

# GUIDE A SMOOTH & SUSTAINABLE REINTEGRATION

One of your employees is currently absent and wants to return to work after a period of absence. To ensure a sustainable reintegration, it's essential that you as a leader collaborates with key stakeholders (the employee, occupational physician, HR, etc.) to develop a reintegration plan.

Every employee is unique, which is why each reintegration process requires a tailored approach specific to the individual. This document provides a guideline outlining the key steps for preparing and facilitating the return to work.

## IMPORTANT: KEEP IN CONTACT WITH YOUR EMPLOYEE IF POSSIBLE

Even when discussing the return to work with your employee, maintaining consistent communication remains central. The relationship between you and your employee is important for both the reintegration process and the sustainability of their return.

Ask how they feel about the communication and interaction. Continue to emphasize how important this communication is to you as their leader.

## >> TIPS FOR THE FIRST DAY BACK TO WORK

Organize an **informal team moment** to start the day (e.g., breakfast or coffee break).

**Be present and available** on the day of the employee's return so you can provide support when needed.

Make sure **the team is present and informed** about the return day.

Check in with your employee throughout the day and at the end of the day. How are they doing?

## >> PREPARE THE RETURN TO WORK

Make sure that all key stakeholders are involved in the reintegration process. Check-in with HR to see which people play a key role in the process.

Discuss the return to work with your employee. Approach the reintegration as a shared challenge or dialogue and think together about how it can be approached. Suggestions can come from both sides. Some potential **conversation starters** that might provide direction are:

"Is there anything I or the team can do to support or enhance your recovery?"  
"Are there any factors that are hindering your return to work?"

Also, discuss the employee's strengths or talents that contribute to their work. Some **conversation starters** that focus on growth and encourage the employee to look ahead positively are:

"What would you like to be more involved in in the future?"  
"Which strengths can you bring to your role?"  
"How can we, as a team, support each other even more in the future?"

Make sure that attention is given to a **progressive return** to work. Research shows that a gradual reintegration reduces the risk of relapse. Encourage social interaction in the workplace by inviting your employee to a team lunch or breakfast, for example. Another option could be to have them participate in a team meeting before resuming half or full working days.

## >> FOLLOW-UP ON THE RETURN

Stay engaged with how your employee is doing. Schedule regular **one-on-one conversations** as a way to keep checking in on your employee's well-being. Consciously ask, "**How are you?**" and make time for their response.