

Reopening in Ontario: Some Considerations

By: Julian Toy H.S.C. Substance Abuse Professional

Member of *The Ontario Association of Mental Health Professionals*

I went to work this morning and felt immensely relieved I didn't need to wear a mask. I've been looking forward to this for years.

It's fogged my glasses, irritated my face and annoyed me when I had to go back to the car because I forgot it.

Even though I was relieved, it felt strange not to have it on. I briefly considered wearing it because I felt incomplete without it. For me these thoughts and feelings lasted most of the day.

I noticed many of my co-workers still wore their masks and asked some why. Some had children at home and wanted to protect them, some thought it was too soon to be rid of them and others just felt uncomfortable without them. Still others had them on their ears but not covering their faces, force of habit I'm guessing.

Over the last two years the world has become accustomed to wearing masks everywhere. While some like me are happy to throw them away, others still take comfort from wearing them for many reasons.

It's important to recognize that any major changes can cause stress and anxiety. And this can affect people in different ways.

People who still take comfort from wearing masks could get angry at those who take them off because they feel endangered by them. Those who threw them away today may view people who are wearing masks as ridiculous or paranoid. Either of these viewpoints could result in bad feelings, argument and conflict.

Avoiding this kind of conflict is simple: do what's good for you personally and don't try to make others change their viewpoint.

Regardless of your mask decision it's important to recognize that we all must deal with society "going back to normal" in our own way. This process takes longer for some people than others.

In my workplace, workers were told about the expiry of the mask mandate but encouraged them to follow their own conscience in deciding what to do. This is the best approach to take on the jobsite.

Employers could also email workers or put up signage that recognizes the stress they could be under with contact information on supports available.

Most of us want to return to normal. It will make it easier if we're kind to each other and let everyone go at the pace that is comfortable for them.

If you have questions, need training or literature please contact Julian directly:

Direct Line: 905-866-7301

E-Mail: juliantoy@myaddictionexperts.com

Web: www.myaddictionexperts.com

Services: Fit for Duty/Drug and Alcohol policy development, Fit for Duty/Drug and Alcohol training, Employee Substance Abuse Assessments.

Preferred provider of Fit for Duty/Drug and Alcohol training Eastern Construction Ltd.