

Working from Home During a Pandemic

During a pandemic, it may be necessary to transition your work from an office setting to your home. The following suggestions are intended to help you navigate this change:

Be Dependable and Responsive

Transitioning to working from home during a pandemic will require adjustment on the part of many colleagues and customers. Establish your reputation for being engaged and communicate effectively. Anticipate extra anxieties and demands. Be attentive to practicing etiquette that promotes respect, collaboration, and appreciation. Let people know that you have received requests from them and a realistic timeframe of when the task will be complete.

Avoid Unnecessary Multitasking

Most of us are aware that multitasking is no longer viewed as a productive means of conducting business. It is easy when one transitions to remote communications to forget this fact and become easily distracted. Be intentional in your communications with your peers, colleagues, and customers. Participate fully in conversations whether by phone or during video meetings. Avoid muting the sound so you can respond to other communications. Take part in discussions, ask questions, help to problem solve and suggest ideas.

Practice Trust

Working remotely assumes you are trusted. It is easy during a transition to feel isolated and anxious about your work. Employees new to working remotely place pressure upon themselves to “prove” that they are trustworthy with the new work arrangement. Going overboard with extra emails and phone calls will certainly give the impression that you are present. However, the described behaviors may create additional unnecessary work for others and give the impression that you are not confident in your independence. Be intentional in your communications. Emails and phone calls are useful only when they result in the exchange of new information and are task-related.

Establish a Workspace

Your work environment will influence your productivity. When possible, create a workspace that mimics the atmosphere that you perform best in. Ask yourself

questions such as: “Do I perform better in natural or bright, artificial lighting?” and “What level of background noise do I prefer?”

Remember that transitioning to working from home during a pandemic is different than times when you may have worked sporadically to complete a time sensitive project or catch up on emails. Use a desk and sitting arrangement that promotes proper posture. Many people find it is helpful to create a space that can be separated from their living space when they are not working. For example, use a separate room to work in or be diligent about “closing up shop” by removing work materials from common living spaces.

Institute a Work Schedule

Your work schedule will depend on your responsibilities and the needs of your organization. Be sure expectations are clearly defined to minimize misunderstanding and conflicts. Arrangements can vary and include standard business hours, flex hours, evenings, weekends, and “on call” hours. If your work includes global communications, you may be required to be available for electronic meetings during early morning or late evening hours. If you have flexibility with your schedule, choose hours that you know are your productive hours and take breaks during the hours when you have less energy. It is generally helpful to consider when the best time is for you to perform the following tasks:

- Respond to emails
- Interact with colleagues verbally via phone or video conferences
- Analyze problems and data
- Brainstorm and create

Communicating with Members of the Household

Communication with other members of the household is essential as you transition to working from home. The following suggestions will encourage all parties to verbalize needs, expectations, and create appropriate boundaries:

- Identify potential distractions and agree upon practices to reduce them.

- Define non-negotiable distractions such as, “No one can enter my workspace when I’m on a conference call unless there’s an emergency.”
- Write a list of agreed upon boundaries and review periodically to assure that they are still agreeable or if they need to be adapted. Posting the rules in a frequently viewed area such as on the refrigerator can be useful during the initial weeks of transitions to working from home.

Take Care of Yourself

Working from home requires the same attention to your physical and emotional well-being as working in an office. Continue to practice health recommendations set by the CDC and WHO. Take time for breaks and meals. Avoid continuous exposure to media coverage. Exercise. Avoid unhealthy practices such as overeating and excessive use of addictive substances including alcohol and nicotine. Establish a set time for sleeping and waking up. Be diligent – your body and mind require at least seven to eight hours of restful sleep. Be sure to connect with family and love ones even if you are limited to mobile devices.

Seek Help

Carebridge EAP and Work-Life benefit is available free and can be accessed 24/7 to assist you manage the worries and anxieties associated with a pandemic and to identify available resources. Your contact is kept confidential except in situations required by ethics and state/federal regulations, such as being at risk of harming yourself or others. To contact Carebridge call, 800.437.0911, email clientservice@carebridge.com, or download the Carebridge EAP app. Additional information to help you manage through the pandemic is available at myliferesource.com.

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