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

# Working from Home When You Are Not Used to It



Many of us are working from home in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. For some, the experience of working from home is new, especially for a prolonged period of time. With schools closed in many jurisdictions, there is another layer of complexity for those with children; even if you do not have children, you may be sharing your space with another adult who is also now at home; work provides a lot of social interaction – more than you may realize. It goes without saying that these are very different times, which require new routines.

**Create a routine**

It is easy to feel lost or frustrated without a clear structure for your day.

- **Get up at the same time each day.** Get dressed and be camera ready as many meetings may be video calls.
- **Stop and move every couple of hours.** Just going back and forth to work and moving around your workplace is physical activity. If you do not have that, you need to be more conscious about getting up for movement or stretch breaks and getting a bit of sun several times during the day. You will need to be intentional about this and should set a timer if you need to.
- **Negotiate your space if you have other adults in the house.** This might seem like a small thing, but still needs to be done. Some people like private space, others like working next to someone else. Do not assume that others want to work the same way as you do. You might also need to have an agreement about who gets the “good” workspace, and perhaps alternate.
- **Know and follow your organization’s privacy and security policies.**Whether you are in the workplace or at home, this is a critical responsibility for every employee. When working from home, you might need to take additional steps to meet your organization’s standards for privacy and security. Make sure that you know what to do, and if you are not sure, ask your supervisor.
- **Make time for social connections.** Video calls are better than telephone for staying connected, especially if the call has more than two people. Plan specific times in the day to connect with others, and make sure that it happens. Additionally, just reach out to colleagues when you feel the need to connect. The reason does not need to be about work. Just checking in with someone is great. Feeling connected is an important part of your well-being and will ultimately make you more productive overall.
- **Pay attention to organizational communications and reach out to your manager.** Read or listen to all communications from your company. Policies and practices may change quickly as

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the situation warrants. Your manager is also there for support. If you have not heard anything for a while, it is okay to reach out to confirm that everything is the same.
- **Plan your non-working time as well.** Use the time to do something meaningful to you. This is a good time to do things that you can do at home, which you might not have had time to do before – learn a new skill, organize your home, connect with your family. Do not focus on what you cannot do, but what you can do.
- **Maintain or start regular exercise.** Getting regular exercise to get your heart rate up is needed, over and above moving or stretching every couple of hours. Your physical health requires this, as does your mental health. It is a great time to get and use a few free weights or work with a virtual trainer.

**If you have children**

- **Understand that they need a routine as much or more than you do.** With school closures, parents at home and community activities cancelled, new routines must be built. Getting up, getting dressed, a time to play, a time to learn at home, a time to do chores, a time to spend time with you are all important. This is a good opportunity to work with your children create these routines, which can also help them feel some control over the changes that are happening.
- **Build time for your kids into your workday routine.** Your work might need to be completed in blocks of time instead of a straight eight-hour stretch. Have specific times when you can give your children uninterrupted attention, even if it is just during the lunch hour. Take turns in childcare with another adult in your home, if possible. Build times in your child's schedule to work beside you. Schools and daycare have time for quiet work or play. The same thing can happen at home.