

In the midst of the new coronavirus pandemic, many companies are implementing voluntary or mandatory work-from-home policies. That means lots of us are dealing with an unusual challenge: working from home for the first time, full-time.

Even if you've done it before, working from home because of coronavirus might feel like a whole new world: It's probably sudden. It might be for an extended period of time rather than a day here and there (and you're not at all sure how long it'll last). Your whole company is involved, and you can't necessarily socialise in person outside of work.

For some, the opportunity to work from home is exciting, not having to commute or have your boss standing over your shoulder. Others could feel intimidated especially those who have children staying home from school, because of the distractions or unfamiliarity of working remotely. With the right mindset however, working from home is possible.

These tips will help you make sure that you're successful, both at getting your work done and at maintaining your mental well-being:

### **Get Dressed**

It might seem simple, but it is crucial. It may be tempting to stay in your pyjamas all day, but it can result in you being slower to start things and less productive overall. You don't need to dress as formal as you normally would, but that act of changing clothes give you a signal that its time to get things done. It helps with confidence and draws the line between working and being at home. It helps maintain a routine when you are feeling cut off from your normal life and the real world. Waking up and having a shower, brushing your hair and doing what you normally would do helps you feel like you are taking care of yourself.

### **Designate a Workspace or Home Office**

The challenge here is trying to keep your work and home lives separate as it can easily become blurry when you are working from home. If you aren't able to fully disconnect from work your productivity for work will be affected and your home life can suffer as well.

The separation between work and home is normally physical so you want to try and recreate this as much as possible with your home workspace. It doesn't have to be a separate room, but it should feel as separate from the rest of your home as possible.

Try to make your space comfortable with a good chair and natural lighting. If you don't usually spend a lot of time outdoors, losing your commute to work can start to weight on you and it will be worse if you aren't exposing yourself to any natural light.

Entering your workspace is a signal to turn 'on' at the beginning of the day and leaving it will help you turn 'off' at the end of the day and disengage.

### **Keep Clearly Defined Working Hours**

You need to be clear about when you are working and when you are not. You will get the best work done if you stick with your regular hours if possible and being on the same schedule as your co-worker's makes everything a lot easier.

You are in charge of your environment and you need to treat yourself like an employee. If you find yourself extending your work hours because you haven't got anything else to do of an evening, remind yourself to put work away, recharge and start the next day with a fresh mind.

Communicate with others in your home in order to establish boundaries so you can minimise distractions during the workday and then you can disconnect the give the people you care about your full attention at the end of the day. This allows you to be more present in your home life.

### **Minimise Distractions**

Distraction is one of the biggest challenges that people working from home face, especially ones who aren't used to it. Its difficult as your home is right in front of you and whatever you normally think of on the way home from work to do it now with you. Its normal to become distracted however you need to be wary of how much you let yourself be distracted.

You probably normally take breaks throughout the day at the office which is needed at home too but try not to use this as an opportunity to clean out a cupboard or anything else that takes a lot of sustained focus. This is a time for you to take a break and prepare yourself to do more work in a more energised frame of mind.

At the moment the biggest distraction we have is the news and checking on the COVID-19 updates is going to be forefront in your mind. It is good to stay informed but don't put yourself in an anxious state by becoming immersed in it.

Let's accept that some distractions can be prevented, and some cannot and what we want is for them not to take over your day. You are dealing with things like the doorbell, deliveries, the washing, the kids, the television, your partner and social media. If your children are coming into the room while you are working or on a phone or video call let them say hi. This may not be acceptable in normal circumstances but at this time you have a good reason for your children to be at home. Explain to your children as much as possible what your working time means but children will be children and we need understanding in times like this for everyone.

### **Communicate**

It's normal for there to be some bumps in the road when you suddenly go remote. Communication here is the key. Come up with a plan that lays out the expectations from all sides as to how often you should check in and how you will be communication with each other concerning work. The plan is likely to change along the way and that is okay to change the plan if problems arise in such a new situation. Reach out to the same people you normally would turn to for help even when not in the same building as them.

Try not to only stick to text-based or email communication, especially if you would normally have spoken to that co-worker while at the office. Checking in via phone or video chat will cut down on miscommunication and break up some of the social isolation that can come from working from home.

### **Still Socialise**

When you are suddenly working from home you are cut off from a lot of casual social interactions you used to have throughout the day that would break up the monotony of work. People need to be around others and have small talk and unexpected circumstances that keep your days feeling unique. From home you don't have

this so talking to your co-workers through the day via text, email, calls, zoom or however your company communicates is vital. If you normally ask your co-workers about their weekend, continue to do this. These types of interactions go a long way.

Set aside a time to chat one-on-one with a co-worker. Set up a time to chat while you have lunch and step away from your work. These breaks are vital even if you are not leaving your home. Schedule morning calls or video conferences to make space for the usually getting into work small talk and carve out time for other check-ins throughout the day. Don't just chat about a project or a TV show you like, really check in. A lot of us are feeling anxious and uncertain right now and being suddenly isolated at home can amplify these feelings. Don't hesitate to reach out and ask a co-worker how they are really doing. When the world is freaking out it is more important than ever that we connect and take care of each other.

### **Get Some Exercise**

Try to get exercise during this time and fresh air if you can find it. If you are use to a daily commute or office environment you may be use to a little walking or cycling so where possible try to put this into your daily routine.

### **Think Like an Entrepreneur**

As we are going through pandemic and seeing how it is affecting our economy it is up to us to look at how we add value to our organisation and teams.

Think about ways you can find solutions to help your company stay above water and rally together to make sure the business survives.

Have an entrepreneurial mindset within your career and think about how you would add value and how you would help the company if your job was on the line and how you would approach each problem.

The current pandemic calls for a more than 'thinking outside of the box' and needs us to throw away the box.