



WHEN HOME BECOMES THE WORKPLACE

**HOW TO CARE FOR
YOUR MENTAL
HEALTH WHILE
WORKING REMOTELY**



**Australian & New Zealand
Mental Health Association**

A REVOLUTIONISED WORKPLACE

In a bid to continue operating during COVID-19 while minimising business risk, thousands of businesses have been forced to implement a remote working schedule for employees, changing the way we connect, engage, and work.

Collectively, working from home has now become the norm for many employees, and steady routines have been set by singles, couples, and families around the world.

But combined with continued bouts of quarantine and sporadic lockdowns, how is this extra time out of a social working environment impacting on your mental wellbeing?

Read on to discover the impact of remote work on your mental health, as well as tools, techniques and plans to effectively manage your mental health and maintain wellbeing while working remotely.

BENEFITS OF WORKING FROM HOME

Of course, it's not all bad. Working from home can have positive impacts on your mental health and wellbeing, including:

- *Having a greater sense of control over your day*
- *Improved flexibility in working times and/or schedule*
- *Increased productivity*
- *Greater work-life balance*
- *Greater work satisfaction*
- *No commuting*
- *Decreased costs associated with travel and work-related expenses*

CHALLENGES OF WORKING FROM HOME

Pitfalls of working from home during a pandemic can span way beyond feeling Zoom-meeting fatigue. Remote working over an extended period of time can lead to:

- *Increased feelings of loneliness and isolation*
 - *Tendencies to overwork*
 - *Difficulties separating work life from home life*
 - *Hindered creativity*
 - *Loss of team communication as a result of decreased social interaction*
 - *Increased feelings of stress and anxiety*
 - *Fewer opportunities for career progression*
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EMPLOYER RESPONSIBILITIES

All employees are legally obliged to contain the risks to health and safety in the course of business operations by seeking to ensure the health and safety of:

- *Workers (employees, contractors, volunteers); and*
- *Third parties exposed to business operations (clients, customers, patrons, bystanders)*

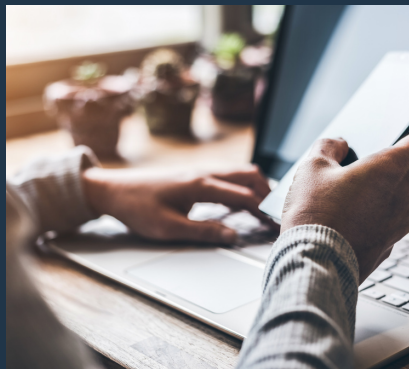
Criminal penalties apply for breach of those obligations.

As an employer, there are three elements to managing risks:

- *Maintaining appropriate levels of hygiene;*
- *Employing appropriate levels of social distancing (including by isolation of people with infection or suspected infection); and*
- *The medical response to infections and suspected cases*

MENTAL HEALTH & THE WORKPLACE

Keep reading to gain practical advice and strategies on working from home while also looking after your mental and physical health.



SETTING UP A PROPER WORKSPACE

Consider the type of space you need for your work - whether you prefer to work in an open space with the rest of your family, or if you need to have your door closed for privacy and/or concentration.

This is especially important if you are undertaking work over the phone, or if you have a strong client database. Patient confidentiality, for example, must be treated with the upmost care. Maintaining a strong connection with clients and co-workers requires your full attention, so ensure your workspace is free from distractions and where interruptions can be kept to a minimum.

MANAGING EMPLOYER EXPECTATIONS

- *Negotiate the terms of working from home with your employer and/or clients*
- *Use positive language and focus on what you can do. (for example, 'I can do those evaluations, but I will need two more weeks')*
- *Clearly communicate your schedule. If you need to take care of your children or assist in home schooling, discuss flexible working arrangements*
- *Report twice daily to your boss - first thing in the morning with your to-do list and at the end of the day to confirm what you have managed to achieve*



MANAGING AND MINIMISING DISRUPTIONS

- *Do housework at the end of the day*
- *Check your emails at set times*
- *Turn off your social media alerts and notifications*
- *Answer only urgent calls - set a time to call back any you have missed*
- *Set boundaries around visitors*
- *Place a sign at your door for delivery people to leave any packages at the door*
- *Set boundaries with children from the start. Ask them not to disturb you while you are in the 'work zone' or while you 'help other people'*
- *Create a daily schedule for your children in blocks, but stay flexible. Find an example of the schedule [here](#).*
- *Consider reward charts for successfully completed blocks. Find out more about reward charts [here](#).*
- *Allow a reasonable amount of screen time, using educational programs and apps. Find out about appropriate apps [here](#).*

MAINTAINING GOOD MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Use the following tips to maintain mental wellness during the working hours:

- *Be office ready: wear presentable, clean clothes and practice good hygiene*
- *Take breaks and eat well*
- *Get exercise and fresh air every day*
- *Prioritise self-care: read, take a bath, chat with friends, garden or*
- *Free yourself of the idea of perfectionism. Accept that not everything may get done as you expected*
- *Set and keep your working boundaries (i.e. deadlines, open communication)*
- *Start and finish at a consistent time each day*



JOIN US

Register in-person or virtually for one of our upcoming events

- *International Mental Health Conference: 26-28 July 2021*
imhconference.com.au
- *Workplace Mental Health Symposium: 13-14 September 2021*
wmhs.com.au
- *Indigenous Wellbeing Conference: 7-8 October 2021*
iwc.anzmh.asn.au
- *Australian Rural & Remote Mental Health Symposium: 3-5 November 2021*
anzmh.asn.au/rrmh
- *STOP Domestic Violence Conference: 1-3 December 2021*
stopdomesticviolence.com.au



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