

Your Employee Assistance Program is a support service that can help you take the first step toward change.

Using Technology to Connect When You Work from Home

The recent COVID-19 pandemic has forced millions of workers to redefine “going to work” as working in the comfort of their own homes. While working from home can be a challenge for some, it’s possible, with the right technology, to thrive in this new atmosphere. Here are our best tips for using technology to work from home.

Understand what your workplace will provide you with. Are you expected to provide your own laptop, or will work give you with one? If you’re using your own computer, do you have access to all the files and systems that you’ll need to do your job? Do you need an additional mouse and keyboard? If you do not have the equipment or access you need, speak to your manager or human resources (HR) department.

Set up call forwarding for your office phone. Call your office’s tech support and see if this is possible. If it’s not, see if you can change your outgoing message to state you’ll be unavailable on this number, but that you’ll be checking your messages throughout the day. You can set an alarm on your phone to remind yourself of when you want to call your office line to check your messages.

If you’re unfamiliar with new programs, test them first. You might be using Zoom, Skype, or Slack for the first time—it’s a new world for workers who are used to meeting in person! Get comfortable with the technology by setting up a “test” call with a friend or colleague who you’re close to so that you can make sure your microphone and camera is working. You can also use this time to test-drive any features you’re unfamiliar with such as screen sharing. Be aware of your surroundings; make sure you’re in a well-lit room, and that you’re comfortable with what’s being seen behind you.

If you’re conferencing over different time zones, set an additional clock on your phone. This will make it easier to figure out when your meeting with remote team members or clients will be.

Make status updates, automatic reminders, and out of office responses your friends. In the office, it’s clear to everyone who’s in and working. But sometimes when remote working, people can be getting stuck into tasks for hours, making them unavailable. Resist the urge to constantly jump on any new emails coming in—if you’re busy, set an out of office message that states you’ll be unavailable for a few hours, but will be back online at a certain time. If your team is on a messaging software like Slack, change your status to “Out to Lunch” when you’re eating, and have it clear after an hour. This will set clear expectations to your team and others about where your focus is.

Don’t be afraid to pick up the phone. If you’re unsure whether you’re reading an instant messages or email correctly, a quick phone call can often sort out any confusion. This can also be a great way to connect with a colleague. (It’s always nice to hear a familiar voice!).

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