



# COVID-19

# Rediscovering your work/life balance

The coronavirus pandemic has completely changed life as we know it. To all intents and purposes, what we all think of as 'normal life' has stopped and we're all now trying our best to adapt to the new reality.

Many of us are now working from home, which is certainly now the norm for most. So how do you find a way to juggle work and life when everything is happening in the same place?

We've got some useful tips to help you look after your mental health and wellbeing as you adjust to the new reality of life.

## 9 top tips for people working from home

### 1. Set up a specific place to work

- While you might be tempted to work from your bed or even lying on the sofa, don't. If you can, sit at a desk or table, which will make you feel more like you're working – and it's harder to nap sitting up!
- The trick is to associate the spot you've chosen with work, not leisure time. This will help you think as if you're in the office.

### 2. Get dressed

- Tempting as it may be to stay in your pyjamas all day because no-one can see you, it won't help you get in a working frame of mind. Get up, get washed, get dressed and you'll feel more like you're going to work.
- Changing into casual clothes at the end of your working day can help underline the switch between work time and home time.

### 3. Establish your working hours

- Pick a start time and a finishing time and stick to them as much as you can.
- With everything that's going on, don't feel obliged to stick to 'normal' working hours. If you're also looking after your kids, you'll have to work your schedule around them and their needs, which may mean working at different times.
- Switch off your work computer and phone when you finish work for the day. Close them down and put them away so your brain knows it's now home time.

#### 4. Plan your time

- Write a 'to do' list for each day, preferably the night before, so you know exactly what needs doing.
- Work out your most productive time and schedule more complex tasks for then. You can do smaller tasks in the times where you know you struggle more to focus.

#### 5. Set boundaries for the people you live with

- Let people know that you're not always going to be available when you're working.
- If you have small children, this could be difficult. If you live with another adult, try to share the responsibility for childcare. If you're parenting alone, try setting up a simple system to let kids know they can and can't disturb you. You could try pinning up a green card to show you can be interrupted and a red card when you're not available.

#### 6. Connect with your colleagues

- It's easy to feel alone when you're working from home, so make sure you check in with your colleagues, especially in these strange times we're living in.
- Modern technology makes it easy to touch base with teleconferencing and instant messaging, so make a point of talking to your teammates.
- Think about setting up virtual coffee breaks or lunches where you can chat about anything and everything except work.

#### 7. Pick your background noise carefully

- Although some people prefer it, working in silence can be tough. It's often better to have a level of noise in the background.
- Television could cut through your attention, pulling you out of your work for longer than you intend, so music may be a better choice. Putting a play list of your favourite songs on could be distracting if you're frequently tempted to sing along, so music without lyrics may work better.
- If you have a lot of people in the house, you might want to try wearing headphones to keep out the ambient noise.

#### 8. Take regular breaks

- It's so easy to fall into the trap of feeling like you need to be constantly available when you're working from home, but you still need to take regular breaks.
- Divide up your day to make sure you have time to step away. Schedule a proper lunch break. Go outside for a breath of fresh air. Take time away from your screen.

#### 9. Enjoy the flexibility

- When you're working from home, you don't always have to be rigid in how you work. If you're losing focus, try stepping away for a while to recharge your batteries then come back to it.
- Don't forget you're gaining time because you're no longer commuting. That doesn't mean you have to spend that extra time working. You might be able to start earlier and finish earlier, or start later and finish later, or arrange a schedule around your other responsibilities.
- You may also be home-schooling children or simply keeping them entertained – you might need to be flexible with your hours, if you can.

## Be kind to each other

With literally everything around us changing, we're all doing our best to adjust to the new normal.

Debbie Bullock, Wellbeing lead for Aviva, says: "Managing your work life balance has never been so important when for many of us our home is now our workplace. To maintain your wellbeing, it's important that you aren't tempted to be 'always on'. Sleep, exercise, and time to rest and recharge are all really important to avoid burn out.

"We're all facing challenges of many different varieties. We should focus on outcomes rather than how long or how hard anyone is working. We need to trust each other, treat each other with kindness and avoid comparing ourselves to each other. This will go a long way to helping everyone to find the right balance."

Although we may be socially distanced, we're all in this together and we need to work together to get through it.