

Webinar #3 – Protecting Your Mental Health and Wellbeing

1. Question - How can we find relief from all the "Zoom calls" we are on these days?

A: It is a question that comes up every time so thanks for asking it.

And so, some of the great tips that I've heard, and that I'm starting to use as well, is that I was able to put an app onto my phone for example. So being able to shift up so that you're not just sitting at the computer in a space where you're at a table or a desk whatever it is you have at home.

So being able to shift that so if when I have it on my phone, I might be able to take the camera off and just have that break, listen attentively.

Take notes, sit in a different way, be able to put my feet up in a different way or sit on a comfy chair in the home. Whatever the case, find different ways to do it and in some cases, you might need to be on camera so today. You know, you might have dressed differently to be a part of the work meeting but being able to help change into your comfy clothes after, and just have that break for different screens right. So, if you can talk by phone you can set it down on your lap. And it really makes a difference to be able to mix that up a little bit.

The other thing I would advise for people who are bothered by the blue light of their computer is there is a setting under display on most computers I'm assuming I'm I don't can't speak for Mac so I'm not really knowledgeable about those but you, it's called nightlight, and it takes the blue tinge off your screen so for a lot of people that makes a big difference on it. And just helps people. You know, when they're looking at a screen for a long time.

2. Question- It's difficult when one of the 4 quadrants you spoke about is not fully met. How can we compensate? Or should we compensate?

A: That's a great point. When one hasn't been met. Absolutely. I think no matter what I'm going to flip back to it, even in my own notes is that is finding the balance is key.

Because in a lot of ways like even around pay equity for example we know that in most cases pay equity is a national issue. It's an issue for all of us. And so we might not fully achieve each one of those quadrants but where can we find that balance and then when there is a lack in one of those quadrants, how do we how do we bring that forward so that they are issues and they are realities that our union is working towards as well and you'll find.

You'll find that there's a lot of movement but in some workplaces from one to the next it might be an issue that we're working on, on a national level or in a regional level for example, but it might not be the reality in the workplace and so when some things like connections to community or living wage those pieces aren't achieved or they're still lacking you may feel may have some sort of balance within those quadrants but some may be lacking and it's an absolute reality that you every one of us would feel that not each one of those are fully accomplished, but being able to find the balance so that we can make it. And when we do recognize that there's a lack is, how can we plug into the program services committees etc. that can help advance some of that work.

Your team here too might want to add to that, but I think no matter what. Like, especially in political I'll speak to that as well, political, we may have we have an influx of leaders to both in our government leaders all levels of government. And so, there's abs and flows. Absolutely. We don't always have a voice etc. but it's how we mobilize around those issues, to ensure that it might not be an issue that it affects me, but it might affect you. And so that's just as important. So that's how we can build in the labor movement as well. So it's a really great question but it's about finding the balance to make it work into, but also recognizing that it will feel out of balance because we can't achieve those even if from one member to the next, for sure, but they help guide our work in our lobbying etc. all the things that we do.

Depending on where the imbalance is and working to write it maybe may require calling on different community groups are supports you the union can be valuable in a number of them, and all of them into one level or another but there may be some times when the union's only real role is going to be to advise you to seek support in another organization, because we're unable to that's outside the scope of the union's work. But I think that we, you can get a lot of these things from engagement in the Union So, good point. Yeah, and then where do we find it right and some of the in the resources too is, you know, those are conversations also have like the impact from each one of those quadrants affect us absolutely and even in the way that we look to those peer to peer models or through the EAP model finding some of those balances.

You know, a lot of us do not achieving pay equity in a lot of different places but we still live with that so how do we how do we keep up the fight and the work, but then also recognize that those systems, take a lot of work to change so it's a really good, great point and if you are. If you're not actively involved in the Union yet, that's a great place to get the, get that work advanced.

3. Question - I am “working from home” but don’t have the equipment to do my work so basically not doing much. I am worried that my employer might decide they won't need my position later.

A: I don't think, I don't think that you need to really concern yourself with that I think that these are extraordinary times, you know we have never been through this before the employer is still trying to work out. You know who's doing what and when is doing lots of that kind of thing. And if it were me and the you know once I got back to the workplace and I was a union rep and the employer approached me and said you know I want to talk to you about that. That's how I would approach it as a union rep look these are extraordinary times note there was no roadmap for this. People were just getting the work done that needed to get done, we're back in the workplace now everybody's prepared to do the work. That's how I would really push against the side I'm not I'm not I wouldn't be concerned about that I think these times are. Nobody really we're all just kind of trying to find our way through as we are in the Union, who were reps working at home and, you know, trying to get a climatized to that so but if that does occur, your contact is your union people.

Yeah, there is a cute meme or a tweet that's going around that says you know you're not working from home you're trying to be productive in a period of crisis. You know, this is the period of crisis with this. We've never been through anything like this before as a, as a country, you know, as far as a world. So, the fact that you're productive at work, at home at all is really a testament to your commitment to your job and your, your capacity.

4. Question - How we should be dealing with our emotions about some staff working from home (taking on extra work) and others on paid leave but not working from home because they don’t have the computers/phones equipment?

A: I think the issue around, not having the equipment to use in, so that they can do their job is one that needs to be the union needs to take up and talk to the employer about, because it is their responsibility to get the workers the tools that they need to do the work, at home.

If we're talking about someone who is feeling resentful that they're working from home, but they have coworkers who are not working from home because they don't have the tools.

That's a really difficult position to be put in and again, for me, you know as a union rep I would shift it as well just as back to the employer right it's the employers choice, or the

employer has made that decision that some workers are going to work and others aren't and still receive pay.

I think what, you must do for yourself. And it's really for the betterment of the entire unit is to ensure that if you are working from home. You're doing exactly like Gina said you're working; you know your job. You shouldn't be doing extra work you most certainly shouldn't be working on such a classification all those things can lead to grievances.

The so do your job, keep a focus on sort of maintaining a good work life balance, even though you're doing it from home and.

And just remember, realize that, you know, however it's it. It's difficult to think of it this way sometimes but this is a choice that the employer has made and they're the ones that bear the responsibility for it.

I wanted to just caution to say, we never know why you know somebody when we're looking, when we're looking from the outside in. We may never know why that situation is happening right in terms of why that worker is at home on paid leave and not actually working. We don't know all the full facts around that, there may be things that we don't know you know it could be, it could be actually you know the employer accommodating somebody or something like that so while I understand is very frustrating. I think Sandra was on the right track you know just do your job.

Do what you can do as Gina mentioned in the presentation. You don't want to, work till 11 o'clock at night because you're trying to compensate for the amount of work that you have you do what you can do within the seven hours or seven and a half hours that you're working and, and that is what you can do. And he won't be able to get that done, and you know I don't think we can really focus on what if somebody else is working or not working because we may not know all the facts around that. I understand that it may create some frustration and some, you know, tension for you but if that's the case, the only other thing I can suggest is that you do speak to the union about that they probably will be able to focus you know in a way that's more productive, not, I shouldn't say productive but focus you on you know what's going on there.

5. Question- What tools can you suggest in how to deal with our anger towards the Employer when we return to work? Employer failing to provide a safe workplace when it comes to dealing with COVID.

A: Well, it's a, how do you deal with anger towards the employer. And it's a good question. I think it depends what the anger is about. And it depends if there's a way to address it through. Health and Safety Committee, has it had the employer not done something have they failed to protect their workers?

have a health and safety committee and you have health and safety regulations, and there's a Health and Safety Act. If that's the case then there's a way to address that through the committee, your committee is going to allow you to really communicate with the employer about these issues and to try to resolve them.

6. Question - Just an observation. For those who are not able to work from home, some of the issues are a bit different. For example: - Feeling excluded, disconnected and useless - Feeling guilty for not being able to participate as a productive member of the team - Feeling more fatigued - Being scared of going back to work with such a long time away

And I think that's, you know, for all of us I think we experience those impacts individually and different not knowing where to find the connections or how to feel connected.

And I think that brings us right back to that social supports are, if we can all get a sense of the importance of building those networks and finding that community and starting those conversations, I think that's a great place. I know, even by having these webinars, being able to make those connections and keep them strong, but sometimes it involves having to ask those first questions and so if you're on Team chat programs and things like that being able to start rooms where there's conversation.

And even as a doing that as a check in. So even for myself, you know I feel disconnected from my workplace.

And I might not be a part of all the conversations so I might be feeling left out of some of that work. And so, sometimes it ends up turning to us as, as a person who needs to start that conversation and that can be very hard. So, let's take note of who might be missing from those conversations, or if we don't have a group conversation or chat

program that that really pulls us together to help build that in. So, if you're using online platforms in any way.

Already, how can you build in within those systems so some of you might be working from home. some of you might be working. Still in workplaces and then how do you merge those two. So, if you see gaps really turning to your, your components and your executives to find ways to really pull it together and it might be a weekly check in maybe it's a daily check in. I'll turn it over to Angela and Sandra to you might have different ways of how you've been able to keep those connections going. Um, I do want to just speak to the issue of the question about returning back to work and being afraid to go back to work. So, from a health and safety perspective, it's, it's, you know, all workplaces are going to have to look at returning workers back to the workplace now and it's the responsibility of the health and safety committee and the employer to make that transition as smooth as possible. So, we're not when we you know when we talk about returning to work. You know we talked about, you know, ensuring that it's safe in terms of the environment to return back to work, but the environments, not just the physical structures and people coming into the office. It's also you know ensuring that the workers are equipped to go back to work mentally healthy and feeling assured that it is safe to go back. So, these are the things that the committee is going to have to look at, and we are I just want to put a plug into. We are now looking at developing a webinar that talks about returning to work and in that webinar, we will address both kinds of things there for you. So anyway. Yes, absolutely. I think everybody is nervous about going outside you know we've been inside now for quite a while right you know we've ventured out to go to the grocery store and I've ventured out to go to a walk in the morning when there's nobody outside but the thought of going out when I you know actually have to get in my car and go to work and go into the office that presents a little bit of, you know, a challenge so I certainly do understand that, and we are going to try to address that. Yeah. In another webinar that we're going to be doing but also just for your sake, persons sake who answered the question asked the question, you need to talk to your health and safety committee that's an issue that needs to be addressed.

You know when your coworkers are working and you're not or you know we get a lot from work, not just our wage we get our social wage as well and the isolation of social isolation becomes even greater when you don't have the opportunity to connect on a daily basis who staff meetings or, or meetings through work and that kind of thing. I mean, we are offering the union is can be a lifeline for you in that as much as we are offering several webinars for this period and as I just mentioned another one around returning to work and safe practices there. So just keeping yourself on your Regional

Office email list or on the PSAC email list so that you'll be notified about these events when they're coming up so you can stay plugged into the union. And I would encourage people you know who do have coworkers who they're friendly with to maintain those contacts throughout this period of isolation, even if you're on layoff. And if you know somebody who's online having to reach out to them during this time, you know, just to see how things are going and a once a week kind of coffee. Coffee meeting over, over zoom or over bonus is, it's not that it can be a real lifeline for people.