

TOP 5 TIPS

TO WORKING FROM HOME SUCCESSFULLY

As we strive to follow government guidance on social distancing, for those of us working from home or 'WFH' has quickly become the 'new normal'.

While temporarily leaving the relative comfort of the office behind for our own living rooms, bedrooms and even garden sheds in some cases, it is vital that we still look after ourselves as if our colleagues still physically surrounded us.

In the first of a series of communications around wellbeing at work, we have collated 5 top tips to help you stay healthy, productive and positive as you make the transition to working from home:

1 STICK TO A ROUTINE

For many people, working from home successfully requires a routine. In these circumstances, it may be useful to try sticking to your existing routine, getting up at the same time or clocking off at the same time to keep a certain level of normality.

Also, think about what helps you get into 'work mode'. It may be tempting to stay in your pyjamas, and there are many amusing tales about home workers doing this, but research proves that home workers who dress smart casual are able to get into 'work mode' far easier than those who do not.

It is also important not to neglect the part of your daily routine you might have spent commuting to and from work. Consider 'protecting your commute' - using the time you would have spent travelling to do something for you. This could be doing exercise, taking a walk outside or reading a book. Small switches to your regular routine can help maintain the distinction between work and home life.

2 CREATE YOUR NEW 'OFFICE'

Leaving your office desk behind requires that you find a comfortable and productive place to work in your home.

Wherever you choose, ensure you have a comfortable place to sit, good natural or artificial lighting, as well as access to power and Wi-Fi.

Where possible, don't work in your bedroom and particularly, in your bed! This can ruin your quality of sleep and make it difficult to switch off at the end of the day.

Working from your bed is also unlikely to be good for your posture, and it's important to set up your work space optimally in order to protect your back and keep your body healthy. Quick tips include making sure your screen is level with your eyes so you are not straining and sitting upright in a supportive chair.

While space might be limited, and even contested among others in your household, creating your own working space, even if at the end of a kitchen table can help you WFH more optimally.

TAKE REGULAR BREAKS 3

When WFH, away from the office distractions, it can be easy to forget to take regular breaks - or if you do, those breaks can be consumed with tasks that need doing in your home life. Taking the washing out can be a regular culprit!

Be proud to take short breaks. They can help make all of us more productive, so don't feel you need to hide from colleagues if you're switching off for a quick walk or to make a proper meal. Working effectively from home does not mean being chained permanently to your home desk, computer or phone.

Do ensure to split up your breaks throughout the day, take a break mid-morning or have a chat with a colleague (or fellow home worker) mid-afternoon. If you can, go for a walk outside in the daylight (following the latest Government advice) or complete a home workout. Also, take a proper lunch break - move away from your home working desk and get a change of scenery. As in the office, crumbs do bad things to keyboards!

4 STAY PART OF THE TEAM

One of the biggest WFH transitions is not being able to turn and speak to a colleague in person.

In the first instance, make sure that people in your team know how - and when - to contact you. Share appropriate phone numbers and ensure you are discoverable on Teams and Skype.

Managers should encourage - and stick to - regular Skype meetings with teams. These should be with cameras on, as maintaining the norm of face-to-face communication can be more efficient and raise team spirits. Holding calls to deliver feedback is also important, as written feedback in an email or message can sometimes be misinterpreted.

Remember that during a normal office day, you would usually have conversations with colleagues that are not about work. With that in mind, message or call someone about last night's TV, what exercise you've just done or what's on the menu for dinner - keep talking to people.

If you feel lonely, reach out to people - we know this is an uncertain time so please don't suffer in silence - let your manager or HR know how you are feeling. We will also be sharing more information on good mental health practices.

5 SWITCH OFF

Be mindful to stop work. Without that physical barrier of the commute home, it can be harder to effectively shut down at the end of the day and switch off from work.

Where possible, finish tasks due for the end of the day and physically step away from your laptop. This is why working in a separate room is preferable.

Leaving your laptop on with emails 'pinging' in, reviewing that document one more time or answering queries that could wait until the next day all add up to not switching off.

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