



## Working Parents Are Struggling

- They are worried about logistical challenges - How do I work and manage my children and/or on-line learning?
- They are concerned about how their performance is compared to employees without caregiving responsibility.
- They feel like they are in the crosshairs of bias against mothers - managers may not provide flexibility or empathy towards fathers. They may hold mothers back from opportunities and advancement.
- They are worried about the health of their families and especially their children. There is not a perfect solution. Everything has consequences and parents need support for the decisions they are making based on their family situation, their health, their risk tolerance, etc.
- You have an opportunity as a manager to provide support to enable the flexibility that your employees need based on what's best for their family.

Remember: Every parent is unique and their family situation is unique. What works for one employee will likely be different for another.

**\*\*If you are a parent, remember YOUR solution may not work or be possible for your employee.**

EXERCISE: Open up a dialog to learn what flexibility means to your employee and learn how you can best support them. Then reflect on the unique needs of your team and how that comes together for the whole group.

Flexibility is meant to be just that - flexible. There is not a one-size fits all solution to flexibility, however they tend to fall into these buckets.

- Keeps normal schedule, but may need flexibility on occasion
- Ability to work outside "normal" hours
  - Shifted schedule - 6-3 as opposed to 8-5 for example.
  - Work in blocks (2 hrs, break, 2-3 more, etc.)
  - Respect for blocked "non-working" time.
- Reduced work week (e.g. 4 -10 hour days)
- Temporary part-time or job share

# ADDRESSING FLEXIBILITY & CAREGIVING DISRUPTIONS



## Reflect on the needs of each member of your team!

Start by simply asking each of your employee the following questions and be an active listener.

- How are you feeling about managing your work and your role as a parent right now?
- What would be your ideal version of flexibility for the next few months to support your role as a parent?
- How can I support you to maintain the flexibility you need?
- What outside influences are you worried about (e.g. client request, last minute "fire-drills," other people outside the team that aren't understanding, etc.)?
- What is the best way to hold boundaries on when you are available/not available?
- How can we set up our communication to check in on goals, progress towards deliverables, etc.

Take notes and be thoughtful as you listen. Don't immediately dismiss ideas on how your team can be productive. If there has ever been a time to be open to trying something, this is it!

If you can not accommodate their requests right away, commit to reflecting on their needs and schedule a time to come back together to finalize a plan.

# ADDRESSING FLEXIBILITY & CAREGIVING DISRUPTIONS



## Reflect on the needs of your team!

This is a great time to regroup. After understanding each individual's needs (don't forget to check in on those without caregiving responsibility!), look at it together. What's possible based on your team's role, priorities, and goals?

How can you support individual's needs and balance that with the overall needs of the team?

What may be gaps or challenges to support the flexibility needs of your team?

What support do you need as a manager/people leader to address those gaps?

What agreements can your team make together?

What commitments can you make as their manager/people leader?

What communication tools need to be put into place to support those agreements?

# ADDRESSING FLEXIBILITY & CAREGIVING DISRUPTIONS



Remember there is no one way that your team can work flexibly. It's about what works based on the type of work you do, your goals, deliverables etc. However, it's critical to remember that working parents, especially moms, are at risk to leave any team or organization that doesn't understand their unique challenges during this unprecedented pandemic.

Questions About This Exercise? Need additional Support? Email [marybeth@wrk.360.com](mailto:marybeth@wrk.360.com)

