

APRIL 2020



# TIPS AND TRICKS A GUIDE TO WORKING FROM HOME FOR EMPLOYEES



The aim of this guide is to provide useful information to support you in being productive and effective in working from home. For many people this is a new journey and will take some time and adjustment to get right. This guide offers simple suggestions and advice to assist in your working from home transition.

This guide contains advice that at the time of writing, is compliant with WH&S best practice and in line with Government advice.

## GROUND RULES FOR YOUR TEAM WORKING FROM HOME

- We are all in this together!
- No phone calls after 6 pm unless absolutely necessary
- Emails must be responded to within 12 hours
- You must be on time to all meetings - if something unexpected happens, send a quick email advising you will be late.
- No multi-tasking during meetings - while it might be tempting to respond to an email or txt, you must focus 100% of your attention on the meeting.
- Ensure confidentiality of all company information. Close the door and use headphones if you are on a confidential call.
- Ensure confidential documentation is kept locked up and if it needs to be destroyed that ensure it's done in line with company policies
- Everyone must be inclusive - no mini groups or teams forming and intentionally leaving people out who need to be included - again, we are all in this together!
- If you are struggling, you must speak up and let your manager know. We want to make this work and make sure you are okay.
- Take regular breaks





## GROUND RULES FOR YOUR TEAM WORKING FROM HOME CONT

- Everyone must keep communicating, be open and honest and support one another.
- Look out for one another and make sure people are doing OK!
- Make sure you intentionally switch off at the end of the day and look after yourself



### KEEP TO THE RULES

Make a real point of familiarising and keeping to the rules outlined by your manager. Remember remote working is probably also new for your manager, so having everyone across the same rules and guidelines will significantly help in this transition.



### SET UP A DEDICATED WORKPLACE

Identify an appropriate space to set up for work. Ideally try to avoid your bedroom or any space that you may associate with leisure or down time. The ideal is to have a specific room, home office or surface that you can consistently work from. This will help you be most productive each day.

Minimise background noise if you need to talk on the phone or video call. Be mindful if you step outside to take a call because you may encounter random background noise such as a plane flying overhead or a lawn mower. Virtual backgrounds are available on video conferencing tools such as Zoom. This is very handy if you have a cluttered or untidy workspace.



## TIPS FOR INTERNET USE

Make sure your home internet is adequate, if your bandwidth is low and you're on a video call, try shutting down other programs to lighten the load on your connection. If your connection is really choppy, you can often shut off the video portion of a call and participate with audio only, which defeats the purpose of seeing your team but will still allow you to participate in the conversation.



Another Internet hog... Kids. If your connection is not robust, set some ground rules about when kids can't be online because Mum or Dad is on a conference call, or stagger your video meetings with your partner or other family members if possible.



## GET READY AS IF YOU ARE GOING TO THE OFFICE

While it may be tempting to roll out of bed and stay in your pajamas all day, there is, in fact, a mental association you make by getting yourself up and ready and therefore in work mode.



Try to do all the things you would usually do to get ready in the morning to go to the office (minus the commute), set your alarm for a reasonable time, get up, get dressed and groomed as you would for going into an office.

Wear shoes - do you go barefoot or wear slippers in the office? The simple act of wearing shoes can help switch your mindset.



At the end of the work day, change out of your 'office clothes' and this will assist in flipping you into home or wind down mode





## GET INTO YOUR GROOVE AND BUILD A ROUTINE

Moving from a workplace office to home office is going to take some time to adjust and get into your groove. It may also take some trial and error to get right.

You need to establish a new normal for yourself, set yourself with start and finish times (obviously this doesn't always transpire but it pays to try really hard!), have set breaks, know when you're most productive and what complex tasks might require more brain power than others and schedule this accordingly. It also pays to recognise when you are going to be most distracted and how to keep yourself focussed.



## PLAN YOUR SCHEDULE

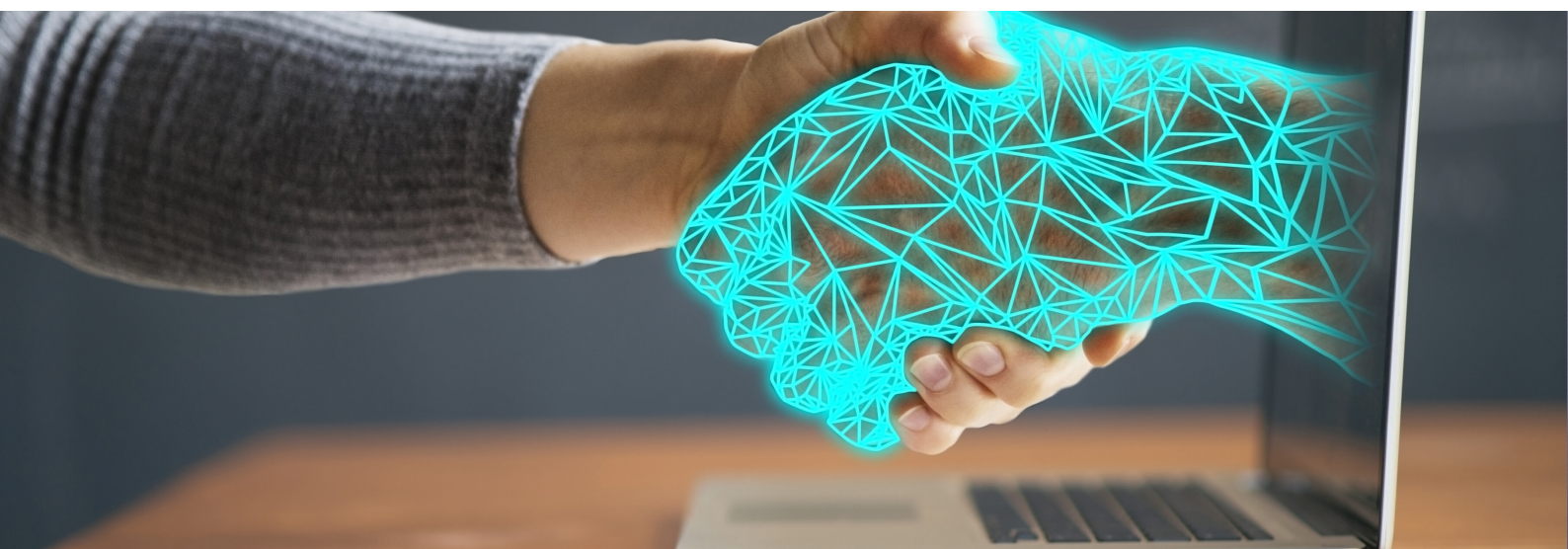
Spend some time either at the end of the previous day or beginning of the working day setting a plan out for your day.

The simplest way to do this is to make a list and tick each thing off as you complete it (you can also use your calendar or any other online resources you find helpful). Obviously, depending on how the day plays out, your plans may change, but intentionally setting yourself up for your day will give you purpose and keep you on task.



## DON'T LET FRIENDS STOP BY

Given the current requirement to socially distance, the Australian Government has strongly stipulated that it's not appropriate to have friends or family drop in regardless of whether you are working from home or not. If you're missing social interaction, try a video call or perhaps even a virtual dinner party with friends.



## BE VISIBLE AND COMMUNICATE CLEARLY

Make yourself available and ensure you are making yourself 'virtually' visible. Communication is critical. Provide updates and if you're behind or aren't able to meet a deadline be sure that you let everyone know.

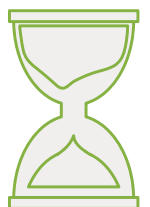


Don't disappear! Make sure you make it to every virtual meeting and take opportunities to speak up and voice your opinions or expertise.

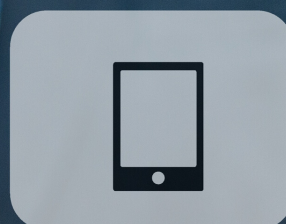
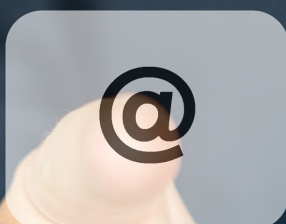
## MANAGE EXPECTATIONS

Have a discussion with your manager about what can actually be accomplished from home. Ask your manager:

- What the priorities are, and how tasks will get done?
- How is your team going to track the projects they're working on?
- How will they meet to discuss this?
- What technology will be used?
- Will there be standing meetings at a certain time to get everyone coordinated?



This should be an ongoing conversation. Remember, going fully remote is a new experience for many companies and their workers. Be honest about what isn't working or can't get done in these circumstances. More overall communication is going to be necessary.





## SPEAK UP IF YOU'RE STRUGGLING

There is nothing easy about moving from an office where you have reasonably easy access to people, communication is open and you can for the most part be entirely focussed on work. Being at home can be tough, particularly if you have kids off school or other distractions. Be sure to tell your manager if you are struggling and they can support you and work together on finding a solution.



## SELF CARE

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## MENTAL HEALTH

Remote working can take some major adjustment and this coupled with the uncertain and chaotic time we are currently facing can have a major impact on our mental health.



Acknowledge and accept how you are feeling and reach out for help if you need it. Our daily lives are consumed by media stories on COVID-19, be mindful of the amount of time you are spending watching the news and reading media articles. This can impact your mental health.

A number of resources are available and these are listed on the last page of this document.



## EXERCISE

Exercise is vital for maintaining mental and physical health. Ensure you factor time in each day to exercise. You could utilise the time you used to spend commuting to do some exercise. Given the current restriction on our movements and closure of gyms, you will need to be creative! There are plenty of online resources available through online platforms, Youtube or apps.



Of course if you are able, an outdoor walk, bike ride or run is an option. Make sure you are doing it alone or in line with the government restrictions on group gatherings

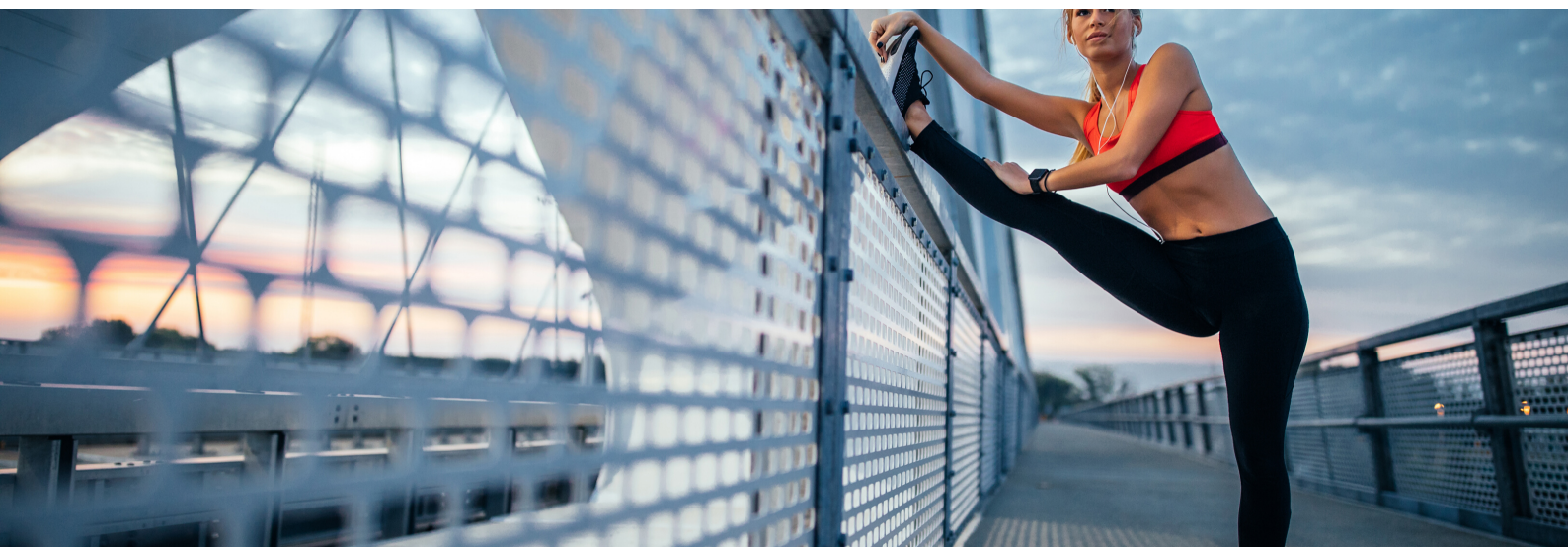
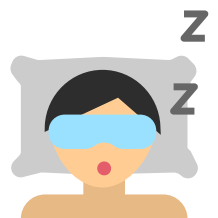
## MEAL AND SNACK PREP

Constant trips to the kitchen will suck the productivity out of your day, prepare your meals and snacks in advance for the day as you would if you were going to an office location.



## SLEEP

Getting enough sleep is really important for maintaining your health and wellbeing. While it may be tempting to stay up late and watch your favourite TV series because you don't have to go anywhere in the morning, the reality is working at home requires you to be disciplined and maintain regular sleep and wake up times.





## TRANSFER YOUR COMMUTE TO INTENTIONAL RELAXATION

This is time for you to detach from work. Instead of starting and finishing your day by stressing out about getting somewhere on time, invest that time into either a relaxing ritual that gets you to a calm and clear state of mind or invest it into winding down your day so that you don't form a habit of working into the night.

It is really important you don't get in the habit of being a 'workaholic'. Work is now accessible to you 24 hours and you need to ensure you are disciplined and intentionally 'switch off'. While we are all adapting to a new normal (where there is little we can do outside of the house) try to find some new activities to enjoy. Suggestions:

- Read a book (an oldie but a goodie and a very obvious one)
- Listen to some music
- Play with your kids
- Let your kids teach you a new skill (perhaps you have a daughter that loves to dance or a son that loves gymnastics!)
- Bake a cake or cook a meal
- Set up a virtual dinner or drinks with friends
- Kick a ball in your backyard or shoot some basketball hoops
- Do some gardening
- Play a board game
- Meditate (there are lots of online resources available)



## KEEP CONNECTED

Keep connected with your work colleagues. Set up virtual tea breaks and if there are opportunities for you to remotely socialise make sure you make this a priority.

Keep communication open. If something is frustrating you, speak to your manager. Remember everyone is in this together and we want to make this work.



### IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

#### Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)

Beyond Blue 1300 224 636

Lifeline 13 11 14

Kids Helpline 1800 551 800

Confidential Helpline (National Sexual Assault, Family & Domestic Violence Counselling Service) 1800 RESPECT (1800 737 732)

Mens Line 1300 78 99 78

Relationships Australia 1300 364 277

**EMERGENCY 000**

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