

Managing your mental health at home

Information about working from home during COVID-19



What this fact sheet covers:

- Tips to protect your mental health
- Considerations about the situation
- Useful online resources & tools

Introduction

It may start as a bit of a novelty, but working from home for long periods of time can start to affect your mental health.

Just as it is important to look after your physical health during the changing circumstances around COVID-19, it's important to keep on top of how you are feeling.

Some common feelings are:

- Feeling isolated, lonely, or disconnected from other people – socially and professionally.
- Being unable to 'switch off from work'.
- Having difficulty staying motivated.
- Having difficulty prioritising your workload.
- Feeling uncertain about your progress, and whether you're performing ok.
- Insomnia and sleep problems.

Here are some tips to protect your mental health when working from home:

Set up routine and structure for your workday, and create boundaries between 'work time' and 'home time'.

Set a routine as if you are going into the office, with a regular start time, and finish time, and a structure for your day, with breaks and exercise scheduled in.

This will help you maintain a strong boundary between work and home life, minimise the possibility of work intruding into your family time, and help you switch off from work at the end of the day.

Creating cues, such as getting changed into your work clothes at the start of the day, and out at the end, can help with this.

Create a specific place in your home where you work - avoid your bedroom.

Studies show that working from home can interfere with sleep, especially for people who



find it difficult to switch off from work. Avoid working in your bedroom if possible. It will then become associated with being alert, awake and switched on.

Stay connected with co-workers and your manager by scheduling regular virtual or phone meetings.

Because everyday encounters with colleagues don't spontaneously happen when we're working from home, we need to be proactive in organising meetings and social connection to maintain positive relationships.

Staying connected with others will help to reduce stress levels, help you feel less isolated, and stay productive.

It also helps you communicate with your manager or employees to keep them informed of what you're working on.

Try a digital detox in the evenings.

Technology makes it easier to stay connected 24-7, but the downside is that it can make it difficult to switch off, and separate work and home life.

A digital detox can help you switch off from work, so you can spend quality time with your family, or doing the things you want to do.

Get outside at least once a day.

If you're not stuck in self-isolation, try to get outside at least once a day. Go for a walk, get some fresh air, and sunshine.

If you are in isolation, go out to your garden or walk up and down your driveway or go out onto your balcony and enjoy fresh air.

Focus on the silver linings.

Working from home can have many benefits: it can improve productivity, reduce distractions, reduce stress, improve work satisfaction, lower the time (and cost) you spend commuting, give you greater sense of control over your workday, and can even help to avoid challenging situations.

Don't forget the other helpful actions for maintaining positive mental health.

Exercising, getting a good night's sleep, eating well, doing activities you enjoy, staying connected with social supports, and managing stress through problem solving, relaxation or meditation, and thinking in helpful ways.

It's important to try to think of the positives of your situation as well as the negatives.

- Working from home is incredibly flexible, giving you a greater sense of control over how you work and when you work.
- It allows many to avoid long commutes (and potential exposure to COVID-19).
- It has been linked to improved job satisfaction, lower stress levels, lower conflict between work and home life, improved focus, and greater productivity, and work performance.



If you need more tips, skills and strategies, consider asking for help from your Employee Assistance Provider (EAP) if you have one, do an online program, or seek help from a professional.

There are also range of free or low-cost digital mental health tools that are available in Australia that can help for mental health. The Australian government is also supporting psychologist sessions over the phone or video, allowing some members of the public to access bulk-billed sessions.

Helpful online tools and resources

myCompass

www.mycompass.org.au

Black Dog Institute Online Clinic

onlineclinic.blackdoginstitute.org.au

This Way Up

thiswayup.org.au

MindSpot

mindspot.org.au

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