

BEST PRACTICES FOR WORKING FROM HOME DURING COVID-19



HOW TO BEST WORK FROM HOME DURING COVID-19

Below you can find guidelines and best practices on how to work from home and specifically how to work from home with children.

What can you do to prepare to work from home? Good communication is super critical, and so is staying connected with your team during work hours.

Some quick tips:

- Set up a dedicated virtual meeting room for your team so that you can have a virtual meeting room where you can meet. This can be done through programs like Zoom.
- Make use of Slack and other collaboration tools to stay connected and aligned

It is very important that you take care of yourself during this transition. Here are a few things to consider:

If you feel unwell

If you are feeling unwell, your focus should be on rest and recovery. Not working from home. If you begin to experience any symptoms or health concerns, please seek medical attention.

Maintain routines that helped you stay refreshed in the home office

For example, if you go for a walk to get a coffee and clear your head each morning, maintain that practice. Though do avoid crowds.

Retain personal space

If possible, use a separate “office” room for working, so there’s a distinction between “work time” and “private time”.

Take breaks

Take breaks seriously and schedule them so they happen. Connect with a colleague over Zoom and have a coffee together.

Tips for people who are new to working from home:

- Set expectations with your family and friends that you are actually working .
- Keep routines and attend all meetings - just do it remotely
- Be aware that your body language may not be as clear over video conference.
- Clarify quickly and be more explicit than usual.
- Be very clear with your colleagues when you are working and when you are not.
- Follow good Virtual meeting etiquette
- Ensure everyone has the opportunity to be heard
- Even though you are at home, consider using a headset for better audio quality

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Working From Home With Children

There are many advantages to being able to work from home. However, the transition can also be a little challenging. And when you have children and schools are closed...even more so! Here are some things you can think about that might make work, and life, a little easier.

Keep the lines of communication open

Keep the lines of communication open with your manager, teammates and stakeholders. The more people understand that you are working with young children in the house, the more they will understand the inevitable disruptions.

Also, keep the lines of communication open with the people who live with you! Ensure they understand that you will be working and agree together what you all need to do to make this new living/working situation effective for all of you.

If you have a co-parent or care provider, good communication with them is also critical. Talk through the daily schedule and determine who is going to work when and be flexible as things change.

Communicate with your manager if you think you may need some flexibility

Talk to your manager if you feel you may need a little flexibility so you can share duties with a co-parent or care provider. Or, so you can balance work around nap times, meals, or bath time. Have an honest and open conversation and agree on a schedule. Then, make sure your team and stakeholders know that schedule and block it in your calendar. That way, you have set clear expectations with your co-workers and when you say you are available you are available. And, when you are with your kids, you are wholly with your kids.

Be flexible

This is not an ideal situation, by any means, but we do still have a lot of work to do. It is OK for you to expect flexibility from your manager and colleagues, but you will need to be flexible also.

Don't sweat the small stuff

If your children make noise in the background or wander into view on Zoom, people will absolutely understand, and many of your colleagues are probably dealing with the same thing.

Have empathy and assume good intent

Have empathy and assume good intent from your colleagues. While we are working from home in this unprecedented situation, we are also trying to drive forward key priorities and keep our business running. A colleague may not have children or might have better access to childcare, but still be working through their own stress and pressures. Alternatively, they may be anxious for your attention when you are not able to give it fully. This is when you need to assume good intent, communicate, and partner with them to work out how to best deliver what they need in a way that works for your situation.

Remember you are not alone

Working from home and practicing social distancing can feel isolating enough without the additional stress of school closures. Here are a couple of things you can do:

- Find a colleague in a similar situation and set up a regular virtual 1:1 to share tips, talk and get it off your chest. Or, talk to someone in a completely different situation and chat about anything BUT kids. Do whatever you need to connect.
- Talk to your manager – maybe there is a way to make things easier that you haven't thought about yet.

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Some practicalities

- If your child needs your assistance while you are on a conference call, quickly excuse yourself, explain that you need to help your child, turn off your video and mute your microphone. Do what you need to do and come back. People will understand.
- If your child is making noise and it is a distraction for your colleagues, just hit mute until you need to talk.
- Find some fun ways for your children to communicate with you when you need to focus and require quiet and minimal disruptions. One example is to make it a game and give them their own packet of Post-its so that they can write messages to you. You could even build a suggestion box or mailbox where they can 'post' them.
- Talk with your kids about when and how they can get your attention if they need you. If they are old enough, you can set aside times during the day to have a quick chat on how things are going and what they might need. Letting your kids know you will check in with them every hour, for example, will help them feel supported and cared for.

Stick to a routine that makes sense for your family. Routine is important to kids so when possible stick to a familiar schedule. Have the kids get dressed in the morning as if they were going to school, stick to the same bedtime, shower schedule and family mealtimes, if possible.

Preparing in advance can also help you manage the practicalities of both parent and employee. Some ideas include laying out clothes for the day if you aren't able to help them get dressed; packing lunches and snacks for your kids that they can get on their own; setting up different play stations they can move to for a change of pace (legos, doll houses, crafts, colouring, games, treasure hunts); having nap time ready to go (books, blankets, and special stuffed animals at the ready).

When you feel like you need to be in two places at once, for example, feeding your kids lunch and being on a conference call, or starting a new movie for them to watch, consider dialing in to the meeting instead of video. This way, you can listen and contribute while tending to your kids at the same time. Do note that your attention will be divided, so this won't work for every call. It may be suitable, though, for calls in which you are primarily a listener.

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WORKING WITH SOMEONE WHO IS WORKING FROM HOME WITH CHILDREN

With many schools closing around the world, this guide is designed to help you understanding how you might be able to help your colleagues who are juggling work and a changing home dynamic.

If you have a direct report who is now working at home with children:

If you have a direct report who is now working at home with children due to school closures, here are a few things you can think about or do:

Have an honest and open conversation with them about what flexibility they may require to make this work. Yes, we have to keep the business running, and we have some big priorities we need to hit, but this is also an extraordinary situation. Be creative and partner with your people about what schedule will work. And, remind them to communicate the schedule to their team and stakeholders to help manage expectations and maintain transparency.

Remember everyone will have a different situation. Some members of your team may have a baby, others three teenagers. Their needs will be very different.

Be thoughtful about when you schedule important meetings. Is it during a time when a member of your team has said they can't be available? Layering on that extra stress might make them feel compelled to join, or worse, feel excluded. Be open to scheduling meetings at different times to help accommodate schedules. Be very clear about what scheduled meetings are important to attend and which are optional. Help the whole team be open, flexible and inclusive to accommodate the needs of the team while keeping our business running. This is your role as a leader.