Nuffield Health

How to be kind to yourself when working from home

Many people are currently dealing with changes outside of their control including different routines such as working from home. Even if you are used to the practice of working from home, doing it every day can add more challenges to an already stressful situation.

The theme of Mental Health Awareness Week is 'kindness' and to mark this we wanted to share our tips on how to be kinder to yourself whilst working from home. Kindness has important health benefits. Many **studies show** that being kind to yourself plays a vital role in mental wellbeing, and can act as a powerful antidote to many mental health difficulties and being kinder to yourself can also improve emotional wellbeing in key areas.

1. Have a morning routine

Once you start **working from home** you no longer have a morning commute. As such creating a morning routine is essential. Preparing for work means dressing for work. Creating a morning routine of breakfast, spending time with family and even leaving the house for a short walk to then re-enter prior to starting work. Logging in to work 20 mins earlier than your scheduled start time helps you to plan and get prepared for the day ahead. Maintaining a normal working routine will make it more likely you will stay in contact with others.

Be kind to yourself by making sure you don't use your reduced commute to do extra work. Use this time for self care instead.

2. Work face-to-face in virtual meetings

If you "dress for work" you are more likely to use **face-to-face in virtual meetings.** In addition, if you know that you will be meeting colleagues via video, you'll be more motivated to maintain that daily routine of getting ready before logging on for work. This will lead to improved social bonds between you and your co-workers.

3. Hold daily video calls with your teams

This can be either on a group chat or with each person you manage individually. It's much easier to feel connected with people and to give and receive kindness when you can physically see them. Being able to see and react to a person's non-verbal cues is also critically important to conversations with most experts saying 70 to 93 percent of all communication is non-verbal.

On a psychological level, engaging with people through video can help decrease feelings of isolation and loneliness that can stem from a sudden move to a remote work environment. A kind smile can have lasting effects.

4. Go to your working spot

Working from your living room, bed or couch is not ideal… no matter how attractive a spot of 'bedmin' is (admin tasks completed in bed). Inevitably you end up feeling lethargic. Have a dedicated place for work. Be kind to yourself and create a working environment free of **distractions.**

A workstation also helps you to sit comfortably and more confidently helping you to focus on work. This way you will be more productive and have more time to check in with colleagues.

5. Downtime

Plan breaks in the day, just like the ones you would take in the office for tea and lunch or to catch up with colleagues. Make sure to have conversations that go beyond the task at hand to discuss everyday events as you would in an on-site environment.

Be kind to yourself by making self care a priority. These breaks help to keep fatigue in check and allow you the chance to check in with work colleagues, household chores or with family members. Take walks or exercise outside to ensure you get fresh air.

6. Use digital tools

Working from home does not mean you are disconnected from your team. There are many digital tools to connect you with others that can be used effectively during social distancing. Microsoft Teams and Skype for Business provide opportunities for team meetings. This allows colleagues to connect digitally, share ideas or resolve any challenges they may be facing.

But don't just keep these tools for work related meetings. Why not organise a virtual pub meet up, a quiz or a bingo session? During **Mental Health Awareness Week** consider a 'random acts of kindness game' where individuals share small gestures of kindness that can really brighten up someone else's day.

7. Communicate, communicate and communicate

When in the remote mode, your voice and online communication becomes your personality. It is important to communicate effectively and clearly with your colleagues, clients and family members. This can be hard initially as you are not in front of your colleagues or clients.

Many people are reluctant to use the video camera when connected via Microsoft Teams or Skype for Business. Video conferencing in all meetings will massively improve your sense of connection with others.

8. Priority list

Having a to do list helps you to prioritise those areas that are time sensitive and important. While at home there can be more distractions and therefore a priority list is helpful to ensure you get work done and are able to make time to connect with others. Be kind to yourself by making sure you prioritise your own needs.

9. Maintain clear work hours

Working from home offers additional time on hand as there is no commuting. Maintaining a professional start and finish time is key to creating a balance. Set alarms on your phone or set your computer to log off at specific times.

When the time comes to leave your work station take a short break or leave the house for a walk to mark the end of the day. This way you will balance professional and personal time appropriately and ensure you have time to connect with others.

Finally remember that adjusting to change in difficult circumstances can take its toll both physically and mentally. When times get tough, ensure you remain kind to yourself with these reminders.

8 kindness commitments

1. You are not "working from home", you are "staying home during a pandemic trying to work"
2. You have not been "redeployed" you have been "assigned a new work role during a pandemic and you are trying to deploy yourself"
3. You are not "in your usual workplace" you are "in your usual workplace, during a pandemic, in very unusual circumstances, trying to work"
4. Your personal physical and mental health is far more important than anything else right now
5. You should not try to compensate for lost productivity by working longer hours
6. You will be kind to yourself and not judge how you are coping based on how you see others coping
7. You will be kind to others and not judge how they are coping based on how you are coping
8. Your team's success will not be measured the same way as it was when things were normal.

To find out more about our emotional wellbeing services, visit **nuffieldhealth.com/emotionalwellbeing** or speak to your Nuffield Health Client Director.

To read more of our articles celebrating Mental Health Awareness Week visit **nuffieldhealth.com/workplace-wellbeing** to see how kindness can positively impact your wellbeing.