

10 WAYS TO STAY HAPPY AND HEALTHY WHEN WORKING FROM HOME

Under current conditions, many businesses have chosen to move to remote work. While this may initially be challenging for some, a greater focus on telework has the potential to improve the function of organizations in ways that will last long into the future.

Telework is a skill that is mastered through practice; organizations or individuals who view it merely as a stopgap measure will not realize the benefits.

Much discussion of telework tends to focus on the employer side of the arrangement. However, individual employees both can and should take a proactive role in developing this capability to make it effective and enjoyable. We've compiled some suggestions to guide telework novices and veterans alike toward a successful and sustainable experience.

Even if this shift is temporary for many, organizations and individuals that build their capacity for telework will see benefits that persist. They'll be more communicative, delivery-centric, and inclusive of people who aren't present. Hopefully, organizations and individuals may decide to keep practicing remote work, recognizing that it is a core competency that, used in tandem with colocated work, provides maximum benefit to both employer and employee.

Once people have learned to thrive in a telework environment, they can integrate their work and life more fully.



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1. Over-Communicate

We often do not realize how much we interact with colleagues when we share space. Maintaining a similar level of communication is key to keeping work moving and eliminating any misunderstandings that may arise. Set and articulate clear expectations. Pick up the phone a little more often than you otherwise might. Send status reports, even when you think everyone already knows how things are going. Leverage new channels like Slack or even WhatsApp to share status and content.



2. Define Boundaries

Mark the beginning and end of the workday in time and space. Take a 'walk to work' by going around the block and re-entering the home as work. Start your day with a 'commute' during which you might listen to a favorite podcast, read, or take the time to enjoy your morning coffee. The point is to mentally prepare just as you might when you go to the office. Take time to decompress when the work day is over, beware of any tendency for work stress or tasks to bleed into the rest of your life.



3. Produce Results

Don't hesitate to share work in progress. Because communicating at a distance is inherently more challenging, it is important to produce something to which colleagues can react. Whereas ideas brought up for discussion can easily vanish into the digital ether when the conversation is over, shareable materials provide a jumping-off point for future improvement.



4. Take Breaks

Every workday, no matter how busy, has a few breaks and transitions—five minutes before a meeting starts, or the time it takes to walk to a lunch spot, or a chat on the way to the rest rooms. Preserving precious opportunities to recharge and reflect is key to keeping telework sustainable. No one can or should maintain 100% focus on work all of the time, and the most productive people actually take more breaks than you might think. Get up from your seat at least once per hour. Take a longer break every few hours, and go somewhere other than the fridge!



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5. Stay Social

Social interactions and friendships at work are important; they are a critical component of mental health. When people go virtual, the non-work parts of their interactions tend to fall by the wayside. Consider grabbing a coffee or beer just as you usually would, but over video chat. Find ways to enjoy time together by making explicitly social/non-work plans, even when apart. Play a video game while chatting. Send a snapshot of your lunch.



6. Connect Creatively

When remote, people tend to become even more reliant on email and phone. Make use of any and all available tools to maximize the fidelity of communication. If describing something isn't working, take a photo and send it. Sketch an idea and scan it. Share screens or leverage social media. Many surveys of our clients show that staff wish there was more use of video and chat and less focus on phone and email, even when they are in the office.



7. Stay Safe, Be Alert

If you or your organization are not accustomed to working remotely, it's a good idea to brush up on security risks, policies, and best practices. When virtual connection is the only option, everyone is more vulnerable to hackers, phishing, and scams. It only takes one incident to grind business to halt.



8. Make Space

Even if it is the proverbial kitchen table, make sure there is a suitable space for your work. Just like at the office, it is best if you have more than one work point. This should include multiple positions and postures, such as a spot on the couch to read and a high table for working at standing height. Don't hesitate to experiment; a closet or a car may actually be a great place for a conference call.



9. Build Trust

Without the natural relationship building that occurs when people are in close proximity, teams need to work to build and maintain trust and transparency. Keep people up to date, delivering when you say you will and reporting back when you can't. Check in and consider what is and isn't working about the model—be explicit—and make adjustments. Always assume positive intent.

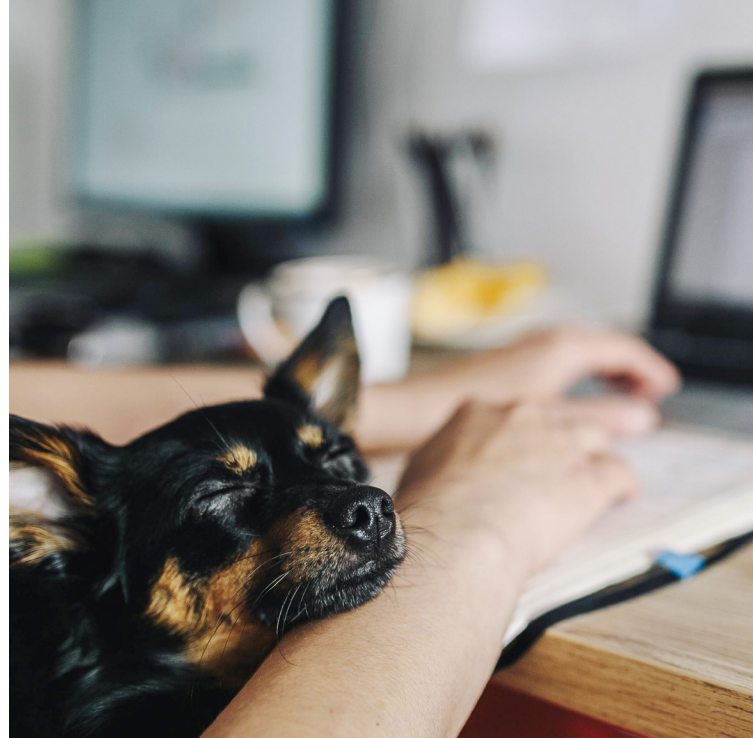


10. Get Outside

Spending time outdoors is proven to be beneficial to mental and physical health. Even if you did not usually do so when working at the office, this is an opportunity to try a new habit that supports long-term wellbeing and performance. At multiple times throughout the day, go outside for some fresh air and sunlight—go to the park, or just walk around the block.

When people are trusted to work where they want and need to, they gain time to exercise and eat right, to be with their families, and to engage in activities they enjoy.

We've spoken to more than one person who credits remote work with triggering a transformation in workplace health and satisfaction. That's something that we can all endorse.



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