

Reigniting your health when working from home



In light of the recent news surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic, many workers are being asked to work from home. The goal is to protect one another and help prevent this disease from spreading.

While many workers may enjoy the flexibility to work from home, that doesn't mean that everyone is familiar with the practice of telecommuting nor does it mean that they will enjoy it. These resources give you strategies to master the art of working independently — and dial down stress, if need be, during this time.

About telecommuting

Telecommuting, or the practice of working from home, may be suggested by your employers due to guidelines to help contain COVID-19. Many workers may find themselves trying this for the first time. When working from home, it's possible people may have trouble staying focused, or they may feel isolated.

Unfamiliar territory during a quarantine

You may find that you are facing new circumstances such as:

- Trying to manage a crowded space with a significant other who is also working from home
- Dealing with kids who are home from school while you're trying to manage your workload
- Feeling isolated at home because public health officials are recommending you avoid crowded areas

All of these new circumstances may feel like unfamiliar territory. They can also cause stress and burnout that we may not be equipped to manage.

Avoiding Burnout

Burnout is caused by ongoing stress. And stress that doesn't let up just because you're working from home. It puts your "fight or flight" system into overdrive. This can result in the release of hormones that are damaging to your physical and mental health. This may lead to chronic health problems like heart disease, depression and severe anxiety.

The key is to recognize burnout if you're at risk and take steps to prevent it.

Building blocks for burnout

If you're working from home with little exposure to the outside world, that may be a potential cause for feeling burned out at work.

You may also be at risk if you:

- Find your work unchallenging or monotonous
- Feel you have little to no control over your work
- Are not rewarded or recognized for your good work
- Have unclear, multiple job priorities or overly demanding job expectations
- Don't have a good support system where you can discuss your stress and challenges

Your personality traits and lifestyle habits may add to burnout. For example, if you have a high-achieving, Type A personality, or you are a perfectionist, these traits can make you more at risk for job burnout. Similarly, if you lack supportive, close relationships, you'll be more at risk for burnout.

Ways to help manage stress while working from home

- **Be aware of stress.** Working from home may cause additional stress. Look for ways to relax and manage stress, such as deep breathing, stretching or meditation. There are also apps that can help you deal with stress.
- **Create regular routines.** Make time for what you need, including time to shower, get ready, work, eat lunch, go for a walk, and so forth. It may be tempting to skip some of your usual steps because you're working from home. But don't let work take your entire day just because you're working from home.
- **Get set up for success.** Find a practical spot in your home for your workspace. If you already have a home office, that's great. If not, look for a spot that's comfortable and organized. Take time to make it your own.
- **Declutter to help destress.** Did you know clutter can cause psychological stress? And that can get in the way of your resilience. But if you organize your workspace, you can feel more in control of stressful situations when they come up.
- **Get a game plan for kids.** If your children will be with you at home during the day, make sure to plan ahead. Create a regular schedule to help minimize distractions during your workday. You can find suggested schedules online to help keep children busy with schoolwork or learning and other activities throughout the day.
- **Stay connected.** Make sure you're communicating with others aside from virtual coworkers. Decide how you'll keep in touch with friends and family — through text, phone calls, over-the-internet or even through letters in the mail. Consider "face-to-face" time using apps.
- **Set boundaries.** Limit exposure to news coverage. This includes social media. Know sources where you can find reliable information, such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov), World Health Organization on [who.int](https://www.who.int) or your local government health authority.
- **Keep up with healthy habits.** Your physical health is an important part of your mental health when you're working from home. Eat well and get plenty of rest and physical activity. These are the building blocks of health.

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