



10 STRATEGIES FOR WORKING FROM HOME SUCCESSFULLY



With the spread of the coronavirus, increase demand for social distancing and the need for employees to work from home raises the issue around how to do it successfully as millions of people around the world are likely to be working from home for the first time this week. For some this challenge is even greater with young children at home. Hopefully the one consolation will be a lower probability of having workmen and their power tools put a hole in your head while you are trying to work.

Working from home can be more difficult than you think and trying to keep your spirits up during this difficult time can be even more difficult. So here are some strategies on how to do this successfully.

1. GET OUT OF YOUR PJ'S

Get up, shower, shave, brush your teeth and get dressed into something more formal than your gym pants. Getting ready for work will not only improve your state of mind, it will psychologically prepare you to start work. Don't lie in bed working on your computer. If you are likely to engage with clients via video call ensure you look formal, again this sets the tone for how you feel. The nature of your job will dictate how formal you need to dress but get dressed.



2. SET A ROUTINE AND GET STARTED EARLY

Working from home can easily blur the line between pillow time and sitting in front of your computer. Set the alarm. Be clear about your routine, start the day you would normally start office hours and finish around the same time. The first week will be a challenge but thereafter it will hopefully get easier.

3. DEDICATED SPACE



Set aside a dedicated workspace if possible. Get the most comfortable chair and desk. This will also help you get in the right frame of mind. Don't lie in bed trying to work or sit on a couch, it doesn't work. Instead sit at the kitchen table if you don't have a dedicated space. If you are going to engage in video calls with clients or colleagues make sure you can lock the door from the inside to avoid interruptions. Not always easy when you have younger children around. If you are working from a dedicated space in your bedroom make sure the video camera is not aimed at your unmade bed. Make the bed to also lift your mood.

4. STRUCTURE YOUR DAY: USE YOUR CALENDER

When working from home it is easy to get distracted. Use your calendar to structure and segment your day to ensure you stay on track and not get distracted by reading news headlines. You should hopefully have more time as you don't have endless meetings to attend. Where possible if you are going to schedule video calls or telecons, instead of scheduling a full hour make them 30 mins. Having a structure will help keep you focused and productive. As much as you may hate to do list, it is also a great way to get the day started. Be clear about what needs doing and fry the biggest frog first.

Nobody sprints through their work from morning to evening. Your motivation will naturally ebb and flow throughout the day. When you're working from home, however, it's all the more important to know when those ebbs and flows will take place and plan your schedule around it. Some of us are morning people, some are night owls.

5. SOCIAL MEDIA & WHATSAPP



Make it really hard to get distracted by social media as this can be detrimental to working from home. Have a schedule for when you are going to check social media. Remove social media from your browser shortcuts and log out of every account to avoid notifications distracting you. Agree with colleagues on a medium of communication. Will it be WhatsApp, email or phone. Only check WhatsApp at set times. Ask colleagues to call you if it is urgent. The risk with WhatsApp is all the other distractions from friends and family.

6. SPEAK TO PEOPLE

Working from home can be lonely so pick up the phone and speak to people. Office environments are social places, being at home can be hard if you spend the whole day without speaking to anyone which can be isolating and bad for your mental state. Make sure you don't lose the social connection, even if it is just to check up on a colleague or a friend. Guard against sitting on the phone with your mom for hours as an excuse.

7. AGREE DELIVERABLES

Agree clear deliverables with your team and boss. Make daily commitments on what will be delivered by when. Agree the frequency of updates to team and your team. Some people try to overcompensate because they are anxious working from home to ensure people know what they are working on or even just working. Agree how you will report back during this period.

8. CHILDREN

Have a conversation with children to explain the situation. Agree a schedule with your children, if you have help around or they are old enough. If you have younger children at home who requires care, agree with a partner or carer on how you are going to manage the schedule between working and engaging with your children. Accept that this will not have a perfect outcome. With children around our day may start much earlier to get work done or end later to get work done when they are asleep. Become creative around keeping them busy. Schedule calls around their nap time to keep the noise down.



Don't snub the idea of virtual babysitting. Grandparents may not be allowed to visit but they can certainly engage in a skype or zoom call with the little ones. Have grandma read them a story online.

For older kids put up a sign to show when you are on a video call. Make lunch boxes the night before. Mothers may be feeling underlying resentment about being the default one to take care of the baby. Talk to your partner before it happens.

9. TAKE REGULAR BREAKS

Short breaks throughout the day are more beneficial than less frequent longer breaks. But don't switch on the TV. Getting outside is also important for your mental health, maintain a safe social distance, stretch and do yoga, go for a swim after work or run on the treadmill. The key is to ensure maintaining a safe social distance from others if you are not self-isolating. The Pomodoro Technique: Using the egg timer method, where you set your egg timer to 25 minutes and get a chunk of work done and then I break for 5 minutes is a great tool. If you don't take a break your productivity levels will suffer.

The Pomodoro Technique Core Process



10. MANAGE YOUR STRESS LEVELS

Avoid spending too much time reading news sites. It is important to stay informed but avoid panicking yourself into oblivion with any updates around the coronavirus numbers and potential fake news. Practice good hygiene and social distancing. If you fall ill, have a process in place to hand over work. The NICD hotline to call if you experience coronavirus symptoms: **0800 029 999**. Stay safe and healthy.

Remember the symptoms are:

- Shortness of breath
- Fever
- cough

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