



# REMOTE WORKING: TAKING CARE OF YOU

Many remote workers feel relieved, relaxed, energized, happier, and more productive, while others feel lonely, isolated, frustrated, anxious, and unmotivated. All of these emotions are normal and expected as you transition from working in an office where clear boundaries exist between your professional and personal lives. With remote work, it can be easy to let these two parts of your life blend together.

It's important to take care of yourself by setting new boundaries to distinguish between being at work and at home so your mental health doesn't suffer from remote work burnout. To stay happy and healthy, here are some recommended self-care best practices to keep in mind.

## Self-care Best Practices

- **Set Boundaries** – Create clear boundaries by setting up a dedicated workspace for yourself in your home. All you need to accomplish this is a work surface big enough to accommodate all of your remote technical tools and files, a comfortable chair with good support, Internet access, good natural light, and privacy in an office or space in a corner of a room. This will provide the structure you need to establish a more permanent, intentional balance in distinguishing work from personal time for yourself and others.
- **Protect Your Workspace** – Speak to family and friends about the hours you are working from home and the ground rules while doing so. Be as proactive as you can to avoid interruptions. Place a “Do Not Disturb” sign in your work space or on the door so it's clear you are occupied. Turn on a white noise machine or app to reduce audio distractions which will help maintain your focus.
- **Listen to Your Biological Clock** – Determine when you are the most productive and creative. Plan your schedule so your most important projects are accomplished during these prime hours. If you are constantly forcing yourself to work outside of your most productive time, you will unknowingly be on the fast track to burnout.
- **Establish a Routine** – Develop a daily schedule and follow it to provide structure, consistency, and establish healthy habits which are important for achieving your goals, being successful in performing your responsibilities, and maintaining good work-life balance.
- **Take Scheduled Breaks** – The human brain naturally works best in bursts of high activity, therefore, it's recommended you work in a rhythm of 52 minutes on followed by a 17 minute break. Of course, it's not necessary to take an hourly break. Listen to your body, and when you need a break, give yourself one. These breaks are best spent stretching your brain or your body to rejuvenate them.

- Overcommunicate – Promptly return emails, calls, and voice mails. Check in with others throughout the day. Confirm receipt of messages and resolve any miscommunication issues quickly with a phone call or virtual meeting. Develop ways of communicating to establish new or maintain existing relationships. Even a quick text message can make others feel connected. If you are unavailable for a long period of time during the day, consider leaving an outgoing voice message or an auto reply email so others are aware when they will hear from you.



- Use Technology – Video conferencing is an excellent way to connect with your supervisor, colleagues, and customers. Make sure to have a plain or professional background behind you, adequate lighting, and are groomed and dressed in proper casual work attire. Consider investing in a microphone or hands-free headset to enhance the quality of verbal communications.
- Note Progress – Be proactive in providing your team with timely progress on shared goals and projects. Send regular email with updates on projects you have advanced or accomplished. Create and utilize a system for sharing documents on network drives so files are consolidated and not scattered on individual hard drives.
- Feedback – Track what tasks are easier or more difficult while working remotely. Ask your colleagues and supervisor for regular feedback on how the situation is working out. Make time to text, call, and inquire on a regular basis about how others are doing or what projects they are engaged with.
- Prioritize Physical and Mental Health – Create ways to enjoy yourself after work hours that provide you with the opportunity to be creative and expressive in a new way. Regularly participate in activities like: exercising or dancing, walking in nature or breathing meditation, painting or writing, watching a movie or reading a book, listening to music or a podcast, and self massage or stretching.

Your specific work situation and team dynamics are unique and different. Any change in a work environment takes time to get used to. Be kind to yourself and make adjustments as necessary. There is no one-size-fits-all self-care practice you can use to resolve all remote working issues. Instead, you're going to have to choose those that fit your lifestyle and work best for you. Self-care is all about taking care of yourself in whatever way helps you feel refreshed and rejuvenated.

If you are struggling with adapting to working at home or experiencing stress affecting your productivity, contact the Department of Law and Public Safety's Employee Assistance Program at 800-367-6577. Our professionals provide confidential counseling services for employees dealing with personal or work-related issues. They can assist you in maintaining a healthy work-life balance and benefitting from the short and long term effects of working remotely.