



COVID-19 Working from Home Best Practices

Work From Home Tips to Support Employee Motivation, Productivity & Health

Working remotely is not a new concept, but it may be new for some. As companies respond to COVID-19 with alternative work arrangements, many employees are having to work from home on short notice and with little preparation.

People around the world continue to discover the joys and challenges of working from home. The first few days may be amazing: working in your comfy clothes, eating your favorite foods, even taking a little nap when you're tired. But after a week, many people report lower productivity, loneliness, back pain, and even weight gain.

How can you stay healthy and productive when working from home?

These tips are designed to help you and your employees avoid the many pitfalls reported with remote working.

Stick to your daily work routine while you are working at home.

Keep your sleep schedule on track. It could be tempting to stay up later binge-watching your favorite show, but the impact of changing your sleep schedule has numerous implications. When your sleep schedule gets off track it's harder for you to get out of bed in the morning, especially when you don't have to go into the office. Being tired throughout the day can make working harder and less productive, which could result in longer hours to accomplish what you need to. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/17/smarter-living/work-from-home-schedule.html>

Get dressed for the day.

It mentally and physically prepares you for the tempo of work and that surprise meeting where you are asked to turn on your video camera.

Lunchtime = disconnect time.

Take your full lunch break without work distractions. Disconnecting during breaks and before and after work hours will help you maintain some semblance of a work schedule.

Build in breaks in your schedule.

It's helpful to block off time on your calendar so people are aware of the times you aren't available and, more importantly, so you have reminders when to take that break. That is also your cue on when to go into the kitchen. Grazing all day or emotional eating can be very tempting while working at home. Diligence around break-time and only visiting your kitchen then is very helpful for weight-management.

Get outside.

When at all possible, don't forget to get outside in nature during these breaks. Studies continue to report the significant benefits of being out in nature on your mental and physical well-being.

Build in transition time before and after work.

To help you transition between work and personal when you may not leave your home. Schedule a few things each day before work to give yourself time to wake up, like walking the dog, exercising or making coffee. Similarly, having a ritual to end the day (like turning off your computer, leaving your office and locking your office doors) can help you avoid working late.

Track your time.

And after a couple days, if you feel you're not as productive or don't know where the time goes, consider using time-tracking technology like tracking app like Toggl, which lets you manually track tasks, or RescueTime., which creates automated reports of the websites you visit.

Limit the amount of news you watch.

Watching too much news and/or TV can lead to anxiety, depression and increased stress according to the American Psychological Association. Remember to limit your screen time, just like we reinforce with our children. Always monitoring breaking news is breaking us, right now. The key is to remember: no news is good news, and will keep you focused and productive.

Create an official - separate - homeworkspace.

It is important to have space that you can physically and mental enter and leave each day (versus heading to that comfy couch or chair you hang-out in). Officially signaling "work" to your brain through a designated workspace helps "turn on" your higher brain, the part of your brain responsible for learning, executive functioning, and productivity.

Ensure that it's a comfortable space (the chair you are using, the laptop support desk, etc.) with good lighting, as that is key to keeping you in a productive, healthy mental state.

Face-to-face meetings are still ok.

If you gain energy and excitement from being in the office, and find yourself missing that connection, take the initiative to schedule collaboration calls and use the camera on your phone or computer to hold "face-to-face meetings."

Build in stress management exercises.

Standing up regularly, looking outside at nature, or taking a couple deep breathes before reading that next email gives your brain a nice mental health break during the day. Also, consider using an app to lead you through a two or three-minute brain break.

Manage email time and define "urgent."

When working from home every email can seem like an urgent email, to the point where you don't get any work done except managing your inbox. Set guidelines with your team and manager to establish an urgent protocol to handle those situations that do require a more immediate response.

Over communicate.

Go above and beyond to communicate progress on critical projects and key deadlines (out-of-sight can often fuel assumptions that you're not working on it). Updates as FYIs are great at relieving team stress. Tools like Slack and Microsoft Teams can easily be put into place to communicate. Microsoft Teams has seen a 500 percent increase in usage as a result of the coronavirus outbreak.

Keep in mind that for most, working from home is temporary. We all react to change differently, and while working from home can be beneficial for some, it's more stressful for others. In either case, remaining flexible and empathetic – and reminding employees that this too shall pass – will be helpful when it's time to head back to the office.

Sources and more information:

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