and where we work since anyone can remember. From Wuhan to Wichita, from mom and pop shops to multi-national corporations, the working world has been rocked. Whether working remotely or carrying on in the workplace, the stresses of COVID-19 have been huge - for individuals and organizations alike.

Supporting Mental Health of Employees During and Beyond COVID-19



[Photo Credit](#)

Headlines are predicting that mental health concerns will be the shadow pandemic of COVID-19 as study after study reports dramatically elevated levels of distress, fear, worry, anxiety, and depression. But another pandemic is not inevitable. Fortune favors those who are prepared, and for the working world, this is a moment when companies have an outsized opportunity. In partnership with [AXA Asia](#), our Columbia WHO Center for Global Mental Health developed a free in-depth resource to guide companies in safeguarding their employees' mental health during COVID-19 and beyond. [Launched this week](#), I am pleased to share some highlights and links in this Five on Friday.

Section 1: Mental Health in the Context of COVID-19: The Big Picture. The ongoing and uncertain nature of this pandemic has been associated with increased levels of distress, fear, anxiety, and depression around the world - including [China, India, United States](#), and the [UK](#). This section of the toolkit highlights why mental health matters in the workplace - especially now. It outlines how incorporating mental health into COVID-19 workplace recovery planning can mitigate the damaging mental health effects of the pandemic and ensure that employees are supported in ways that enhance coping, resilience, overall well-being and productivity. [Click here to access Toolkit Section 1.](#)

Section 2: Common COVID-19 Stressors. This section of the toolkit discusses ten COVID-19 related stressors that have been widely reported by working people around the world. Since these stressors affect a wide array of people, a small increase in any stressor can lead to considerable - yet manageable and preventable - negative impacts in the workforce. Due to the frequent occurrence of these stressors, especially during times of this pandemic, adequate and proper mental health support for employees from companies can have immediate and tangible benefits for individuals and companies alike. The benefits multiply to families and communities and economies. [Click here to access Toolkit Section 2.](#)

Section 3: Effective Leadership during COVID-19. Business leaders and managers have the opportunity to shape the conversations and strategy for how their workplace will respond to the mental health needs that surface for employees during this pandemic. This section of the toolkit articulates eight evidence-based steps that leaders can take to help organizations promote effective coping, resilience, and productivity for employees and the organization as a whole. [Click here to access Toolkit Section 3.](#)

Section 4: Having Constructive Conversations to Support Employee Mental Health in the Context of COVID-19. Talking about mental health in the workplace can be challenging. It is often difficult to know where

to begin and what is okay to say. This section provides an overview on how to engage in supportive conversations about the mental health impact of COVID-19 in the workplace, including guidance on beginning the conversation, asking questions, and active listening. With proper mental health resources, you don't need to be an expert to talk to someone who isn't coping so well and you can be reassured that you will not make matters worse. [Click here to access Toolkit Section 4.](#)

Section 5: Putting it All Together: The Three P's and Common Mental Health Concerns. The mental health impact of COVID-19 will vary widely person to person. Most individuals will navigate this period and cope with various stressors with limited impact or impairment. But a significant minority of individuals will develop more enduring and impairing mental health issues. This section of the toolkit discusses what employers can expect in terms of the most common mental health concerns of their employees, why it matters in the workplace, and what actionable steps can be taken. By understanding and engaging on these issues, business and organizational leaders can protect employee mental health, promote positive mental health, and provide access to mental health care as needed. These three Ps - Protecting, Promoting, and Providing - will ensure that mental health supports and services are in place during COVID-19 and beyond. [Click here to access Toolkit Section 5.](#)

Businesses and working practices have been reshaped by the coronavirus pandemic. This toolkit offers practical advice and is designed for anyone in a leadership role to help you make the most of this unique opportunity to address the longstanding issue of mental health in the workplace. Many thanks to [Gordon Watson](#), CEO AXA Asia and the entire [AXA](#) team for their leadership and partnership in making mental health matter in the workplace in the context of COVID-19 and beyond.

[Supporting Employee Mental Health During COVID-19 and Beyond is available to download for free here.](#)