



Top Tips for managing mental health whilst working from home

The COVID 19 outbreak is an unprecedented crisis impacting the entire global community. Whilst governments are racing to find medical and economic solutions, people are forced to radically adapt their lifestyles and work routines. The pandemic surprised businesses, with the full scale of the psychological impact on employees yet to unfold. School closures, conflicting family demands and unusual living arrangements have dramatically increased strain on mental wellbeing. Without the practical and social resources of an office environment, employees face a prolonged period of upholding professional standards and personal productivity for their clients.

Here are our top tips for managing your mental health whilst working from home.

Plan a timetable

One of the biggest challenges people will face is how to structure a routine. Perhaps you have children who now need to be home-schooled or an elderly parent who needs food or medical supplies dropped off. Make a list of new tasks that need to be ticked-off on a daily and weekly basis and map out a timetable. This might require a flexible and agile approach - reflect and review every week and adjust where necessary - it may take a few weeks to work out the best set up.

Activate your support network

Check in with family and friends for support on a daily basis. Along with you, colleagues and loved ones face extraordinary circumstances – replicating your social interactions will offer opportunities for mutual support. For professional help, contact your health insurance or seek out online or telephone counselling resources as [MIND](#), [BetterHelp](#) and the [Samaritans](#).

Set boundaries in your household

Spend time in your household discussing the best way to manage shared spaces. Most people will find themselves in unusual living arrangements, without a dedicated workspace, and children or flatmates to disrupt focus patterns. This might involve adjusting your working hours by working early in the mornings or late at night. Agree to compromise and or swap after a few weeks and set clear boundaries about what works best for you.

Fight fear with facts

There is an abundance of information out there. Identify the most credible sources, such as the [WHO](#) and the government's [NHS website](#) and stick to it. Exit the Whatsapp chats with unnecessary noise and set a 'news flow budget' to check in with the daily news twice a day at set times only.

Meditate

Spend 5-15 minutes a day disconnecting and unplugging. Perhaps you have an established meditation practice that you can plan into your daily routine. Otherwise, use meditation apps such as [Headspace](#) or [Calm](#) for free guided meditations. Use noise cancelling headphones and find a dedicated time in the day and space in your home for your practice.

Schedule breaks

Stick to regular break times and take them. Step away from the computer and allow yourself to switch off for lunch and for a few breaks throughout the day. A break means finding time for yourself in whatever way – whether that's reading a magazine, going for a quick walk or playing an instrument. Approach breaks as a fundamental 'reset' strategy for your productivity.

Accept your limitations

These are extraordinary working conditions to be functioning in. Things are not going to run smoothly. You might struggle to have uninterrupted time to do your work. There may be limitations as to where you can set up your workspace, or continued pressures on how to balance regular tasks such as lockdown grocery shopping with caring for children or an elderly relative. Accept that every day will bring a new challenge. You are not superhuman and things may take longer. That's alright.

Practice self-care

Make a list of things to turn to at the end of the evening or throughout the day that you know will increase your wellbeing. This might be a long bath after the kids have gone to bed or an early morning solo walk at the crack of dawn. Maintain habits that make you feel a sense of normality such as personal grooming or nutrition.

Exercise

In line with government lockdown advice, minimise reasons for unnecessary journeys and social exposure, but try to leave the building for one form of exercise a day. Work out the best time to integrate this into your daily routine. Tap into the video content and live streams offered by personal trainers and yoga teachers.

Express vulnerability, confidently

If you are battling with certain challenges, list them out and share them in a positive, confident manner. It's ok to express your vulnerability with colleagues and loved ones. This is not the time to have to 'soldier through' every single hurdle. Focus on the solutions, not the problems and avoid bottling things up.

Be kind to yourself

These are unprecedented times posing unprecedented challenges. We will continue to face extreme uncertainty for all aspects of our lives, as professionals, partners, flatmates, carers, siblings and children. You don't need to have all the answers. Practice positive language with yourself and be sure to share and celebrate small successes.