



## ***A colleague returns, and you do not know what to do***

*What to say? How to help? What to ask, and what NOT to ask? There are many thoughts when a colleague returns from a stress leave – it is not like after a leave due to physical illness.*

Unfortunately, you often end up saying nothing – which is about the **worst** thing you can do. The **best** is to act normally and naturally.

After a stress leave, the employee often turns up on her/his first working day very nervous and with a heavily beating heart: "Can I cope?", "How will they meet me?", "What will they say?"

## **Be natural**

Act precisely the way you did before your colleague went on a leave. Cherish confidence, and do not pass on information unless in agreement with the colleague in question.

## **Pay attention without making your colleague tell her/his story over and over again**

"Hi, how nice to see you again", "Hi, we have missed you" or similar would be so nice to hear. Be careful with: "How was it", "Are you quite well now?" etc. It may be overwhelming to have to answer these questions many times during the first period, and your colleague may still be a little vulnerable. Invite her/him to lunch and talk about everyday things. A lunch without work talk is a real lunch break and is good for your cooperation.

Smile and laughter is wonderful and energising.

## **Fully recovered**

Remember: Even if your colleague looks well, it does not mean that she/he is fully recovered. There may be relapses – mostly because your colleague often feels sorry to have been on a leave, because she/he feels that the leave has affected you and that she/he has failed. This is why a person with stress often pushes her-/himself too hard and too quickly.

## **Energising micro breaks**

The best help you can give your colleague is to remind her/him about micro breaks and about taking care of her-/himself. And by the way, this is something we should all do. Help create a culture where micro breaks are allowed – with room either for being social or for withdrawing.

## **You are not responsible – use your leader**

Take care of your colleague but remember that your leader is responsible. Stress occurs for many different reasons, and it is often very hard to do something as a third party. The person who is hit by stress often tries to hide and maybe deny it.

If you notice any signs of relapse then go to your leader and seek help that way.