

COVID-19

Looking after yourself when working from home

Your workplace may have asked you to either voluntarily or as a requirement, work from home for a certain period of time to reduce the potential spread of the coronavirus. While the procedures in place are designed to keep you safe and healthy, sometimes they can negatively impact your wellbeing and bring up feelings of isolation. It is important to look after your wellbeing if you have been asked to work from home and remain connected with those around you. The following strategies are recommended:

1. **Stay connected.** It is important to stay connected with your colleagues, when you are working from home. Even though you are not physically in the office, you can still email, call and instant message. Maintaining a normality of communication gives you a sense of social support and can reduce feelings of isolation. Your workplace should have put in place technology to continue meetings and communications via video or telephone, if you are unsure about your specific situation, speak to your manager about the procedures in place.
2. **Maintain a routine.** While you are not physically at work, it is important to develop a new routine to promote productivity and give yourself a sense of normality. Our minds and bodies crave routine and regular schedules, so adapt your old work routine into your new "working from home" routine. This may include lunch breaks, phone check-ins with your manager, small daily work goals, an exercise routine or maybe even a mindfulness practice. You will likely have "more" hours in the day due to not having to commute to work, so use this time to do activities which will strengthen your wellbeing and maintain purpose!
3. **Control your devices.** In today's society, we are constantly being bombarded with news alerts and updates on our devices with both helpful and unfortunately unhelpful information. While we need to stay informed around COVID-19, when we are bombarded by too much information we can often become overwhelmed and anxious. Practice controlling your device use during this time. To reduce anxiety while you are at home, it may be helpful to turn off notifications from your news apps and only check news websites once a day. If your social media feed is turning more harmful than helpful, consider doing a social media detox and deleting these apps from your devices temporarily to give your mind a break and reduce your stress levels.
4. **Focus on what you can control.** An essential strategy for dealing with challenging situations is to identify the extent to which we have personal control or influence over these events. When we have little or no control over an external situation, we need to be mindful of how much time, energy and effort we attribute to worrying about that event. Otherwise, we may be 'wasting our time' getting stressed about something that is not within our control to change, which can become extremely frustrating and overwhelming. But, if we can exert, even a small amount of influence or control over a situation, then we can respond in a proactive way. We can create an action plan and set realistic goals to pursue. In relation to COVID-19, we do not have control over the government's response, our organisation's response or other people's actions in terms of self-isolating, but we do have control over our own actions. Ways you can exert control while working from home include: continuing to practice good hygiene, self-isolating if you have any symptoms of illness, limiting exposure to news channels and not engaging in hysteria conversations around COVID-19.

Working from home can be challenging and bring up feelings of disconnection and unease. The suggestions included in this article are intended to give you a greater sense of control around your reactions to COVID-19 and how to maintain your work performance and duties during this time.

If you are struggling with feelings of isolation or anxiety around COVID-19 while you are working from home, you can book in for a phone or video session with a psychologist from the Centre for Corporate Health's EAP program on 1800 959 956.