Working from home during COVID-19

Working from home has its pros and cons

While we tackle COVID-19 on a global scale, having the ability to work from home is extremely helpful. But it can also present some challenges. Distractions or not having the resources we need means we aren't as productive as we could be. Not having a proper workstation or being socially isolated can also pose challenges. Here are some tips to help you feel more productive and engaged while working from home, while also keeping you well physically and mentally.

1. Put on pants

While it's nice to be comfortable, it's also important to get into the right headspace for work. Simple things like making your bed and getting dressed can help create the distinction from being in "home-mode" to "work-mode".

2. Set a routine

Routines help anchor us. When your normal routine is out of whack, it can be hard to get into the groove. Create a work-from-home routine by establishing a designated work area and scheduling your day, so you know when you are going to start and finish. Maybe it's making a morning coffee, laying out your notepad or having a pre-work walk around the block to start your workday.

3. Work from home goals

Some people struggle with motivation when working from home. To help, spend 10 minutes at the start of the day planning. Rather than a simple to-do list, prioritise tasks so your work has the most meaningful impact. When you have a sense of purpose to your day, your energy picks up, and you feel more creative, engaged and committed to your work.

Remember to cut yourself some slack during this time. You'll have good days and not-so-good days, productive days and not-so-productive days. It's important to remember that this is an unprecedented global event. We're all just doing our best and it's just as important to take care of yourself and your family.

Try not to do work in bed, on the floor or on a couch. When you're hunched over your computer, you're not only risking a back injury. When your chest drops, so do your energy levels as your breathing is restricted, making you fatigue more easily.

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4. Bursts of work and bursts of recovery

Energy levels and engagement fluctuate throughout the day. But productivity isn't necessarily about working longer. Research shows people perform better when they can intersperse focused work with dedicated recovery. So, mix up your workday with regular breaks and use timeboxing to help you focus when you are working. Also, don't extend your workday – if you give yourself time to recover, you'll be more productive the next day.

Timeboxing is assigning a fixed period of time to a task, scheduling it and sticking to it. For best results, your work time should be no more that 90-120 minutes before you take a break.

5. Move your Mood

When people work from home, they tend not to move much. Sometimes, movement is limited to walking between the jug, the kitchen table and the loo. The trouble is, the longer you sit the more likely your mood and energy levels will plummet. Instead, keep your energy levels high by making regular movement a priority. Go for a walk around the block or break up your workday with workouts in your lounge.

6. Stay Connected

Working from home can be lonely so it's important to remain connected. Build ways to connect with your workmates throughout the workday. It might be morning standup meetings or end-of-day wrap-ups, online or on conference calls. Schedule time to connect on purpose. When you would normally stop work to chat with workmates, do the same via phone or video call. Remember, we're all in this together. Even if you're enjoying the peace and quiet, others in your team may be living alone and appreciate a call.

7. Leave work with a clear head

A lot of people struggle at the end of the day to switch off from work. The best way to leave work with a clear head is to feel that you've done a good day's work. So, at the end of your day, write down the progress you've made and acknowledge all you've achieved.

8. Deliberately detach from work

The best way to detach from work when you're taking a break or finishing up for the day is to do something completely unrelated to work. If you've been sitting at a computer, this might mean getting up and exercising, playing with your kids, chopping firewood or watering your garden. For many of us, working from home is an opportunity to spend more time with our family or to take some downtime from our normal commute. Why not embrace it?

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