



How to Be Productive and Thrive While Working Remotely

**HELLO!
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HOW TO BE PRODUCTIVE AND THRIVE WHILE WORKING REMOTELY - FOR YOU, YOUR TEAM, AND YOUR FAMILY

If you have never worked from home before now, the new onset of remote working can be quite challenging. Even if you've worked from home for a while, the presence of other family members due to the recent work-from-home situation might still be creating challenges you don't normally face. Either way, you are not alone when it comes to the overwhelm you may be feeling right now. Many are adapting and looking for ways to manage the new normal.

What's really interesting is there are signs that working remotely may not be just a

short-term solution for a country dealing with a crisis. I truly believe we are in a situation that will change our traditional views on workers and working, and we may see a number of new/different outcomes come out of our current situation. In an uncertain world, remote could be the remedy.

Companies/businesses that never worked remotely prior will now realize that it is manageable, feasible and, in some cases, even cost effective. They may also find employees are more productive working from home. Those who have worked

KEY AREAS

- Home Office Setup
- Wake up earlier
- Get dressed
- Using your time
- Self Care
- Sleep
- Mealtime
- Setting boundaries
- Flexibility
- Organization
- Focus
- Tasks / Projects
- Distractions
- Natural Productivity Style
- Reduce Stress
- Action list

remotely on a full- or part-time basis in the past will up their game and can be even more effective working remotely.

Others will refuse to see this as a viable situation for the future. Companies or managers that have insecurities, or tend to micromanage, might be unwilling to believe that working remotely really has its benefits. They want their workers where they can see them and directly monitor their productivity. That being said, there are workers who perform better in an office setting, based on their Natural Productivity Style, but I will talk more about that later on.

I won't pretend that transitioning to working remotely is without its challenges, but it may be easier than you think. It starts with identifying the challenges, then implementing common sense strategies to overcome them. It also helps if you realize and acknowledge the role your mindset plays in your ability to adapt and thrive under remote working conditions. Be open to new ways of doing things and embrace what is. This is an opportunity for growth for all of us, and you may even surprise yourself with how adaptable you can be!

So, how can you boost productivity and balance the demands of both work and personal life while working remotely?

How do you stay sane and keep work from creeping in 24/7 and blurring the line between professional and personal time?

It's all about having a plan, structuring your time to create daily routines that honor both work and family, and creating an environment for success. You will find a comprehensive list of tips below. Some are general in nature, and apply if you are working from home or not, but I think you'll find them all helpful.

Let's get started!



01

HOME OFFICE SETUP

Have a set workspace.

The ideal is to have a room with a door to create a quiet and private environment, with as few distractions as possible.

If you don't have an office space with a door, find a place where you have as much isolated space as possible. I have known people to even use their walk-in closets for a quiet office space.

Try to duplicate your setup as close to your normal office setup as possible. I understand this may not be feasible for most, but keep that in mind when setting up your space.

A folding room divider can help create a more personal space.

Do NOT work in bed. Create or find a dedicated room or surface for your new workspace.

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02

WAKE UP EARLIER

Research shows morning people tend to be more productive, because getting up early gives them more time to prepare for the day. Plus, if you have kids at home, this can be a good distraction-free time to squeeze in a little extra work.

Create a morning routine. Include:

- Daily meditation – meditating before you start your day can set the stage for calm and focus
- Write a gratitude list – this is also a good thing to do at the end of the day
- Eat a healthy breakfast
- Visualize your goals and dreams - for the day, the week, the year, or even for your life
- Review your plan for the day and set priorities

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GET DRESSED FOR SUCCESS

Start your day as you would any work day where you are preparing to work in an office environment. Take a shower. Style and comb your hair. Put some makeup on - if that's your normal routine - and get dressed. It might be tempting to work in your PJ's, but you will feel more professional and competent when wearing proper attire - even if it's from the waist up. 😊

This may seem like a small thing, but it's all important. It's not just about the physical look. More importantly, it's good for your mental state. It brings a sense of structure and normalcy, which are sometimes lost in work from home situations. It also gets your mind in the right place for the work of the day.

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04 TIME

- Keep regular, routine hours - wake up and go to sleep at the same time every night.
- Realize that your day will probably not be the same routine or hours as your “normal” work day. Working from home, you will probably find you need to work longer hours and allow for more breaks and down time, especially if others are home with you. Schedule in those extra breaks, and don’t pack your schedule so full that you don’t have the flexibility if more breaks are needed.
- While working from home, avoid the urge to feel you need to do household chores. Set aside time in your day/week for those chores and they will get done.
- It’s a fact that tasks and projects always take longer than you initially think they will. Understand that it takes 1–1 1/2 times longer to do something than what we think. When planning a to-do or task list, always put the time you think it will take and double it.
- If you oversee meetings, send an agenda in advance, and challenge yourself to reduce the length of time of the meetings: half-hour meetings to 15 or 20 minutes and one-hour meetings to 45. You will not only be saving yourself time, everyone in the meeting gains the time.
- Know your prime mental time and schedule mental tasks during your most productive time.
- Plan ahead. Spend time at the end of the day to determine what your most important task for the next morning will be. Spending 15 minutes at the end of the day can save you up to 60 minutes the next morning.
- Pick a definite time to stop working each day. Setting that boundary is a great way to ensure a smoother transition between work and making sure you get the personal time you need.

05

SELF-CARE

Self-care is so important to productivity, mental health, and physical well-being. Taking care of ourselves gives us the energy we need to do what needs to be done.

Unfortunately, self-care is often overlooked or low on the priority list for many, but it is so essential. Make it a priority in your day.

- Set time for exercise
- Stretch during break times
- Stay hydrated - (There are negative effects on cognitive performance with even mild dehydration.)
- Take walks
- Spend time outside during breaks - (Fresh air has significant mental and physiological health benefits!)
- Micro breaks help break up the monotony of mentally or physically draining tasks and improve concentration. Take clear breaks - schedule, or use a timer.
- Use newfound time (not commuting) to do something for yourself: like reading, devoting time to a hobby, learning new skills, or completing projects you have been putting off (and can now take off your to-do list for mental freedom).
- Choose healthy snacks with a good mix of protein, fiber & water.

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SLEEP

Getting an optimal amount of sleep doesn't just boost your mood, it infuses your body with energy, and ups your productivity game. It's one of the most important things to keep your energy level and productivity up. You will make better decisions overall, as well as more accurate split-second decisions. Getting adequate sleep also improves your memory and helps cement what you've learned during the day.

Lack of sleep causes low energy levels, which is one of the biggest reasons for procrastination. Sleep-deprivation leads to slower response rate and adds to the chance of job burnout. Insufficient sleep also causes health issues: like depression, weight gain and high blood pressure, etc.

All that said, the case for getting good sleep is clear! To be sure your body and mind are getting the sleep they need to help you succeed...

- Try going to bed and getting up at the same time every day.
- Strive for 6 – 9 hours of sleep per night for best performance
- If you have difficulty falling asleep, try meditation before bedtime to relax ... or take a few moments to do a brain dump to clear your mind of anything that might be troubling you and keeping you awake.

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MEALTIME MASTERY

Thinking about mealtimes can be a huge distraction as you're trying to get things done. It can also be a source of stress when decisions are left up in the air until the last minute, especially when there are children in the house who are getting hungry and crabby. A little planning ahead can take the stress out of mealtimes and create a much more peaceful, productive environment for everyone. Here are some tips for calming mealtime chaos.

- Plan out your meals to avoid snacking all day when the fridge is staring you in the face - or calling your name every time you walk by.

When you take the time to plan meals it will remove the thoughts of what you will have for lunch or what you will fix for dinner. Once planned, your mind will be satisfied and not feel like it needs to constantly remind you.

- Plan and communicate mealtimes and menus with others in the family. This will also put their minds at rest, so they're not constantly asking you "when is dinner?" and "what's for dinner?".
- Have your family members help in the meal planning and even meal preparation.
- Keep in mind that children do need healthy snacks throughout the day, so plan ahead for those too. Add their snack times into your schedule and have healthy snacks available for them. This will also keep them from being overly hungry when you're making dinner or lunch.

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BOUNDARIES

Boundaries are crucial, especially if you share your space with others - such as a partner, roommate, kids, or even people not in your household... like friends or parents.

People often think working from home means you have more free time. The truth is, working from home is totally the opposite, especially under the current circumstances where you might be dealing with children being educated online and a spouse working from home too. Either of those can complicate daily routines and timelines.

Communication is key. Make sure everyone understands you have work to do and tasks that need to be done. Make sure (the night before or each morning) that everyone in the household knows and is committed to the time schedule. (See Flexibility)

- Talk it through. You could even post the daily schedule, so everyone has a visual reminder throughout the day.
- What time is each spouse/partner obligated to meetings, time sensitive tasks, etc.?
- What is the mealtime/snack time schedule?
- What are the family activities, and at what time?
- What is needed from others in the household when virtual meetings are going on?

Set clear boundaries and expectations by using good communication and you will ease a lot of the stress that can come from boundaries that are unclear.

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FLEXIBILITY

If you are used to working 8-5 in an office setting, working from home can feel very strange and different. It adds in elements – like new distractions, temptations, and structure issues – you don't normally face. It's important to reset your expectations around what productivity looks like. Know that your productivity will not be the same as you normally see it, and adopt a mindset of flexibility, especially if you are someone who typically struggles with changes in your environment or routine.

- Be kind - to yourself and others.
- Change or, in some cases, lower expectations for yourself and others.
- Be realistic. Working from home is a whole different ball game. If working from home is due to circumstances beyond your control, you are not only navigating a difficult time, you are going through a change - and change can be stressful. Think about the situation and what is realistic, then make the necessary adjustments in your mindset and expectations.
- Be helpful to others who might be more stressed.
- Be patient, sensitive, and considerate.
- Add more humor to your life. Watch comedy, tell funny and embarrassing stories, talk with someone that makes you laugh. Play a fun game.

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ORGANIZATION

Being organized is critical to your productivity. If you can't find what you need when you need it, it has lost its value.

Clutter and disorganization will reduce your effectiveness and efficiency. Trying to work in a cluttered environment and being disorganized not only makes it harder to find things, it also has a negative effect on your subconscious. It creates a feeling of chaos.

On the other hand, being organized saves you time, energy and, in many cases, money. It sets the stage for focus and efficiency, which are the goals.

These days, we have moved beyond what we have traditionally thought of as clutter. It's no longer just a matter of having piles of mail or papers, or having a desk that doesn't have any room for you to spread out your work. Clutter comes in many forms - physical, digital, mental, social, and financial.

Think through where you may have clutter and take some time to clean it up. Schedule time to clear your work space, delete old files on your computer, sort and deal with mail (and email), toss or shred old documents that are no longer needed, and deal with any social, mental, or financial clutter that is weighing you down.

Be ruthless and you will reap the benefits of your organizing efforts!

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FOCUS

- Many people find music helps them stay focused and boosts productivity. Find music that matches the energy of the project you are working on. I especially like using [Focus@Will](#). It will help to find you the best music based on your productivity style and the energy level you need.
- Work no longer than 90-minute stretches at a time. Energy levels steadily decline the longer we work past the 90 minutes. Even just taking a small 5-minute break will revitalize your brain and energy level.
- Avoid “water-cooler” time. This is especially important when others in the household are coming and going in your space throughout the day. Even seemingly harmless exchanges can divert your focus and knock you off track. (Read through the boundaries section again if this is an issue for you.)
- Avoid getting caught up in too much time on Social Media. It is a sure detriment to your productivity. It's WAY too easy to lose time mindlessly scrolling on and on.
- Remove social network shortcuts from your browser, tool bar, and bookmarks. Also, turn off notifications to reduce distraction and avoid temptation.
- Use a timer to help you stay on track and focused. You can also consider using a timer as a reminder to get back to work - for those who are easily distracted by other things at home when they're taking a break.
- Avoid multitasking. It is a huge time waster and energy suck. Focusing on, and completing, one task at a time is a much more efficient way to go.

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TASKS/PROJECTS

- Working from home requires different skills to stay organized. You need to be clear about your objectives, goals, and tasks – both daily and weekly.
- Know your priorities and what is most important to accomplish each day. Start with a maximum of 3 tasks.
- Be accountable to yourself and to your employer.
- Stay engaged with your team/staff on regular meetings and one-on-ones.
- Break large projects down into manageable steps/tasks. Use the DNA of Productivity (Decision - Next - Action). We tend to look at our projects as overarching tasks and write down the end results. (re: budget, fix website, project ABC, etc.) It's important to put actions needed, or next action needed, vs end results. Examples might be... write a rough draft for sales copy for new page on website... or check with teammates on project progress and call sub-contractors for bids on next phase.

This shift in how you plan your day and set tasks can work especially well with large tasks or projects that have a deadline. Breaking your to-dos into smaller, specific tasks makes it more manageable and not so overwhelming.

- Be responsive to the needs of others. Be willing to share your skill and expertise to move projects and tasks forward.

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DISTRACTIONS

Even if you don't have the luxury of setting up in a separate room, you can prime yourself for success by removing any obvious distractions from your space. ***Remember, every distraction takes you 20 minutes to recover from and refocus your attention.***

- If you are working at the dining room table, remove everything except your working materials and give yourself room to spread out.
- Face away from the TV – and keep the TV turned off, if possible. This can be tricky if you have young children who are being entertained by TV so you can work, but try to keep it off if you can.
- Put the laundry basket in a different room. Schedule time for chores and resist the thinking that putting a load of laundry in - or any other chore - will only take a minute.
- Resist the temptation to work in bed. Working from your bed does not create the professional “feel” you need to be efficient and productive, since it is a more relaxed setting.
- Spend time setting the children up with schoolwork, crafts, movies etc., so they are focused on their project when you must have uninterrupted time. (Also, refer back to suggestions on setting boundaries and communication.) A little planning the night before helps in this area too. Have ideas for how they can occupy their time and rotate them as needed.
- Schedule routine tasks like checking email. Schedule handling your email 4 times per day. For most people, this is an effective solution to the distraction emails can be. Also, be sure to turn off notifications, so you aren't tempted to just jump into email “real quick” to see what just came in.

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HAVE THE RIGHT TOOLS

Having the right equipment makes your work day so much more productive and your time more efficient. Here are some things to consider to make sure you have what you need to do your best working from home.

- Reliable laptop and/or desktop - You may not have the two-screen setup as usual, but that does not mean you can't work towards getting that setup at home if this is a permanent or an extended-time situation.
- Adequate Internet speed is a must-have. You might need to up your Internet plan for the time being or add an Internet booster in your home to accommodate higher usage needs.
- Communication Tools – Working from home can make you feel cut off from the world. Using communication tools help reduce the isolation factor. Don't hesitate to download Zoom, Skype, or any app/program that will allow you to have face-to-face time. ****Warning** you might have to reel in those extroverts from time to time, so they are not constantly interrupting.
- Printer, printer paper, and ink
- Pens, paper, and post-its
- Instant messaging - Use Slack Microsoft Teams (or something similar like Basecamp) to communicate, manage workflow on projects and keep everyone in the loop.
- Cybersecurity - talk with your IT department to make sure you are using the best form of security regulations.

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NATURAL PRODUCTIVITY STYLE

We all are just a little different. We each have ways we work best. We each also have strengths and weaknesses that affect our productivity. It's important to understand all of this if we want to be our best and maximize our potential. Discovering your *Natural Productivity Style* will bring an ease and flow to your days that you may never have experienced before.

What do you need to work your best based on your personality traits? Do you need absolute quiet to focus and concentrate? Do you work best independently or on a team? How well do you manage things like stress, decisions, and communication? All of these things impact your day – and your productivity.

When it comes to understanding your weaknesses, some see weaknesses as a negative... but the opposite is actually true. When you identify your weaknesses, you gain valuable insight. You can learn to delegate tasks that you don't do well or that don't come easily to you - instead of "fighting" against them and having every day feel like a battle. You can also use insight into your weaknesses to make a commitment to learning those skills you lack, if you choose to.

Identifying your strengths - and working within them - gives you the opportunity to do more of what you love, which energizes you and makes the work you do more pleasant.

Consider taking the full assessment at theproductivityexperts.com/self-assessment/ to uncover your strengths, weaknesses, and how you work best. You'll be glad you did!

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REDUCE STRESS

Stress is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as “a state of mental or emotional strain or tension resulting from adverse or demanding circumstances.”

It's common for everyone to feel some stress in their daily lives. With the uncertainty around health, the economy, and our current circumstances, taking care of our stress should be a top priority. Along with implementing the above suggestions, here are some simple yet effective ways to help in reducing your stress.

- Visit [The De-Stress Zone](#) on my website. It's full of FREE resources, articles, checklists, videos, and more. (Be sure to sign up for the More Resources section!)
- Accept that the world is changing, and not all jobs are 9-5 office days anymore. You may now find yourself working remotely into the future. Accept that we cannot stop change, but also reframe your thinking to the idea that with change also comes exciting new opportunities.
- Social interaction is important, and you must realize that remote working can cause feelings of loneliness. Take that into account when planning your day/week. When can you create some social time? Virtual lunch, tea, happy hours or chats with a friend or family member are great ways to stay connected. Visiting or talking with the neighbors is also great (with proper social distancing, of course).
- Take it outdoors. When the weather is nice, consider working outside on your patio or deck. If you cannot work outdoors, at least take your breaks or eat lunch outside.
- Foster an attitude of gratitude. Make a list of all the things you are grateful for every day.

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REDUCE STRESS CONT.

- Hours of work can start to get blurry, and work can creep in at any time. Try to set some type of schedule and define some NO WORK hours/days.
- Make sure you are getting enough exercise. Daily walks and scheduled workouts are great stress relievers.
- Lack of structure and boundaries can cause a feeling of being out of control. Create structure and set those boundaries – for yourself and others.
- Take a step back and re-evaluate what needs to be done. Break tasks down into smaller, workable steps and work on the right things - instead of working on everything.
- Make your work experience pleasant. Appreciate the work you do - even if there is no one else around to appreciate you. Now is a perfect time to get in the habit of celebrating your accomplishments - big and small.
- Stay hydrated and avoid the caffeine.
- While working from home you can provide an amazing sense of freedom and flexibility, as well as a no-cost commute, there are pitfalls and hidden stressors to be aware of. Focus on what you do have control over. Realize there are things we don't have control over, and accept/don't fight them. Focus on the benefits of a work-from-home situation.
- Take it one day at a time!

For more tips, strategies, and resources, visit <https://TheProductivityExperts.com>

INTENTIONAL ACTION = SUCCESS

Whether we are facing specific challenges or just going through our normal work day, awareness, planning, and intentional action will help us be more productive and successful.

After all you have just read and learned, take some time to think about what you want or need to do differently to boost your productivity.

WHAT WILL YOU DO DIFFERENTLY?

*"PRODUCTIVITY
ISN'T EVERYTHING
IN LIFE, BUT IT
AFFECTS
EVERYTHING. IT'S
THE ROI OF YOUR
TIME, ENERGY,
AND MONEY"*

Cathy Sexton

GREAT RESOURCES

01

FOCUS@WILL

Up to 4x your focus and productivity while you work and study with this scientifically proven music streaming program.

02

FACEBOOK GROUPS

The Productivity Experts™
Stressedpreneur™
Miracle Money Method™

03

DE-STRESS-ZONE

Free resources to help you de-stress and be more productive
<https://TheProductivityExperts.com/De-Stress-Zone/>

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NATURAL PRODUCTIVITY STYLE - QUESTIONNAIRE OR ASSESSMENT

Find out more about your Natural Productivity Style™

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THE PRODUCTIVITY EXPERTS BLOG

Articles to help you be more productive

06

PRODUCTIVITY COACHING

The benefits of working with a productivity coach

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THANK YOU!

Thank you for your interest in being productive working from home. My goal was to give you tips, techniques, and strategies that will make your life easier, more productive, and less stressed. If you enjoyed this information and found it helpful, please connect with me on social media, leave a recommendation on LinkedIn, or write a Google review.

Also, feel free to reach out to me personally if I can help you, your team, association, or group in any way. Here are three ways you can contact me:

- ~ website - theproductivityexperts.com
- ~ email - Cathy@theproductivityexperts.com
- ~ or schedule a strategy session @ <http://callcathys Sexton.com>

Here's to your success - Cathy Sexton

STAY IN TOUCH WITH THE PRODUCTIVITY EXPERTS ON THE FOLLOWING PLATFORMS.

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