

Working from Home: How to Stay Productive and Connected



Technology has changed the way we work.

Thanks to productivity and communication tools like email, video conferencing, collaboration software, social tools, content sharing and of course, the Cloud, remote workers can actively engage and stay connected with their colleagues as never before – even when not working side-by-side in an office.

This is especially important in the wake of the COVID-19 outbreak. Companies that can continue operations with their employees working from home are jumping at the opportunity to protect the safety and wellbeing of their workforce – and the public at large. But, working from home is not as easy as it may appear – it's not a skill

that comes naturally to many. In normal remote working circumstances, daily distractions from children, pets, and household chores, can make working from home difficult. Couple that with social isolation, digital collaboration challenges, sluggish residential network bandwidth and a totally new physical work environment, productivity can seem downright impossible. The current health crisis brought on by COVID-19 only exacerbates these challenges. But with the right guidance and support, you can be both engaged and productive working remotely. Read on for tips to help you stay on-task and connected when you can't be in the office.



Follow a structured daily routine

Follow your normal morning routine and “arrive” to work on time. It’s important to take your usual breaks throughout the day and to put your work away when the business day is over. You’ll reduce distractions and stress by sticking to a schedule that closely mirrors an in-office routine. Try to start your day with a 10-minute walk, stretch or daily meditation

Define your workspace

Set up a dedicated workspace in your home to reduce distractions and maintain work-life balance. You may have an actual home office or perhaps you are carving out space at the kitchen table, in a corner of your living room or down in your basement. Wherever your space is, keep that area tidy and clean. Check the strength of your WiFi or broadband. How is your lighting? Try

to find areas with natural light and low noise and be mindful of your surrounding for virtual meetings - you don’t want your laundry drying in the background! Your bed may look like a tempting office space, but resist the urge work where you sleep as the quality of both (not to mention your posture), will suffer.

Equipment

Consult with IT or HR to understand what equipment, cables, software or hardware you will need to work from home, such as a laptop, monitor, email and VPN access, security tokens, permission to access necessary files.

Dress the part

A part of maintaining your normal morning routine means being presentable. Rather than sitting at your desk in your pajamas, dress as if you are going into work. Selecting clothing that

is appropriate for the office keeps you connected to your work and helps create boundaries between time spent working and time spent relaxing at home.

Hold yourself accountable

Create a task list when you start your day to keep you focused and to prioritize the things you need to get done. Refer to your list throughout the day and cross off items as you complete them. It may help to talk through your to-do list or share your goals for the day with your supervisor or a colleague over video chat when you start the day.

Communication is key

When used correctly, technology can help us to collaborate and stay connected. Use the communication tools you have at hand (email, online collaboration tools, and your wellbeing platform) to stay connected and

share regular updates. When you attend video conferences, enable video and show your smiling face. This demonstrates you are present and engaged and creates more natural conversation with your colleagues. Some video conferencing tools even allow you to customize your background, so have some fun! As you consider which tools can help you be most productive, remember that a simple phone call may be the best - and fastest - way to communicate and get the information you need.

Make time to socialize

Don't underestimate the importance of chatting with your coworkers.

Research shows even small increases in social bonds can boost employee productivity. Try out a walking meeting or share healthy lunch recipes with your team to keep it fun. Make sure you build in those moments for meaningful exchanges on a daily basis. Launching healthy habit challenges or step-offs with your coworkers is a great way to maintain connection in a fun way.

Schedule time for breaks

Everyone responds to working from home differently. Some people will naturally overwork themselves, while others will struggle to stay on task throughout the day. This is why scheduling breaks is so important for

your physical and mental health. Set a regular reminder on your phone or use your wellbeing platform to hold yourself accountable in practicing all of your daily healthy habits. Take a walk outside, meditate, listen to your favorite podcast.

Unplug at the end of the day

Set a time to leave the office and maintain that routine each day. Close your laptop, turn off your computer or other devices, and step away from your workspace when the day is over. Work-life balance is important to staying productive, reducing burnout, and returning to work refreshed and ready to tackle another day.



COVID-19 Disruptions: We're All In This Together

For parents and caregivers, COVID-19 adds a whole new dimension of disruption and anxiety. With most schools, colleges and universities not likely to be back in session before May, if at all, parents and caregivers are feeling overwhelmed, exhausted and mentally spent. They're working from home and now jockeying with spouses, partners and kids for a quiet workspace where they can be productive. Then, they must figure out how to divide their attention and energy between taking care of their families

and their work. With social distancing recommendations and shelter-in-place mandates, playdates and daycare are no longer options. High school and college kids don't need a 24/7 babysitter, but they do need attention, especially now. They, too, are facing uncertainty and disruption on a scale that they've never experienced before. This is unsettling for everyone.

We must remember that we are all in this together and we are all impacted. And, we all have a responsibility to safeguard public health. That will require us to

one-another, especially co-workers who have caregiving responsibilities, through proactive empathy and patience. Ask coworkers how they are feeling - if you are able to help, offer to do so. Employers should consider accommodating flexible working hours so that employees can better balance their work/life responsibilities. In addition to actively promoting EAP programs available to employees, explore benefits that may relieve the burden on parents and caregivers:



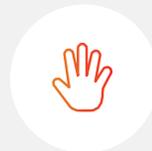
Coaching services and support to help relieve stress and anxiety



Digital wellbeing programs that focus on improving sleep quality, mental health resilience and mindfulness



Financial wellbeing education and programs



Back-up care services



Meal preparation and delivery services