

Stress less, when working from home

Many people find themselves in the position of having to work from home because of coronavirus (COVID-19). This brings with it a lot of stressful and new challenges such as, a lack of structure, distractions, blurred boundaries and isolation; affecting mental health and your well-being.

It is very natural to have feelings of frustration, loneliness, worry, or concern for yourself and those close to you. The tips and advice here are things you can do now, to help you stress less when working from home whilst also looking after your mental health, you can even share them with people you know! **Make sure you get further support if you feel you need it.**





Let's start with the basics – Some people will have a private work station at home, however most will need to use the dining room table, kitchen, or any spare space available. Make sure you have a separate area that is comfortable, provides desk space with a screen at the right height, a comfortable chair and any other amenities that will set you up both physically and mentally for the working day.

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Making it work for everyone – Communicating with others in your house that may also be working from home is important to avoid stresses down the line. Talk about details such as, when does the working day start and finish? What time is lunch and are their breaks during your day? If you have children, establish 'childcare shifts', have the conversation and keep reviewing this. Where do you take phone calls? These could even be scheduled and talked about the night before for 5 minutes to check, what does tomorrow look like for you? If you live alone, planning this yourself will help provide some well needed structure.

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Create your own routine – Routines are good for your productivity and most importantly, your mental health. Decide what works best for you, does a workout before the day starts set you up for the work ahead? Would a walk around the block during breaks help freshen you up? Even getting a shower and getting dressed may sound simple, but it maintains a routine and ensures you are in the right headspace to take on the day, especially if you are having work or video calls with colleagues and clients.

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Staying active and managing the news – Get exercise and seek activity where you can, incorporate a dose of exercise into your routine, whether it's walking during breaks, smashing a HIIT workout, or going for a run before the day starts. Get creative, make it fun and move your body in whatever way you enjoy! A dose of exercise is important to maintain immune functions and looks after your mental health. We live on a notified and anxious planet, ration social media and the news, keep informed, however decide a slot that is dedicated to this - on your watch. Set time limits on your social media apps and visit reliable sources such as the Public Health Agency or World Health Organisation.



Dance in the rain – This tip is all about staying positive despite the current situation. It's not ideal having to make changes to the working day but that doesn't mean we need to dwell on it and take our mind away from getting the most out of the present moment, which is all we have! Our focus has moved from normal everyday goals we had to looking after our work, mental health and encouraging self-development through hobbies. Use any spare time to unwind, engage in a skill you were putting off – cook, learn a new language, pick up that dusty guitar or exercise; it's an opportunity to work and play, if you make it one.

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You're not on your own – Being away from the office doesn't mean you're on your own. Stay in touch with those you work with, decide what time works best for everyone for catch-up meetings. When the work stuff is done, have some fun! Set up a text or email group and share things to enjoy, recipe of the week, a virtual come dine with me, workout of the week and help each other out, you're in this together! Connect with your friends and family more than usual, it's easier than it has ever been with technology. Check in and see how their day is going, during the evenings play some games or have a quiz online together, especially if you're living alone.

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Fuel your mind – When working from home it can be easy to lose track of time and miss important breaks to eat and get away from the busy screens we work with. Set a lunch and any break times before the day begins and stick to them. Missing these can reduce concentration and affect energy levels. Drinking plenty of water and having healthy snacks such as fruit and vegetables while you work can help keep your energy levels up and prevents a drop in blood pressure which lowers mood and alertness. No more post lunch time drag for you!



Sleep well – Sleep is often overlooked in the working week, we work to deadlines, check emails in the evening and even try to get ahead of some work in our ‘downtime’. Not getting enough sleep affects every aspect of our biology such as decision making, memory, immunity and weight. Going to bed and waking at a similar time, keeping the room cool and dark as well as winding down before bed away from the screens helps you get the 7+ hours of sleep a night you need. Try getting in a period of time before bed, away from your new home-office environment and read a book an hour before sleep, listen to music or even try some creative writing!

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Take time to relax – Making time to relax has never been more important, it’s a way to release any tension and stress that builds up during the day. This is time for you, away from anyone else or any to-do lists. Try some meditation after the working day, keep a journal, reflect on how you and your body are feeling. Doing something you enjoy like baking, singing, dancing or simply watching your favourite television show – as long as it relaxes your body and mind, it’s worth it.

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Embrace the challenge – Working from home requires a lot of changes, this can be scary, but it’s okay, none of it is set in stone. This is temporary and at the end of the day you are in charge. Look at the changes you have made, are they working? Did missing that morning workout slow your day down? Did you skip lunch on Tuesday to work on a project? These changes are a work in progress, don’t be hard on yourself if you feel a little stressed or miss a goal you had set.

Keep adapting and refining the journey: *‘You can’t go back and change the beginning but you can start where you are and change the ending’*
C.S Lewis.

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AMH Works provide a range of programmes which support employers to improve mental and emotional well-being in the workplace and create Healthy, Resilient Workplaces, to find out more contact AMH Works Manager, Shelly Wilson on **07540124083** or **swilson@amh.org.uk**

There may be times when you need extra support. If you’re finding things really difficult you might want to speak to your line manager, a GP, Lifeline or Samaritans. **Further information on sources of support are available on www.amh.org.uk**

