

Keeping in good mental health when working from home

Working from home for the foreseeable future is uncharted territory for many of us. Here are some top tips about making home a base that fulfils as many essential human needs as possible.

Mental health is as important as our physical health:

1. **Keep boundaries**

Your home needs to remain associated with feelings of rest, play and love. Keep work papers to one room (ideally not your kitchen, lounge or bedroom). Keep a physical boundary. If possible, close the door from home activities.

2. **Lock work away**

Don't leave lingering reminders of work around. If you must work in family rooms, buy a locked cabinet and when you finish, lock work away and out of site.

3. **Take breaks**

Establish routine. A start and finish time with planned breaks. The brain needs a break every 50-90 minutes. The body needs to move every 15 minutes. Set a 'move now' alarm if needed. Focus on doing something different each break.

4. **Enjoy**

Enjoy the comforts homework can bring. With no commute, can you sleep longer? Do you have home-based activities and hobbies that provide a completely different challenges from work (e.g. exercise, gardening, cooking, cleaning, even artistic decorating)? Have something to look forward to everyday.

5. **Keep active**

Don't go from the computer to the TV. Take a break from technology and screens e.g., exercise, stretch, yoga, dance, run. Create a routine with a variety of indoor and outdoor activities which achieve 10,000 steps daily.

6. **Keep connected**

We all need to feel that we belong, and this is a significant challenge when we are working from home. If other family members and house mates are at



home, organize synchronized breaks. If you live alone, actively organize to have contact with friends and family on a daily basis.

7. Focus on inclusion

Recognize that others will also be facing new and perhaps unexpected challenges. We all come from different backgrounds and home situations and we can't assume our experience is the same as others. Reach out to your team members and ask them how they are, what they need and how you can all work together virtually to feel more included.

8. Sense of achievement

We all need to feel we have purpose. Reflect and take an audit of what you have achieved each day and each week. Keep a running list of completed activities. This will help you feel motivated in quiet times.

9. Keep upbeat

We are all more than our on-line presence. Turn camera's on. Bring personality, humor, gratitude, warmth and compassion to daily communication.

10. Grasp time

Take this time as an opportunity to learn new things both within and outside work. Listen to interesting podcasts and Ted Talks for example. Set yourself targets. Discuss your new learnings with friends, family and team.

11. Ask for help

Recognize your own needs for connectedness, space, rest, reflection and play. We are all unique. Reach out for help from work colleagues as needed. Recognize symptoms of stress and anxiety both within you and others. Stay safe, be kind to yourself and others.

12. Use the Employee Assistance Programme *(for BP employees only)*

You can find lots more information online or if you need to speak to someone you can call the EAP directly.