

## **Working from Home: Tips and Tricks for Success, Wellness, and Connection**

### **1. Get Up and Get Dressed (“Make your Bed”)**

Get up and get ready for the day like you are going into the office. Be video-conference call ready. Try to start your day as “normally” as possible. Routine and structure are important strategies to reduce stress and to clear your mind to allow you to focus on the tasks ahead.

### **2. Designate a Spot to Work in Your Home**

Find a table, desk, or room that you designate as your “office”. Choose or create a neutral, professional background for virtual meetings or video calls. Select a spot, free from distraction or high-traffic areas, where you can sit comfortably...but not too comfortably. Couches and comfy chairs are nice, but are often the spots to be saved for winding down/relaxing after the workday is complete. Try to keep your work in your “office” so that you can take a mental and physical break when your workday ends.

### **3. Bookend Technique**

Note a start and end time for your day. (Bookends) At the beginning of your day, for the initial bookend, take 5 minutes to write down what you would like to get done within the workday’s allotted timeframe. The last 5 minutes of your day is for reflection and checking off the list of things you completed, as well as adding any additional things you may have done. Even if there are things remaining on the day’s to do list, the visual cue of your accomplished tasks is helpful and invokes feelings of productivity and job satisfaction. When your workday is over, you get to place the final bookend, step away from your “office”, and leave it until the next day.

### **4. Warm Up your Voice**

If you live alone or are up before others in your home, take the time to warm up your voice by speaking or singing aloud. Without this prep work, your first phone call or virtual meeting of the day will find you sounding as if you’ve just woken up regardless of the time.

### **5. Take Short Breaks Often**

Step away from your computer every hour and half or so and walk around your house or outside for fresh air. Fill up your water bottle, throw a load of laundry in, walk to the mailbox, walk your dog, stretch, do some yoga poses, dance, water your plants, or whatever activity you enjoy that allows you to explore the space. Mental and physical breaks are needed and allow you to be more productive than powering through. Make sure you are up and moving at regular intervals!

### **6. Take a Lunch Break (and/or Nap)**

Step out of the “office” and take the time to eat a healthy lunch that will sustain your energy throughout the afternoon. If others are in your home, connect with them during this down time so that you can return to your “office” after lunch with fewer interruptions and less guilt for needing focused time for work. If your body is naturally asking for a short nap during lunch, set an alarm and take the siesta. Just make sure you get the physical activity on your shorter breaks.

### **7. Use Laundry as a Work Timer**

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Doing your laundry is a built-in timer for your home. Use the cycle time to start and finish a task from your to-do list before changing the load. Committing to one assignment during the wash cycle and another during the dry cycle can train you to work smarter on tasks that you might technically have all day to tinker with if parameters were not set.

**8. Check in with a Teammate**

Facetime (skype, zoom, google hangout) a team member if you have questions, need help, or just need a smiling face. Use the same method to engage your students when you speak with them. It will also help your students feel connected and get the “face to face” experience they enjoy and that fosters relationships. It is very easy to feel disconnected or lonely while working from home. Thank goodness for technology! You are not alone <3!

**9. Life Happens, What’s your Sign?**

If you are working from home in a house that has life going on during your workday, it is unrealistic to think there will not be interruptions. Be patient with your housemates and offer them your attention when you can so that you can return to your tasks without guilt, frustration, or added stress. When possible, include them in your lunch break and/or short breaks and let them choose the activity. Create a sign or cue that clearly designates to others in your home that you are engaged in a meeting, on a call, or focusing on a project and need to be left undisturbed unless there is an emergency.

**10. Exercise**

Try to get 30 minutes of exercise each day. Even using three, 10 minute bursts will do the trick. Walking, Biking, Running, Jump Rope, Body Weight workout. Anything you enjoy but make sure you are moving and able to clear your head! Physical, Mental and emotional health is very important regardless if you are working from home or in the office. It affords better sleep which will help you wake feeling rested and ready to start the next day.

**11. Your Time is Your Time**

When your workday is complete, place your paperwork in a secure location, turn off your computer, your work cell phone, and the light in your “office”.

Your time is your time.

You need it.

You’ve earned it!