

The effects of working from home on mental health and family life



During this time, many people will be working from home which can make it difficult to maintain a balanced lifestyle. Ensuring you take time to prioritise your mental health is critical while working from home.

Outlined below are some simple tips to assist you in ensuring you have a productive workday while managing quality family time:

1. Stick to your work routine

By undertaking our 'usual' work routines, we use muscle memory and the habits we have created to mentally and physically prepare us for the workday ahead. If you get up, shower, get dressed, have coffee, watch the news etc before you leave for work, then try to stick to this. If you have a to-do list, stick to it as much as you can. At the end of the day you will feel much better if you can identify things you have accomplished, even though the day may have felt less than productive. If you usually finish work at a certain time, stick to this as much as you can.

2. Get up, dress up, show up

Studies have shown that professional attire, a nice hairdo and make-up (for the ladies) can empower our self-care and self-image and in turn boost our confidence. While it seems appealing to lounge around in our PJ's and slippers, wearing night clothes also creates a habit. When we get ready for bed and put nightwear on, it is a part of routine to wind down and relax for sleep, and that won't lead to an overly productive day. Aside from this, being dressed will keep you prepared if you happen to have a last-minute video call!

3. Have a dedicated work area

By having a designated area in the house for work, it makes it much simpler to switch off at the end of the day. If you allow your work to invade your comfy and safe spaces, you will find it hard to compartmentalize work and home life. Ensure your work area is safe. It is just as important to know who you report incidents to, who is your safety representative and how to manage hazards in the home. It is no different to the office.

4. Take a break

Just as it would be at the office, it is important to take a break when working from home. Go for a walk and get some fresh air, make a coffee, or simply put a load of washing on. You can even use your laundry loads as timers for your breaks! If you are looking after children and working from home at the same time, it would be worth being open with your manager to establish a work plan that fits in with your caring requirements. It may not look exactly like a normal workday, but will ensure you can spend quality time with your children and look after their needs without feeling pressured by work deadlines.

5. Have a support network

It is very easy to become isolated when working from home. Your mind can play tricks on you when you ruminate on anxious thoughts. What might be a very innocent and casual email could be completely misinterpreted, because email has no tone or gestures to demonstrate intent. Talking to someone regularly can have huge benefits. This person may be a friend, a colleague, or a professional such as a psychologist or counsellor. Stay connected. Remember, if you are feeling it, there is a good chance others are too, so reach out and strategise, we are all in this together. Don't be too hard on yourself, it is okay to not be at your most productive during a global pandemic!