



Work from Home Tips to Support Motivation, Productivity and Health

This has been quite a few weeks of change, which feels more like several months! Kudos and thanks to all for making such a quick adjustment.

While many of our staff have been working from home well before the coronavirus outbreak, working from home full-time is new to most of us and requires some getting used to. The first few days were crazy, even while we relished not having commutes and being able to be home and safe. As the weeks go by, however, you may be feeling loneliness, lower motivation, and other challenges.

So, how can you stay healthy and productive when working from home? There is definitely a "mindset" adjustment that is needed when you are teleworking if you normally don't do it.

Here are some tips designed to help things flow more smoothly when you're remote working.

Create an official – separate – home workspace.

Try to create some physical separation in your workspace from your "home" space. It's important to have space that you can physically and mental enter and leave each day (versus heading to that comfy couch or chair you hang-out in). Officially signaling "work" to your brain through a designated workspace helps "turn on" your higher brain, the part of your brain responsible for learning, executive functioning, and productivity.

Ensure that it's a quiet, comfortable space (the chair you are using, the laptop support desk, etc.) with good lighting, as that is key to keeping you in a productive, healthy mental state.

Try to avoid the kitchen table, if possible, if that's where all the action is in the home. Also, if you have family home with you, try to set a boundary so they know when you can and cannot be interrupted. We know this will be a challenge with children at home, so do the best you can without going crazy.

Stick to your daily routine while you are working at home.

Set and maintain a schedule with expected work hours. Keeping a routine is very important during times of uncertainty. So, keep your sleep schedule on track. It could be tempting to stay up later binge-watching your favorite show, but the impact of changing your sleep schedule has numerous implications. When your sleep schedule gets off track it's harder for you to get out of bed in the morning, especially when you don't have to go into the office. Being tired throughout the day can make working harder and less productive, which could result in longer hours to accomplish what you need to.

Get dressed for the day.

It mentally and physically prepares you for the tempo of work and that surprise meeting where you are asked to turn on your video camera.

Lunchtime = Disconnect time.

Take your full lunch break without work distractions. Disconnecting during breaks and before and after work hours will help you maintain some semblance of a work schedule.

Build in breaks in your schedule.

It's helpful to block off time on your calendar so people are aware of the times you aren't available and, more importantly, so you have reminders when to take that break. That is also your cue on when to go into the kitchen. Grazing all day or emotional eating can be very tempting while working at home. Diligence around break-time and only visiting your kitchen then is very helpful for healthy eating habits.

Get outside.

Don't "sit" at your computer all day. Get up, walk around, go for a walk. Make sure to move around. When at all possible, don't forget to get outside in nature during these breaks. Studies continue to report the significant benefits of being out in nature on your mental and physical well-being.

Build in transition time before and after work.

To help you transition between work and personal when you may not leave your home. Schedule a few things each day before work to give yourself time to wake up, like walking the dog, exercising or making coffee. Similarly, having a ritual to end the day (like turning off your computer, leaving your office and locking your office doors) can help you avoid working late.

Track your time.

And after a couple days, if you feel you're not as productive or don't know where the time goes, consider using time-tracking technology like tracking app like [Toggl](#), which lets you manually track tasks, or [RescueTime](#)., which creates automated reports of the websites you visit.

Limit the amount of news you watch.

Avoid marinating in the news about the pandemic. Watching too much news and/or TV can lead to anxiety, depression and increased stress according to the American Psychological Association. Remember to limit your screen time, just like we reinforce with our children. Always monitoring breaking news is breaking us, right now. The key is to remember: no news is good news, and will keep you focused and productive. Get the facts you need and walk away. Control the things you can, and enjoy the rest of life which is still unfolding.

Face-to-face meetings and "water cooler chats" are still OK and encouraged

If you gain energy and excitement from being in the office, and find yourself missing that connection, take the initiative to schedule collaboration calls and use the camera on your phone or computer to hold "face-to-face meetings" or chats with your co-workers.

Build in stress management exercises.

Standing up regularly, looking outside at nature, or taking a couple deep breathes before reading that next email gives your brain a nice mental health break during the day. Also, [consider using an app](#) to lead you through a two or three-minute brain break.

Manage email time and define "urgent."

When working from home every email can seem like an urgent email, to the point where you don't get any work done except managing your inbox. Set guidelines with your team and manager to establish an urgent protocol to handle those situations that do require a more immediate response.

Overcommunicate.

Go above and beyond to communicate progress on critical projects and key deadlines (out-of-sight can often fuel assumptions that you're not working on it). Updates as FYIs are great at relieving team stress. If you are directly managing a team, be sure to establish a regular team meeting to create continuity.

Keep in mind that for many of us, working from home will be temporary. We all react to change differently, and while working from home can be beneficial for some, it's more stressful for others. In either case, remaining flexible and empathetic – and remembering that this too shall pass – will be helpful when it's time to head back to the office.

Above all, stay well! Remember that your contributions to Avalon matter and each of you is a valuable member of our team. Out of sight does not mean out of mind, and we are all counting on each other.

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