



WHAT DOES ENFORCED HOME WORKING MEAN FOR EMPLOYEE WELLBEING?

Top tips for physical and mental wellbeing when working from home.

With the lines between staff's personal and professional lives becoming blurred, working remotely won't necessarily improve work-life balance. Make sure you help yourself to work remotely to best effect whilst looking after your physical and mental health and wellbeing.

As Coronavirus sweeps the UK, we will continue to see increasing numbers of people choosing or being forced to leave their usual office environment and work at home. What does this mean for wellbeing and morale?

Much of the evidence about home working points to positive benefits, including improved work-life balance and increases in job satisfaction and productivity. However, it is important to note that such evidence is based primarily on studies of individuals who have chosen to work at home. And in many cases, they will have collaborated with their employer to ensure this arrangement is effective for both parties. Imagine now the situation where many thousands of individuals are forced to work from home, with little time to consider any adjustments that might be necessary to make this work. There are a number of potential pitfalls of this situation in relation to an employee's morale.

The most obvious aspect is that of social support or interaction. While some employees might welcome the increased solitude, we know that some home workers suffer from feelings of isolation or loneliness that can negatively affect their mental health.

The sudden removal of individuals from their work-based (and indeed other) social circles could have a significantly negative effect on the welfare of some.

Maintaining communication networks while working remotely is important for the management of work tasks, but let's not forget that interpersonal interaction and sense of community is also important.

Second, let us not presume working at home will necessarily improve work-life balance. In fact, a failure to properly segment work and family or home life can increase feelings of work-life conflict and actually lead to reduced work satisfaction. Home-based employees need to feel they can still switch off at the end of the day and take breaks – this can be more difficult when the lines between home and work become blurred. This might be complicated further if other family are also at home, which is likely in the upcoming few weeks. Those who have tried to work at home with young children – or indeed with any caring responsibility – will appreciate how stressful this can be.

We have created our list of top tips to assist with both physical and mental health and wellbeing whilst working from home.

TOP TIPS TO KEEP YOU FEELING YOUR BEST



Physical health and wellbeing

- Try to use a proper office chair
- Stand up every hour and move away from the desk/table for 2-4min
- Stretch to ease out muscles
- Get some fresh air
- Take regular breaks
- Get some fresh air and exercise during your breaks, take a short walk to re-energise

Nutrition

- Stick to regular mealtimes
- Eat a substantial breakfast and include fat and protein such as porridge or Weetabix with some nuts or seeds
- Avoid unhealthy snacking habits
- Eat healthy snacks e.g. fresh fruit/oatcakes
- Drink a large glass of water every hour or so to keep hydrated
- Limit caffeine to 4 cups of caffeinated tea or coffee a day - caffeine can make you anxious and tired and can interrupt a good night's sleep
- Make a juice/smoothie to increase fruit and vegetables in your diet
- Wash hands, food utensils and surfaces when preparing or serving food
- Keep food refrigerated
- Avoid preparing food if feeling unwell
- Try not to eat out of boredom, be mindful about eating. Perhaps portion out snacks for the day and stick to those portions
- Make a food plan for the week
- Buy frozen fruit and vegetables
- Batch cook stews and soups and portion out to have as daily meals

Mental health and wellbeing

- Try to designate an area in the house that becomes your office. Clear away 'homely' effects. If you only use this area when you are working, there will be less of a feeling of being in the house for 24/7
- Take a walk in the morning before you settle down to work. That way you will feel as though you are approaching the workplace fresh, rather than tumbling out of bed!
- Try to stick to a regular working schedule
- Treat your working time with respect and do not be distracted by household chores or the tv
- At the end of the day go for a walk to help you draw the line between work and home life
- Try not to work after 6pm
- Don't work late into the evening as the blue light from your device can interfere with sleep
- Remain positive and remember that nothing lasts forever
- Practice mindfulness. Download the free Calm app - www.calm.com
- Keep in contact with friends/colleagues on the phone
- Get dressed, working in your PJ's can be unproductive and lower your mood
- Support mental wellbeing by getting outside even for 10 minutes a day for a dose of vitamin D and some fresh air
- Take regular screen breaks
- Have a clear and organised workspace
- Take a break from the news, try not to let the Coronavirus take over your life.