

The amount of suffering is bad enough, but the toll on mental health and the impact on family from the stress during recovery is rarely considered. Here's how you and those you love can bounce back sooner. And here's how your EAP can help.

Workplace Injuries: Stress and Recovery

Back to Work When You're Ready Is Key

Going back to work as soon as you are able will help you avoid the pitfalls of long-term recovery. These can include depression; isolation; family conflicts; deterioration of workplace relationships; anxiety; and fear of losing job skills and, of course, income.

Your Mission: Getting Well and Back to Work

Keep appointments and follow medical instructions. Even if you are beginning to feel better, do not stop medications or begin participating in activities that can cause reinjury. Medical practitioners will help prepare you for a safe return to work through proper medication and exercise, which could include a work-hardening program.



Being determined to succeed will benefit your recovery. Studies have shown that positive attitudes about recovery aid injured workers greatly.

Recovery Roadblocks

While waiting for recovery, are you:

- Feeling depressed or "flat," with no emotion?
- Becoming very emotional?
- Becoming irritated or angered more easily?
- Taking excessive amounts of pain medication?
- Ignoring your doctor's instructions? because recovery feels hopeless?
- Experiencing conflict with those at work?
- Experiencing more conflicts at home?

Staying Positive

If your injury resulted from not being cautious or following a safety rule, be careful about mentally punishing yourself for it. It is better to commit to change and how you will avoid injury in the future.

Being off Work May Be Bad for Your Health

Studies show that employees injured and off work for six to twelve months have only a 10-20% chance of returning to work. Not working can lead to poorer physical and mental health, loss of self-worth and self-confidence, and social isolation. Anger and depression are risks you face along with boredom and apathy. Your mission is to fight these dangers, avoid the "sick role" permanently, and stay positive.

Staying Active and Chart Your Success

Get your doctor's approval for staying physically active. Keep a recovery chart so that you can see your progress. Get out of the house if at all possible. Change the scenery. Find appropriate ways to keep up with what's going on at work. Consider online courses or other training to improve your skills and abilities.

Returning to Work

You may be offered light-duty work to accommodate the state of your recovery as permitted by your health care provider. Don't resist light-duty work. Even if light-duty work is not your preferred job, getting back to work will do you more good than you realize. If you return to your regular job, do not participate in duties you once performed that have not been medically approved. Feeling guilty or yielding to peer pressure to perform unapproved duties such as heavy lifting can lead to sudden injury again. Be prepared for comments like "Come on, just help me lift this table for a second..." or "So, what's it like getting all the easy jobs?"

What the EAP Can Do

The EAP can meet with you during your recovery to offer you support and refer you to resources in your community that can aid your recovery needs. Meet with the EAP early, before you begin to notice depression, family conflicts, or struggles with those around you.