

Coping with Mental Health Issues Associated with Working from Home

Objective

To identify ways to cope with mental health challenges associated with working remotely.

What to Know

Since the pandemic, there have been many more opportunities for employees to work from home. While many people enjoyed this transition, others found they struggled being at home most of the time. The APA conducted a survey of remote workers, and most employees working from home said they experienced negative mental health impacts, including isolation, loneliness, depression, increased stress, and difficulty creating boundaries around work hours.

If you work remotely from home, there are things you can do to cope and enhance your mental and emotional health.

Check in with yourself. At the end of each workday, check in to make sure your life is in balance. You might realize you need more time out of the house, socializing or doing something fun. Perhaps you will realize you did not move around enough or drink enough water.

Schedule time with co-workers and/or your supervisor. If organized social events are not possible (in-person or virtually), schedule brief weekly check-ins or meetings to reduce your feelings of isolation.

Create a healthy work environment. In a home office or workspace, have a standing desk to encourage movement, water nearby to stay hydrated, an ergonomic chair, and an elevated computer.

Stick to defined work hours. Commit to a schedule and avoid computer usage before and after work hours.

Move and stretch regularly. Even with regular exercise, sitting for long periods can increase risk of death from cardiovascular disease and cancer. Every 30 minutes get up and move around. Set an alarm to remind you to move.

Reduce screen time. Research shows people who use a computer for more than six hours a day are more likely to experience moderate to severe depression. For example, instead of sitting down for a video meeting, opt for a phone call and take a walk during the meeting.

Practice the 20-20-20 rule. Every 20 minutes, stare at something 20 feet away for 20 seconds. Also, blink more often when you are in front of a screen.

Adjust monitor and screen settings. Your computer screen should be at or just below eye level. Make the font larger for easier reading and adjust the screen's brightness and contrast to reduce eye strain.

Date	Describe the activity.	Describe what happened.	How did it help you cope?	Will you continue doing this? If not, explain why.

Reflections on This Exercise

Did you experience any challenges while completing this activity? What was hard? Easy? Explain.

Did this exercise help you reduce the negative impact of working from home? Why or why not?

How helpful was this exercise? _____
 (1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What did you learn during this exercise?
