

## TIPS FOR A MENTALLY HEALTHY REMOTE WORKPLACE

Working from home sounds like a luxury, but it comes with a number of challenges. What if you have connectivity issues with co-workers? What if you need something from your office that you don't have access to? What if you are bombarded with other in-home distractions like pets, family members and electronics?

Getting your work done is important for businesses but staying healthy (mentally and physically) is just as crucial for at-home workers. It's all about creating boundaries between work and personal life, and that can be a difficult adjustment. Here are some tips for telecommuting, working from home, self-isolating or even self-quarantining—no matter your reasoning.

### *1. Maintain Regular Hours*

Set a schedule and stick to it. Working designated hours, and then stopping when those hours are up, will give your brain time to work and time to rest. While working remotely does mean that there is added flexibility with your personal life schedule, it's best to stick to a schedule where you can be productive, get your work done and call it a day when work hours are up.

### *2. Create a Morning Routine*

Humans are creatures of habit—and that's partly because routine helps us mentally and physically prepare for things. Whether it's having a cup of coffee every morning, doing some morning stretches or taking your dog on a walk, creating a morning routine can greatly help you get ready for the workday at home.

It's also important to think about other controls, too. Working in your pyjamas sound good but research suggests that we can fall in to bedtime routines and struggle to get motivated if you remain in night wear. Do you feel refreshed working out in the morning or the evening? Get up, dress-up and show up. This will not only help with your self-esteem, productivity and purpose, but will also assist if an unexpected video conference was to take place!

### *3. Schedule Breaks*

Just like any working environment, giving yourself breaks is incredibly important to let your brain and body relax. Take a 15-minute walk, go make some lunch or catch up with a loved one on the phone—whatever you do, though, do not work yourself to the bone without letting yourself take a break away from screens, meetings and work. Studies have shown that breaks can actually significantly improve productivity levels and a person's ability to focus.

#### *4. Leave Home*

You don't have to eat out every day, but it is important to leave your home and give yourself a new space to breathe, work or exercise. This is true for in-office workers too: leave the building at least once a day. Your body needs to move, and fresh air and new scenery do your mind a lot of good.

In the circumstances around COVID-19, it is still important you get out and take a break from your routine workspace, while still practicing good social distancing.

Isolation is a measure for a person who is infected with COVID-19, has recently travelled back in to Australia or has been in close contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19. In these circumstances, you should not go outside and breach isolation. You can still keep active inside the home or backyard.

#### *5. Socialise with Colleagues*

If you are working from home, socialising is important to maintain your sense of connection, purpose and focus. This can be done using a multitude of different video or chat apps, phone calls or emails. Don't forget in difficult times, humour is welcome! Share a meme and a laugh.

Loneliness, disconnection and isolation are common problems in remote work life. Take advantage of opportunities to meet people, talk about common interests and have remote retreats. Making sure you nurture relationships is crucial to mental health—especially when working remotely.