**Top tips for managing work/life balance whilst working at home**

As we have realised that working from home is now the new ‘normal’ for the foreseeable future, now is a good time to think about how we move to the long term and how we build a home working routine that works for us.

Whilst some people have found home working has given them more free time by cutting the commute, others have found that this time is easily swallowed up by working longer hours mostly in front of screen.

Here we have pulled together some top tips for how we can build a workable routine that enables people to switch off from work and provided some links to further resources.

1. **Assess your routine**

Take the time to consider how you have been working through lockdown. Do you have a set start and finish time? Are you sticking to these? Have you been taking a lunch break every day?

For the foreseeable future the way we work might need to change to help protect our health and wellbeing.

Consider the routine you have established with the following things in mind:-

* Can I continue this routine comfortably for the next 3/6/12 months?
* Will this routine work for me now that the schools/nursery have reopened, gyms are currently open or if I can visit my friends and family again?
* Are there any improvements I could make to this routine?

Then take the time to think about what parts of the routine you need to **STOP,** what parts work well and should **CONTINUE** and what new things do you need to **START** doing?

1. **Set boundaries that work for you**

Now that you have considered how you would like your home working routine to look, take the time to think about what your working boundaries are. These could be around absolute start and finish times, committing to taking a full hour lunch break away from your desk or about setting a specific time in the day to do a particular activity (childcare, exercise routine, walk). By been clear about what you are working, and when you are doing it, this makes it easier to turn this into a routine.

If you find it hard to stop working at the end of the day, make plans to go for a walk, visit friends if possible or do some exercise. By committing to an action or diarising an event, it can make it easier to walk away from the computer.

1. **Use your calendar to communicate when you want to be contacted**

In order to ensure others help you stick to your work routine where possible, block the times in your diary or use your out of office to set expectations of others around when you will be working and when you would like to be contacted. If your calendar states you are finishing at 5.00pm, people will be less likely to try to book in meetings that run past that time.

1. **Finish the day with a completed action**

Evidence suggests that unfinished tasks play on our mind even when we are not at work, even more so when our workspace is also our living space. By trying to manage daily tasks so that we end the day by completing an action or ticking off a to-do list, this can help us feel ready to switch off.

Also, avoid restarting. If you have a meeting late in the day, the temptation can be to check your emails or finish off some last minute tasks. In doing this you can effectively be restarting work and find yourself still there hours later. Try to be mindful about what you would like to achieve following a late meeting, perhaps writing up the notes or creating a to-do list for the next morning and then switch off after completing that task.

1. **Leave the ‘office’ at the end of the day**

When working at home, whether in a spare room, office or living space putting away the laptop and work items out of sight is really important for helping make the transition back into home mode after work. Other things that can help replicate leaving the office can be:-

* Changing clothes (Taking off your ‘uniform’ and putting on your relaxing clothes)
* Walking home from work (Once the computer is put away take a 10 min stroll to clear your head before beginning your evening.)
* Scheduling social time (arrange to visit or phone a friend to help transition your brain away from work) or if you need wind down time take some time to read/cook/craft etc. on your own and let your mind relax and distance itself from your working day.

**Further information**

[**TED TALKS:- How to get into a work from home mind-set playlist**](https://www.ted.com/playlists/736/how_to_get_into_a_work_from_home_mindset)

[**https://www.bupa.co.uk/newsroom/ourviews/working-from-home-part-2**](https://www.bupa.co.uk/newsroom/ourviews/working-from-home-part-2)

[**https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/coronavirus/looking-after-your-mental-health-during-coronavirus-outbreak-while-working**](https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/coronavirus/looking-after-your-mental-health-during-coronavirus-outbreak-while-working)