Homeworking – Hints and Tips

With the upcoming challenges we are facing globally with covid-19, working from home is something that many of us are having to practice for the first time. Here are some hints and tips to try and make the transition a little easier.

Maintain a regular schedule

Setting a schedule not only provides structure to the day, it also helps you stay motivated. Start the day as you would if you worked in an office: Get up early, get dressed, brush your hair, take off your slippers, make a tea and try to avoid online distractions once you sit down to work. Some people go for a walk before and after work to replicate a commute. Say good morning to your colleagues over email, IM, Slack etc.

Create a workspace

Create a space where you can be comfortable, focused and productive. You also want to make sure your friends and loved ones understand that even though you are at home, you are off limits during your scheduled work hours. If possible, set up a desk in a quiet area near natural light. Your computer screen should be an arm's length away from you. Try to find a comfortable chair with back support. Your feet should be flat on the floor and your knees bent at a 90-100 degree angle. Some people put their computer and work items away in the evening, creating a demarcation.

Take regular breaks

The office day is broken up by meetings, kitchen chats, lunch and toilet breaks. Working alone, without face-to-face interaction, makes it easy to work for long, unbroken periods. It may be tempting to work flat out, especially if you're trying to prove that you're productive at home. The brain is like any other muscle, it needs to rest. Go for a walk, get some exercise, stretch. Then get back to work.

Stay connected

Prolonged isolation can lead to decreased productivity and motivation. If you don't have a job that requires face-time with others on a daily basis you need to put in the extra effort to stay connected. We recommend trying to call colleagues rather than always emailing or messaging. It is important for your psychological well-being to ensure that you are communicating and do not feel isolated and alone. If you struggle to apply

yourself when working alone, try virtual ' body doubling', connecting with a colleague via skype video call and both work 'live' together on your projects rather than chatting.

For people who already struggle with anxiety disorders, the daily reminders and updates about coronavirus sweeping the globe is only adding insult to injury. Of course, coronavirus fears aren't entirely unfounded, it is normal to be worried about the outbreak. By following the government advice, and the correct preventative methods to protect yourself and others. This can help you to feel more control in the situation and ease your anxiety. Check out our Mental Health top tips blog for more info.

Virtual communication may increase the risk of misunderstanding during stressful times, such as now. Be proactive in your effort to validate messages sent and received by asking questions and using considerate language to soften messages. Be kind and empathic.

Celebrate your wins

When working on your own at home staying motivated can be difficult, especially when distractions — Facebook, that pile of laundry, the clothes that needs organising — abound. To maintain momentum, spend a moment or two acknowledging what you *have* been able to accomplish that day, rather than fixating on what you still need to do. Take some time at the end of the day to attend to the things that you achieved instead of the things you didn't get done. The daily reminder of what you were able to finish will help create a virtuous cycle going forward.

Principles to Remember:

Do:

- Stick to a routine
- Create a dedicated workspace and let your family and friends know that you are unavailable during work hours (where possible)
- Focus on what you've accomplished at the end of each day to keep yourself motivated
- Tell your manager if you are struggling to work effectively from home. Lots of us will be in the same positon so let's all be honest and support each other
- Be proactive in asking your manager for feedback
- Get in touch with your IT function if you need assistance

Don't:

- Try to work all day without regular breaks, your productivity & health will suffer
- Isolate yourself - talk to colleagues on the phone & skype (or equivalent)
- Stay in your PJs and try to work from the sofa