

## **WORKING FROM HOME: How to stay motivated and on track**

If you've never worked from home before, it can be a huge shock to your system. Not only do you *not* have the social contact with your colleagues, in the current situation you'll be either with your family or alone – all the time. Emotionally we associate our home space with relaxation, not work, and this change can cause great discomfort in many people. If you have a young family, you're suddenly on call 24/7.

Here are a several things you can do to make working from home as easy as possible:

### **1. Bring routine into your day**

- Get up at a similar time that you would if you were going to the office
- Get dressed in smart-casual clothing to give you the feeling of being ready for work (pyjamas and casual clothes will have a negative impact on your work)
- If you're with your family, sit down with them and work out a timetable for everyone. Be realistic. You are not going to be able to sit at a desk for eight hours if you have small children around you wanting your attention. If necessary split your day up into shorter chunks (30 or 45-minutes for each task)
- Use a time tracker – online or offline – to plan your tasks for the day and include coffee and lunch breaks. Setting an alarm can be a useful reminder for you to take a break
- Towards the end of the day, review what you've achieved and plan your next work day. This will help you to create a clean break in your day between work and private time
- Decide what time your work day will finish and set an alarm on your 'phone or clock to make sure you shut down your laptop/computer when the alarm goes off
- Share out household tasks if you can – build your home team

### **2. Create some clear space to work**

- Not everyone has a home office but it's important to have a dedicated space from where you can work (the same applies for home schooling)
- Is there somewhere you can block off with some plants or other items to create a screen? Having piles of washing, children's toys or other non-work items in view will irritate your concentration. Keep your space as neutral as possible
- Make sure that you have sufficient light to work with. If it's not possible for you to be close to natural light, make sure you have a desk lamp so that you're not straining your eyes

- Keep an extension lead close by to charge any equipment you're using so that you don't have to keep getting up unnecessarily from your work space.
- If you enjoy having a snack whilst you're working, keep something close to hand (again so that you're not getting up unnecessarily)
- You may find that the chairs you have at home are uncomfortable if you have to sit on them for anything length of time (especially if you're used to your ergonomic furniture at the office). Consider investing in a chair suitable to your needs (you don't have to spend a huge amount of money)

### 3. Limit Feelings of Isolation

Human beings are not designed to live in isolation, and even if there are other people in the household, not being at the office with your colleagues or being able to spend time with your friends can leave you feeling alone and isolated.

- Find an online community and join groups on Facebook, LinkedIn or other social media, or create your own online social group with your work colleagues and friends
- Limit the amount of time that you watch/read the news because it will bring your energy down. If you absolutely want to, decide to watch a news summary once a day and stick to it
- Use the time that you would have spent commuting doing something for *yourself* – or maybe start doing that one activity that you've been telling yourself you never have time for – it could be a few minutes of meditation or focused breathing, maybe some exercise, or maybe even a virtual coffee with someone close. You *need* private time.
- Set up a regular video call with your friends and colleagues (one easy to use platform is Zoom). Messaging and emails are good for passing information, but face to face conversations will help everyone to feel connected
- Plan some FUN activities for the evenings or weekends. Get creative using video on your 'phone or laptop. Join an online yoga class, arrange an online party with friends and take it in turns to play your favourite music, hold a baking class and show others how to make your favourite cake, form an online choir, set up online play dates for your children – the possibilities are endless (see a list of websites at the end of this information)

### 4. Stay Focused

- If you have a home office, shut the door
- Put up a *do not disturb* sign on a plant or whatever you're using to screen your work space, a plant, a pile of books ...



- Have regular meetings with your family to make sure that everyone knows what everyone else is doing
- Turn your 'phone to silent or vibrate when you're working because there will likely be people wanting to just have a chat (let others know when they can call you)
- Keep your work space tidy and make sure everything is shut down when you finish for the day (don't be tempted to re-open your laptop *just in case*)
- Don't work for more than 45-minutes without taking a break – you are already dealing with enough change and there's no point in exhausting yourself
- Managing upwards: you're already working in a different environment with a huge amount of uncertainty about how long this situation will continue. Long online meetings are not helpful to anyone. Encourage those you work to send information over email, and then meet online to take decisions
- To function properly, your brain needs water, oxygen and protein (and time to sort things out whilst you're asleep). Keep a large jug or bottle of water close to where you're sitting, and if possible spend a few minutes outside during your breaks
- If you have small children and you're finding it impossible to work, speak to your supervisor or HR contact and find out what your options are in this exceptional time.

## 5. Useful resources - IF YOU HAVE OTHER SUGGESTIONS PLEASE SHARE THEM!

<https://zoom.us/> - online video meeting (free for up to 100 people for up to 30 minutes)

<https://clickup.com/> - online project/time management

<https://www.headspace.com> – online meditation

### Some suggestions from others:

[www.skypeascientist.com/for-families.html](http://www.skypeascientist.com/for-families.html) - let your children learn from a scientist online

<https://www.grokker.com/> - videos with workouts, also on wellness and health