

Working from home during COVID-19

As more people are working from home to limit the spread of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), what was once a perk may now seem like a punishment. It can be hard just to find and set up a workspace and connect with work, let alone deal with the isolation.

If you are used to going into work, you may miss opportunities for regular social interaction and connection with co-workers. Regardless of which life stage you're in, working from home may cause feelings of isolation, frustration or stress that can impact your mental health.¹ Here are some tips to help you manage your new work-life balance:

Set yourself up for success

Find the most quiet place you can to set up your home work area. Make sure you have good lighting, a comfortable chair and plenty of outlets to plug in your computer, monitor, phone charger, etc. Put everything you need nearby so that you don't need to constantly hop up to find a report, get supplies, etc. Maintain as much of an office-like demeanor as you can. If you are using video for meetings, remember, you're on camera too.

Establish your routine

When you're away from the workplace, it's important to set specific hours—and stick to them. It's easy to work more hours than normal, but that may cut into your family time and affect your sleep schedule. You may also feel pressure to prove that you are spending your time productively, and this can result in increased anxiety and stress. Set your boundaries and develop a routine: wake up at the same time every day, take a shower, get dressed, etc. Keep as much of your non-work life as it was before the pandemic: eat well, exercise and get fresh air—just remember to maintain a 6-foot distance from others.

Practice self-care

Self-care is any proactive activity that we do to take care of our mental, emotional and physical health. Good self-care is the key to improved mood, reduced anxiety and a good relationship with yourself and others. While so many normal activities are disrupted, take some time to practice gratitude, eat healthy, get enough sleep and maintain or start an exercise program. You will feel better for it.²

Increase communication

You might find it easier to be productive without your most chatty coworkers constantly buzzing in your ear. But social interactions—even with coworkers—can alleviate feelings of isolation and loneliness. Try to maintain normalcy by setting up regular check-ins with your team or manager that allow you to provide progress updates, sort through problems or brainstorm ideas.

Cherish children

If you have children at home due to school closings, helping them make sense of what is happening in the world will help you process the situation too. Kids of all ages are as vulnerable as adults to feelings of anxiety, stress and sadness. Do the best you can to manage childcare, plan for different age groups and ask for help from those near to you, while staying mindful about social distancing. Be flexible to accommodate your children's needs and those of your employer. This is a unique moment in history. Move through it as gracefully as you can and create good memories for your family.

Take breaks

In the office, there's usually time for coffee breaks, lunch walks and chats with colleagues that give some breathing room from work. Just because you are working from home doesn't mean you aren't entitled to the same breaks. Hitting the pause button throughout the workday can be good for productivity. Get up and stretch, take deep breaths and look up from the computer at regular intervals. Remember to eat, and check with your supervisor for permission to take a break for a quick walk.

For more information and tips, visit [MagellanHealthcare.com/COVID-19](https://www.magellanhealthcare.com/COVID-19).

¹Smith, P. (2020, March 10). How To Deal If Working From Home Is Hurting Your Mental Health. Retrieved from https://www.huffpost.com/entry/working-from-home-mental-health_n_5afd88e2e4b0a59b4e014602?guccounter=1&guce_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ29vZ2xlLmNvbS8&guce_referrer_sig=AQAAALPysx5taWAnltmdXV9uEcuIXzXyRxgs3xGUH0ztFrzmyZfyFKQUQo1BetFTXXoiY1InEVcXeQbFXLffHW2ba17Yr9eG5nDkYyB5iech6hx8iRFumbBwpzRVhn1H7uRr-3ZngjIoto2Ctd1o-7SI4sEDdIr-GAyVlgsNUEul-5MM

²Michael, R. (2018, July 8). What Self-Care Is - and What It Isn't. Retrieved from <https://psychcentral.com/blog/what-self-care-is-and-what-it-isnt-2/>