

How To Work From Home Without Burning Out Or Losing Work Life Balance



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Working remotely comes with amazing perks. No commute, more flexibility, wearing yoga pants at your desk. What could be better?

But if you're new to working from home, you may be realizing that maintaining some semblance of balance is one of the biggest challenges telecommuting presents.

The boundaries between your personal and professional life blur. It's easy to let self-care go out the window. And you may find yourself overworking in an attempt to appear productive.

You might:

- Rationalize knocking *just one more task* off your to-do list, only to look up and see hours have passed

- Sit in front of the TV answering emails, even though you're supposed to be decompressing
- Find yourself thinking about work around the clock, including when you're with family

All of this is a surefire recipe for [burnout](#).

While working from home is associated with greater job satisfaction, research also [finds](#) that remote workers are more likely to go beyond normal hours and put in more effort than is required.

Work Rebooted: Preparing For The Future Of Work

Because of the coronavirus outbreak, many people are working from home. You probably found yourself going from working in an office with a big team, sharing a space, and navigating the office politics and office etiquette to completely working by yourself overnight. It can be a huge transition and requires you pivot how you manage your workload...and yourself.

So how do you disconnect when you lack the physical separation of leaving the office behind? Here are concrete actions you can take to work from home without losing work-life balance.

Working From Home: How to Relax and Switch Off From “Work Mode”

Adjust your expectations

During a typical work week, it's likely you [waste up to two to three hours](#) a day at the office. When you work from home, that changes. Distractions, like your boss swooping by your desk, suddenly disappear. As a result you'll be more productive in less time.

Adjust your expectations of yourself accordingly. Don't hold yourself to sitting “butt in chair” for the same forty hours a week as you would in the office. And [don't feel guilty](#) if the same work that used to take you eight hours now only takes you four or five.

Prompt yourself to wrap up

At the office, you have the visual cue of co-workers leaving to signal the day is winding down. In absence of that, set an alarm on your phone or calendar thirty minutes before you should be wrapping up for the day. You don't have to call it quits exactly then, but start the process. It's a great way to stay aware and nudge yourself to close up shop for the day.

Power down

Sounds simple, but turn off your computer completely. Powering down makes it harder for you to slip online after hours. You can also try deleting work-related apps from your phone. These steps leverage the psychology of habit formation -- namely, to make an undesired behavior harder by creating friction to doing it.

Plan the next day

It's hard to switch off from work when you have tasks and to-do's swirling through your brain. That's why you should end each day by [planning the next one](#). Take five to ten minutes to define your top three priorities for tomorrow. This gives you peace of mind that your most important projects are captured, which puts your brain at ease and lets it relax.

Have a transition ritual

Create a practice that helps you change gears and transition from work to downtime. That could be:

- Taking a shower
- Changing your outfit
- Meditating for five minute
- Making a list of the top three things to be done the next day
- Zeroing your inbox
- Straightening up your workspace

Make meaning from the day

The difference between a good day and a bad day is all in how you interpret it. You get to decide whether you'll view the day from a growth-oriented mindset or negative one, so choose wisely.

One practice my clients love is called [High/Low/Hero](#). Alone or with your family, take a moment to define:

- Your daily “high” - what went well or was fun and exciting
- Your daily “low” - what didn't go well or was disappointing
- Your “hero” - a person who was a hero to you or a moment you made yourself proud

Do something tactile

Getting out of your head into your body is crucial for [Sensitive Strivers](#), who tend to be [overthinkers](#). Do something on your off-time that engages your other senses. That could be cooking, a craft like knitting or needlepointing, even journaling, yoga, or another form of exercise.

Create accountability for yourself

Make commitments that force you to end work on time. For example, in the age of coronavirus, that might be a virtual happy hour with friends or playing board games with your spouse and kids.

Detox your attention

Your mind responds to the stimulus it's given. If you keep giving it intense, demanding material -- like continuing to check emails or working past your capacity -- your mind will stay on high alert. Wind down at the end of the day by giving your brain a break. Escape into a fiction book, watch some stand up comedy, take a class on a hobby that interests you. The only rule is that it cannot be professional- or business- development related.

Outsource like a boss

Free time is precious. When you have downtime, you want it to be restorative—but that can't happen if you're running around doing laundry or cooking. If you have the means, you can create more time for yourself by outsourcing errands. These days, there's an app for everything, and depending on how busy you are, the benefits of hiring someone's services can seriously outweigh the costs, and give you back valuable time and energy.

Notice the signs of burnout

Burnout refers to a collection of different reactions that occur in response to prolonged stress and overworking. This includes physical symptoms like headaches along with emotional ones such as a negative attitude about your work or career and a loss of motivation. You may find yourself short-tempered with family or colleagues, or easily offended by even the slightest criticism.

Burnout can also masquerade as [imposter syndrome](#). Because you're exhausted, you may feel like you're not good enough, productive enough, or falling behind. Then you credit that to personal failing or the fact that you're a fraud.