



# THE EMPLOYEE ENHANCEMENT NEWSLETTER



HELPFUL RESOURCES FROM YOUR  
EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

June  
2020

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# Canceled by COVID-19: Managing Disappointment

In addition to fear and anxiety, COVID-19 is causing many to struggle with feelings of disappointment. Aiya Kuprinska, Office Manager at Workplace Options' London service center, shared her sadness over canceling her trip to Latvia in April. "My dad, sister, and I were planning a surprise celebration for my mum's sixtieth birthday," explained Aiya. "Our friends and family members from all corners of my home country were planning to attend, but now they cannot."

Whether it is a canceled celebration or a postponed vacation, disappointment emerges out of an unexpected sense of loss. If not managed in a healthy way, disappointment can lead to lingering feelings of sadness and even depression. Below are five positive steps to help work through feelings of disappointment.

**Step 1: Give yourself permission to be disappointed.** Adults are generally so uncomfortable with negative emotions that there is a tendency to try to rush past them. However, if you allow yourself to experience the disappointment, as well as other feelings that may accompany it, like sadness and anger, you stand a better chance of being able to process your feelings in a healthy way. Genuinely experiencing emotions, no matter how painful, is part of the human experience. As you learn how to move through negative emotions rather than circumventing them, you help strengthen your personal resilience.

**Step 2: Find support.** As the old adage goes, "Life is full of disappointments." The plus side of this is when you share your disappointment with someone you trust, they likely will be able to relate. Talking about disappointment can help release some of its fuel. In addition, the person you share with can offer comfort and may help you gain additional perspective.

**Step 3: Identify what you value.** Disappointment reveals what really matters. If you are dejected because your son's graduation ceremony was canceled due to the coronavirus quarantine, what does that reveal about what you care about? Is it a reflection of how proud you are of him, or how eager you were to celebrate his achievement? Did you view his graduation as your graduation as well? Digging deeper and understanding what is at the root of your disappointment can be a very healthy exercise. From there, you can move on to other ways to honor what you value.

**Step 4: Channel your disappointment.** Once you uncover what you value in step three, you can channel the energy of your disappointment to positive actions honoring that value. For the canceled graduation, as an example, perhaps that means offering to spearhead a virtual graduation ceremony or creating a video with personal messages of congratulations.

**Step 5: Seek perspective.** This fifth step may take time, which is fine. However, at some point, try to reflect on something positive about the situation. For example, in cities like Los Angeles, Paris, Rome, and Milan, known for their poor air quality, residents have experienced noticeably less smog over the last three weeks due to reductions in manufacturing and traffic. Some are hoping this will convince residents to take air-pollution warnings more seriously in the future.

While you do not have the power to change things outside of your control, you are able to control how you respond. If you are dealing with a COVID-19 related disappointment, know that you are not alone and, like others, you have the ability to move beyond it.

*Source: Fisher, M. (2020, 2 April). Canceled by COVID-19: Managing disappointment (A. Gaddis, Ed.). Raleigh, NC: Workplace Options.*

# Tips for Coping with Extreme Stress

As you face tremendous uncertainty, change, and transition during this unprecedented time and in response to various personal and work-related challenges throughout the year, it is important to monitor your stress levels and take steps to cope with and, if needed, decrease stress.

Below are some tips for coping with extreme stress:

- Concentrate on caring for yourself.
- Talk about it with other people in the same situation. Compare reactions, and reassure yourself that you are not alone in the way you are feeling.
- Talk about it with friends and relatives who care about you. It's normal to need to tell your story over and over.
- Keep your schedule as routine as possible, and don't overdo it.
- Allow time for hobbies, relaxing activities, and being with friends (virtually or in-person)—even if you don't quite feel like it.
- Participate in whatever physical fitness activities you normally enjoy.
- Beware of any temptation to turn to alcohol, tobacco, caffeine, and sweet foods. They may make you feel better momentarily, but can cause more problems in the long run. Concentrate instead on a healthy diet.
- If you can, postpone major life decisions until things have normalized.

Don't hesitate to accept help from friends, coworkers, and others. If you can, offer help to others affected by the event. Sometimes good self-care and talking with friends are not enough. You may want to seek professional counseling through your Employee Assistance Program (EAP). This does not mean you are sick, but rather that a counselor may be able to help you get your recovery process on track.

*Source: U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM). (1993, December; Revised 2019 [Ed.]). Tips for coping with extreme stress (p. 38) [B. Schuette, Ed.]. In A Manager's Handbook: Handling Traumatic Events (Pub. No. OWR-15). Retrieved August 20, 2019, from <https://www.opm.gov>*

# How Quarantine May Impact Your Next Tax Return

Whether you're working from home, out of work, or taking on new side-gigs, the coronavirus has impacted millions of people's regular work schedule. And while taxes might not be an immediate concern right now — the tax deadline and payment due dates got pushed to July 15, 2020 — different arrangements can lead to new tax implications.

Knowing what will happen upfront can help you prepare, perhaps by setting money aside to pay more taxes later or by keeping track of expenses that you can deduct to lower your tax bill.

## **WORKING FROM HOME — NOT MUCH CHANGES**

If you've kept the same job but started working from home, your tax situation might not be different. Assuming you're an employee, rather than a small business owner, the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (TCJA) axed many of the tax deductions that you could take in the past.

Unreimbursed business expenses and home office deductions are gone from 2018 to 2025 (they're still available to self-employed people, just not employees). So, while an ergonomic setup for your new home office might be appealing and beneficial, know that you won't receive any tax benefits. However, your employer can still write off the purchase as a business expense, so you may want to ask them to make the purchase for you or reimburse you.

## **COLLECTING UNEMPLOYMENT — IT'S LIKELY TAXABLE**

Whether you've been let go, furloughed, or had hours cut, you may be able to file for and collect unemployment benefits. In most cases, the money you receive is considered taxable income. (If you contributed to a private unemployment fund or your company has its own fund, those disbursements might not be taxable.)

At the start of the next year, you'll receive a Form 1099-G showing how much you received in unemployment benefits. You'll add this amount to your taxable income when you prepare your tax return, and may have to pay more income taxes as a result. To lessen the blow later, you can choose to have money withheld from your unemployment benefits, similar to how employers withhold money from paychecks. However, that means you'll also receive less money now, when you may need it most.

## **START A SECOND JOB — UPDATE YOUR W-4**

If you've taken on a second job as an employee, you may want to update your Form W-4 with all your employers. What you put on the form will impact how much money your employers withhold from your paycheck for taxes, and how much you'll have to pay or receive back when you file your annual tax return.

The IRS released a new version of the Form W-4 in 2020, so you may want to update the form with your current employer even if you didn't take on a new job. Additionally, you can use the updated Tax Withholding Estimate app to help ensure you fill the form out correctly and your employer will withhold the right amount.

## **TAKE ON A SIDE GIG — RECORD YOUR EXPENSES AND PAY EXTRA TAXES**

Some people are supplementing lost income by taking on freelance or contract work. With a few popular side gigs, such as driving for a delivery service, you'll likely be a contractor rather than an employee. For tax purposes, you're self-employed if you take on any of these jobs (i.e., you'll receive a 1099-MISC rather than a W-2 from the company). Being self-employed can lead to paying higher taxes because you'll need to pay an additional self-employment tax on your income. However, as a small business owner, you'll also now be eligible for business deductions. These can include the aforementioned home office deduction (although there are strict rules) and health insurance premiums if you're not eligible for coverage from an employer or spouse's employer. It's also important to record the miles you drive for work as you may be able to claim a large mileage deduction, particularly if you took on a delivery side gig.

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*Source: DeNicola, Louis (2020, April 20). How Quarantine May Impact Your Next Tax Return. Retrieved May 14, 2020, from <https://www.moneymanagement.org/blog/how-quarantine-may-impact-your-next-tax-return>*