

Supporting you: Working from home

Top tips

Here are ten top tips to support your mental wellbeing as we continue to spend more time working from home.

My name is Deborah Winks and I am a Health and Social Care Lecturer and former Family Support and Parenting Manager for Flying Start, Wrexham. I am also a single parent to an amazing little boy, and know first-hand how difficult it has been to manage working from home and feel like a good enough parent and be good enough at my job.

We have had to adapt the way that we work in recent months and these changes have seen many of us working from home or doing a blend of home and work based work. Without the face-to-face contact with our colleagues, the designated office space to work, and the journey to and from work to reflect on the day, it can feel overwhelming to work from home. This can make us feel like there is no structure to the day and often leaves us feeling like there are no boundaries between home and work life.

These are my top tips to look after your wellbeing whilst working from home, and provide you with some tools to help you create a separate home and work life.

1. Create a 'to do' list to keep you focussed

Plan your week, allowing you time for all of the things on your 'to do' list as well as the video calls and meetings that you need to attend. Be realistic with your time and make sure you leave enough time between video calls as they can run over and leave you feeling overwhelmed. **Actively taking control improves your wellbeing.**



2. Have a defined start and end to your day

Make sure you leave enough time in the morning to get a good breakfast, get dressed and do the things that you need to do before starting your day. Distractions at home are difficult when you are trying to work, and it's easy for work and home to blend into one, but if you are disciplined and set a routine, you will adapt to the change much easier. **Remember that change takes time.**

3. Remember to take a lunch break and step away from your work space to do this

It is really important to look after yourself and prioritise your lunch break. Make yourself a nice lunch the night before as if you were going to the office. Having something nice to look forward to motivates you and acknowledges that you are important. Step away from your work space for lunch as this is an important time for you to recharge. **It can be difficult to do this but the more you practice it, the more chance you have of it becoming a habit.**



4. Use video technology to speak to your colleagues

Don't underestimate the difference a friendly face can make. Set up a lunch time coffee and catch up or quiz. Technology can be scary for many of us but the more you use it the easier it will become. Feeling part of a team is still really important and gives us a sense of belonging. **The more tools we have in our toolkit to support our wellbeing, the better we will feel.**



5. Try and make a small 'office space' so that you can separate work and home

If you have the space for a home office, fantastic. If not, do what you can to make what space you do have work for you. Having a designated space helps you to stay focussed and shift from home to work. It also means that you can step away from work during your lunch and at the end of the day. If you don't have space to set up a small desk (I've set up a nice space under the stairs) then be consistent in where you do work, and consider packing everything up into a box or a bag at the end of the day, preferably before you go for a walk. **Make the space work for you.**

6. Acknowledge how hard the change to home working can be

It is perfectly normal to find working from home a challenge. I thrive on a routine and things have dramatically changed over the last 7 months. Remind yourself of this and don't place expectations on yourself. **You are doing the best that you can.**

7. Take a walk at the end of your 'working day'

I often plan for the day on the journey into work and reflect on the day on the way home. This helps the transition from 'work Debs' to 'home Debs' and helps me organise my thoughts and put work away so that I can be the best parent that I can be. So many of us no longer have this option but we can factor in a 10 minute walk at the start or end of the day to support our brain to process and order the working day, so that you can switch off and avoid letting work creep into your personal time. **Give it a go - go for a walk at the end of the day and see if it helps.**



8. Pack away your work space and turn off all work related devices

It can be too easy to log onto our work phone or laptop after work has finished. This can set an unrealistic expectation on yourself and merges work and home. This can have a negative impact on your work/life balance and impact your mental wellbeing without you realising that it is happening. Be clear on your availability and turn off all of your work related devices at the end of your working day. **This is a healthy habit to get into, keep at it.**

9. Actively support your mental wellbeing

Remember to be kind and compassionate to yourself. Make a conscious effort to do one thing every day that supports your wellbeing; do some deep breathing; look up a positive quote every day; make a running list of 'I am good enough because...', 'I smiled today because...'; look online for some wellbeing ideas.



10. Don't suffer in silence

Remember for many of us, this is a new experience and routine. We may not have as much social interaction as we used to and we may be feeling alone. Reach out. Spend time thinking about who is in your support circle and use them when needed. It isn't easy to be honest but I promise it will be worth it. I've worked hard to build up a network that I can call on when needed and I am not embarrassed to say that I use them. I couldn't manage without them and I know that they value having me at the end of the phone too.

Speak to your manager and be honest. As a manager I really want to help all of my staff to feel strong and supported. **It's ok not to be ok.**

And remember 'you don't have to be perfect to be good enough'.



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