

LIFESTYLE-BASED MENTAL HEALTH CARE FOR DEPRESSION

# Employment and work

Working or volunteering can protect against depression and psychological distress, whereas extended unemployment increases the risk of, and may worsen, depression.

If you have taken time off work or become unemployed due to depression, or for any other reason, it is important to consider and plan how you can get back to work in a safe and sustainable way.

**Scan for more information**



## What about my workplace?

**In Australia and many other countries, employees who are dealing with mental health concerns are protected from discrimination.**

- Employers are required to make reasonable adjustments\* to support people with a mental health condition, as long as the person is able to fulfil the core requirements of their job.
- Reasonable adjustments are changes to a job role or workplace that help someone with a mental health condition to keep working, or to return to the workplace if they've taken time off.
- The earlier you tell your workplace about what is happening for you, the better equipped they will be to support you.
- Choose a senior colleague who you trust in your workplace and let them know what is going on for you.
- Be clear about what supports you need (e.g., temporarily reduced responsibilities, changes to duties, personal leave).

## But I don't know how I will manage!

**It is important to plan your return to work in collaboration with your health care practitioner. This can help you to try different schedules, modes and styles of work and find the right balance for you as your condition improves.**

- Consider partial return to work, such as temporarily reduced work hours with a gradual return to your usual workload.
- The probability of returning to work decreases as the length of time since employment increases - so even a half day is better than none!
- Adjustments to work responsibilities may be necessary. Seek out tasks that you feel you can complete with competence. This can help you feel more confident in your capabilities and contributions.
- Engaging in psychotherapy during your return to work may better support reductions in depressive symptoms.
- Your health care practitioner and, where appropriate, your workplace rehabilitation consultant, can provide support, help you coordinate and negotiate your return to work, and provide individual strategies to support you at work.