

PODCAST TRANSCRIPT

Wellbeing Awareness 2

Alison Moore

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Hello everyone, and welcome to this Draken Wellbeing Awareness podcast, and specifically to talk about on-site working transitions.

Welcome to podcast two of the Draken Wellbeing Awareness Series and in particular covering home to onsite working transition.

This is the second of two podcasts and if you haven't listened to podcast one, I suggest that you do before you listen to this one, and you can find a link to it on the same webpage that you found this podcast. And in that podcast, I covered wellbeing, a broad look across what I mean by wellbeing and what we can do to consider maintaining good wellbeing. And we looked at the common factors that impact our wellbeing.

So in this podcast, I'm going to cover a bit more on how to look after our wellbeing, including my darling Gran's copper, and no that's not a police officer and returning to onsite working. And that's whether we've been working onsite, whether we're returning to site from working at home.

Who am I? My name's Alison Moore. I'm a registered accredited counsellor, wellbeing advisor and trainer. My background is in multinational tech businesses. In the eighties I developed frequency-hopping radios for the military. In the nineties I worked on the comms for the Channel Tunnel and in the noughties I retrained as a counsellor and coach. And in the first podcast, we looked at what physical wellbeing was, mental wellbeing, social wellbeing, and financial wellbeing. And we looked at stress, how stress is caused and what we can do to begin to manage our stress. And here I'm

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going to talk in much more depth about managing stress and in particular, relating it to the return to onsite working. There's a PDF handout with all this information in which you can download from just below the link to the podcast, which I hope helps reduce your stress. And to recap about stress, most people feel stressed sometimes and some stress can be helpful. It's too much stress that makes us ill. Stress affects all of us differently and there are common signs that we can look out for.

Last time, I talked about the parasympathetic and the sympathetic nervous systems, which means that whilst we have some elements of control over feeling stressed, a lot of it is outside of our control. So the causes of stress, well, change causes stress and feeling out of control causes stress. Almost anything that affects our daily life, work or relationships can cause stress. Even seemingly small issues can cause stress if they go on for a long time. And some of us are more affected by stress than others and different things will impact us. And that can depend on factors such as our personality, our upbringing, and our work and our home life. And sometimes situation or events that can seem positive can cause stress such as having a baby or getting married. And sometimes we can struggle to understand why we feel stress and it's a change.

And it's really important to recognize that it's okay to feel stressed in what is sometimes considered to be good situations. And please do talk to someone. You can come and talk to me. And so the goal isn't to eliminate stress, which is impossible. It's to reduce it and to take time to recover from the stresses of daily life.

And I do that by thinking about four pillars. It's about taking a minute often, building awareness, setting boundaries and bringing ease into our effort. Now I'm going to spend a little bit of time going into each of those in more depth now.

So taking a minute often, when our life gets busy there can be a snowball effect. Busy-ness builds busy-ness. And if we don't take some time every day to interrupt the snowball from rolling, it gets bigger and faster and harder to stop, which leads to burning out or if I keep up with my snowball analogy - crashing into a wall. And we

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prevent this by regularly and intentionally pausing and taking time for ourselves and that's even a minute. If we think about some of the display screen equipment requirements of taking a break every so often, I think it's 10 minutes every three hours and it suggests looking away. And that also helps with getting into the habit of taking a beat away from whatever it is we're doing. Perhaps looking out the window, having a drink of water so that we can help reset our stress levels.

Building awareness and that's about regularly acknowledging how much we're doing and how much that requires of our body, mind and heart. If we deepen our awareness of how stress impacts our wellbeing, that can motivate us to interrupt the stress cycle and prioritize our rejuvenation, rebuilding our resilience. And I think that's about having a bit of a body scan. I'm having a wriggle now and thinking about how do my shoulders feel? How long have I been sat here? Would it be worth me getting up and so on? So it's really important that we perhaps at first almost diarise checking in with how we're feeling.

Now setting boundaries and by this I'm thinking of time boundaries so that when we're at work, we've got enough time to do the job. It can be also about setting boundaries of when people can come and talk to us. And I'm going to talk more about that when I get onto the specifics of back to office working. Create a boundary that supports you, that supports the things that are important to you. So whether that it's absolutely essential that you get out and have a walk at lunchtime, and I would suggest that it is, it's absolutely essential that you have lunch and that you have regular breaks away and go and get your drinks of water, but really think about how you can set boundaries so that you don't get too much pressure.

And bring ease into my effort, well what I mean by this is the tricky thing about stress is that it impacts our body's ability to effectively do its job. So with the previous example, I suggested make sure that you hold a boundary for having lunch and you would probably choose to eat mostly a healthy lunch. But if we eat it while stressed, because perhaps we're feeling we shouldn't be having a lunch break because I haven't got time

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to have lunch, because we've got noradrenaline, adrenaline and cortisol coursing through our bodies because the sympathetic nervous system is activated, then our body won't be able to digest and absorb all of the amazing nutrients that we consume. So sometimes we can think we're doing the right thing and we're not.

Now I want to turn to the specifics around what to do when we return to work onsite or we've been working onsite. So here are some statements. So I've been working onsite. I'm used to a quiet location with space to social distance. I'm concerned about colleagues' behaviour and this is going to affect my use of car, income, expenditure and this is going to increase my stress. All of those statements could apply to us if we've been working onsite.

What to do if we're returning to work onsite. So here are some statements, I'm returning to work onsite and I'm used to a quiet location with space to social distance. I'm concerned about colleagues' behaviour. This is going to affect my use of car, income, expenditure. This is going to increase my stress. And if you listened carefully and closely, you'd have realized that both those sentiments of whether we're onsite and colleagues are returning or we're returning to work onsite, actually there's a really good chance that we're all feeling the same sorts of concerns. And I think if we can take a beat and remember that, that's going to make things a lot easier for us no matter what our own perspective is.

And I'm going to talk about returning to onsite working thinking about the same four pillars that I used in the first podcast so financial concerns, physical concerns, emotional concerns, and social concerns. So financially our income may change. There might be less or more overtime. And our expenditure may increase. We might now have travel or childcare costs, which we didn't have if we were working from home. And as I said, it's important that we consider these things and that we talk to colleagues, partners about them because that's the surest way of diminishing our concerns and diminishing the stresses. What else could we be impacted by? It could

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be buying lunches for example, or remembering to order food for pack lunches, but there could be an impact on our financial wellbeing.

So physical wellbeing, what stresses might we need to consider? Well, think about how you need to be with more colleagues onsite. Think about your proximity to colleagues. Your working position, remember to move. For some of us, we won't perhaps even have been onsite and so the desks and the equipment and the computers could be completely new to us. So really do think about your working position and remember to move when you're at work. Ensure desks, screens, lights, and everything is set up ergonomically for you and listen to your body as I said earlier. Really take a check-in and certainly every 15 minutes or so have a little shake at your desk and every 50 minutes or so get up, go and get a drink of water.

Emotional stresses that we might experience. So ease back in gently. Watch out for self-doubt, we are out of practise. Worrying if we've got it right is perfectly natural. Our socialising muscle in our brain has diminished quite a lot. I think most of us have noticed this and with practise we will get back up to speed and feel comfortable. And really be aware that we will all be on different timetables. Others will be on a different timetable to you. So it's okay if you're aware that you're still feeling some anxiety and it appears that others aren't. Go with your own pace and remember to give colleagues time and space.

And the social wellbeing, social stresses, we will all find something uncomfortable, the same way that we're all triggered differently by different events for our stress levels. This is going to be an individual process for us all. And please don't judge yourself. And in particular be hard on yourself by how you think others are feeling or behaving, just because of how someone looks doesn't necessarily mean that they're feeling absolutely fine inside. However you feel is perfectly natural. And be particularly aware of colleagues who have been working differently to you, whether that's colleagues who've been onsite and you've been homeworking and vice versa. And make sure to give sufficient space to yourself and your colleagues. And by that, I mean physical and

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emotional space. And take a moment to be understanding if a colleague's behaviour is surprising. We're all going to be learning things again for the first time and so if someone surprises us in how they're behaving, give them a bit of space so that they can regain their equanimity, their emotional balance.

My Gran's copper, so my Gran lived in a house that didn't have hot water. And on a Monday laundry day, she filled the copper with hot water. We always ran out and there was always a gap at the top of it. And I used to say to her, fill it up more Gran, fill it up more. No, no, no. Well, one day of course, as a youngster, I did fill it up more. I didn't realize the line that she was filling it to dutifully said fill to here and as a youngster, I filled it up. When eventually it boiled, the lid came off, scalding water went everywhere and I was really, really lucky that I wasn't permanently scarred with scalding. What's this got to do returning to work?

Well, all of the activities that happen that leave us feeling uncomfortable and create stress, need us to activate the parasympathetic nervous system to rebuild our resilience. And we're all kind of like my Gran's copper, we've all got a level on it that says fill to here. And there's a really good chance that both recent events and changes to working practices could take us above that fill to here line. And so what we need to do is we need to let the hot water out the bottom quicker. Now my Gran, she just had one tap to let the water out and it took quite a while to get below the level that it was sparking and fizzing everywhere. And so what we can do, it would be great to stop putting the stresses in the top. Most of us can't do that. If you can brilliant and do, but what you can also do is do things to let the water out the bottom more quickly. And for me, that's the activities that rebuild our resilience and that activate the parasympathetic nervous system.

Now the full list is in the handout. However, there's a couple that I want to pull out now before I finish the podcast. So I've already talked about scanning our body. Laughter activates the parasympathetic nervous system, drinking water does. Baked beans on wholemeal toast, if you can eat that, it's an incredibly nutritionally balanced meal and it

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really reassures and activates the parasympathetic nervous system. Listening to the right sort of music and by that, it's the right sort of music for us. And touch, you might notice if you see me doing training courses and things sometimes I touch my lips. I'm touching my lips now. There are a myriad of nerve endings in our lips that if we touch them activates the parasympathetic nervous system. And so it's a really great quick shortcut way of helping diminish our stress levels. Just to make sure you haven't got ink on your fingers because I invariably have, and I end up with blue lips.

There's a full list in the PDF handout and other sources of help. The SharePoint website, the link to it is in the PDF, has a whole raft of great sources of different advice. Please, please do go there. You can also access the Draken employee assistance program through MetLife, which again is on the website or you can contact me and have a one-to-one conversation, which currently is by phone or Teams video. And you can email me on draken@agoodplace.co

I hope this has been helpful to you. Please have a look at the PDF and listen to the podcast again.

My final words, whatever you're feeling is fine and the most important thing, please remember to breathe. My name's Alison Moore. It's been great speaking with you and I hope podcast has been helpful.