

7 simple tips to tackle working from home

It's fair to say that life has become more difficult for everyone right now. Coronavirus (COVID-19) has changed everything, and we're all struggling to adjust to new ways of living and working.

There are some perks to working from home we can all enjoy (bye bye commute!), but feeling stress, boredom, anxiety and uncertainty is also completely normal. Alongside this, many of us are worried about future job prospects and trying to look after kids as well.

These 7 simple tips can help you adjust to working at home, feel more productive and take care of your mental health in these unprecedented times.

Just remember: we are all in this together.

1. Establish your own routine

Without steady schedules, the lines between work and personal time can get blurred and be stressful to get right.

During lockdown, try to follow your normal sleep and work patterns where you can, and stay consistent.

Get up at the same time, eat breakfast, and get out of your pyjamas! Even schedule your "commute time" – and spend it exercising, reading or listening to music – before logging in.

Most importantly, when your workday stops, stop working. Shut down, stop checking emails and focus on your home life. And at the end of the day, try to get to bed at your usual time.

2. Make a dedicated workspace

This follows on from point 1: when we live and work in the same space, it can create anxiety and stop us being able to focus.

If you can, find a quiet space away from other people and distractions like the TV (or the kitchen, when you feel snacky).

Get everything you need in one place, before you start work – chargers, pens, paper and anything else – and shut the door if you can. Even in a small or shared space, try to designate an area as your work space.

Lastly, get comfortable. While it might be tempting to sit on the sofa, it's much better to sit at a desk or table. Use the NHS guidelines to set up your workspace correctly, as much as you possibly can.

If you do not have office furniture like an adjustable chair, try using things like cushions to support you in your chair, or a box as a footrest.

How to sit at your desk correctly

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/how-to-sit-correctly/>

3. Give yourself a break

Working at home can make us feel like we have to be available all the time. But just being "present" is no use to anyone if your mental health is suffering.

Making time for breaks is important to help manage feelings of stress – try to take lunch and regular screen breaks. Give yourself time to concentrate on something else so you feel more focused when you return. Even just 5 to 10 minutes of short breaks each hour can really help your productivity too.

If possible, set a time to go for a walk and get some fresh air (making sure this follows the latest government guidance on exercising once a day).

Working from home means you might be spending a lot more time without moving your body. If you're feeling stiff or tense, try doing some light stretching or exercise with our 10-minute home workouts.

Try a 10-minute home workout

<https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/for-your-body/move-more/home-workout-videos/>

4. Stay connected

Feeling isolated is normal right now. But there are lots of ways to stay in touch with those who matter – boosting their mental wellbeing as well as our own.

In and out of work, human interaction matters. Schedule video calls and pick up the phone instead of emailing. If you're struggling with working at home then speak to your colleagues or manager about your concerns.

And remember, your colleagues probably feel the same as you! Ask how they're doing and whether there are ways you can support each other.

Make time to socialise virtually – schedule in a digital coffee break or Friday online get-together.

5. But set boundaries

Setting boundaries with other members of your household is key to mental wellbeing while working at home.

You can be more flexible when working from home, so enjoy it. But it can also be difficult if there are new distractions to deal with, like children at home, who may think you are on holiday and want to spend time with you.

Have a discussion about your needs, especially with family. Remind them that you still have work to do and need quiet time to do it, and share your schedule.

Similarly, set boundaries with work. It's easier to stay logged on when your home is your office, but try to switch off from work when the day is over and enjoy time with family at home.

6. Start thinking longer term

We may have to work from home for longer, so think about ways to improve how you work over a short time. If you have a garden, could you work there if the weather's warm?

Try to explore how you work with others. Are there different ways to talk online or new software you could use?

Do not worry about getting everything right straightaway. It takes time to get used to juggling a new work-life balance.

7. Be kind to yourself

Remember, this is an unusual situation and things will not feel normal!

Be kind to yourself and acknowledge that you might not be as productive as you usually would be. Be realistic about what you can achieve given the circumstances, and relax when your work is done.

Further support and advice

<https://www.mentalhealthatwork.org.uk/toolkit/coronavirus-and-isolation-supporting-yourself-and-your-colleagues/>

There are plenty of things you can do and places to get more help and support if you are struggling with your mental health. <https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/> pages on [stress](#), [anxiety](#), [sleep](#) and [low mood](#) have lots more tips and specific advice. If you are a parent or caregiver for a child or young person, [Young Minds has guidance on talking to your child about coronavirus](#).

[The NHS mental health and wellbeing](#) advice pages also have a self-assessment, as well as audio guides and other tools you can use while staying at home.

We also have [guidance and information](#) to help others if someone you know is struggling with their mental health.

<https://www.getselfhelp.co.uk/>

Remember, it is quite common to experience short-lived physical symptoms when you are low or anxious. Some of these, like feeling hot or short of breath, could be confused with symptoms of coronavirus.

If this happens, try to distract yourself. When you feel less anxious, see if you still have the symptoms that worried you. If you are still concerned, visit the NHS website.

If you do not live in England

Additional country-specific coronavirus guidance is available for [Scotland](#), [Wales](#) and [Northern Ireland](#).