

TOOL KIT Working from home – how to maintain our mental health wellbeing

The outbreak of the coronavirus COVID-19 has impacted people in varying ways on an international scale. It is understandable that during times such as this, people may be feeling afraid, worried, anxious and overwhelmed by the constantly changing alerts and media coverage regarding the spread of the virus.

If you are asked to work from home either in a full-time or part-time capacity this may come with a mix of feelings and reactions, including:

- Excitement for this change in environment and routine
- Fear and worry about lack of connection and interaction with others and impact this may have on your own mental health and wellbeing
- Loneliness
- Fear for your own health and safety, and that of family or loved ones
- Feelings of helplessness and hopelessness
- Loss of power and control – *I didn't choose this*
- Lack of certainty – *How long will this situation last? When will we return to work/normal life?*

In order to look after ourselves and our colleagues during this strange and unprecedented time the following are some tips and guidelines.

Working from home tips:

- Start and finish times – like you would if you were coming into the office, ensure you are working your regular hours per day
- Wake up more than 5 minutes before your workday starts – this will give you time to prepare for the day, both mentally and physically
- Get changed out of your pyjamas every morning – it will help get you in the right headspace for work and you won't be caught off guard in a video meeting (the 'newsreader' dress code is always a winner – work attire on top, casual bottoms)
- Shut down computer and pack it away (if possible) at end of each day – this will help with having clear work/life divide



- Separate work space from other day-to-day 'home' tasks and try to avoid working from the bedroom if possible – it is important to have a clear work/life divide
- Create a routine including ways to unwind/decompress at the end of the day – for some of us the commute home is an important way to end our work days or to prepare us to enter our next job which may be as a parent, partner, carer etc. Try to find ways to ensure you are still getting that critical time, for example go for a walk outside after you shut down your computer, or work on your balcony or back yard. If you don't have a lot of time, doing a 10 minute relaxation/meditation before leaving your work space can help you get ready for your next role
- Regular breaks – schedule in regular breaks as it can be tempting when working from home to not take time out. It is important to step away from your desk during your breaks and don't look at anything work related. Try enjoying a cup of tea in the garden, call a friend for a quick chat or do some stretches
- Physical activity – go for a walk down to your local park or down to the local shops. Whatever works for you but move your body regularly
- Stay connected – call rather than email, utilise platforms to stay connected with your colleagues and use your videos not just audio.

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General mental health and wellbeing tips:

- Perspective – try to see this time as unique and different, not necessarily bad, even if it was something you didn't choose
- Connection – think of creative ways to stay connected with others including social media, email and phone
- Be generous to others - giving to others in times of need not only helps the recipient, it enhances your wellbeing too. Is there a way to help others around you?
- Stay connected with your values, don't let fear or anxiety drive your interactions with others, we are all in this situation together
- Daily routine – create a routine that prioritises things you enjoy. Maybe this means you get to sleep in a little, go for a swim in the ocean on your lunch break or even do things you have been meaning to do but haven't had enough time to in the past such as reading that book, or watching that show
- Regular exercise, eating well and getting enough sleep are also important in looking after ourselves during this time
- Try to see this as a new and unusual period, that might even have some benefits
- Limit your exposure to news and media. Perhaps choose specific times of the day when you will get updates, ensuring they are from reputable and reliable sources.

Where do I go for further help?

- Contact your GP or the **Child and Adolescent Health Service** in your area.
- For help finding an appropriate referral contact **Lifeline on 13 11 14**.
- Children and young people can phone **Kids Help Line 1800 55 1800** or access web and email counselling www.kidshelp.com.au
- Parents can phone the **Parentline** in their State for support: <https://kidshelpline.com.au/parents/issues/how-parentline-can-help-you>
- Government Assistance
<https://www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/help-emergency>
www.health.gov.au
www.headtohealth.gov.au



For 24-hour telephone support call 13 11 14. For more information visit www.lifeline.org.au

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