Mental Health and Working-from-home

Introduction

Spending an increased amount at home with limited social contact can take a toll on our mental health. Working from home also takes away routine and structure that might be present in the workplace, such as a walk outside during lunch breaks. Extended periods at home can cause feelings of boredom and loneliness.

Some staff may be familiar with working from home, or potentially already have a work from home arrangement in place. For those working from home for the first time, they may find the isolation and change in office environment difficult to handle.

Plan ahead

We recommend workplaces put in place a plan with their staff prior to entering a potential lengthy period of a work from home arrangement. This could include:

- Ensuring each staff member knows who to contact should they require psychological support (such as Acacia EAP or HR/Wellbeing teams).
- Prepare for the social isolation by increasing buzz or scrum meetings throughout the week, using a video conferencing platform if possible.
- Encourage staff to create a new daily routine such as regular breaks, time spent outside and maintaining regular working hours.
- Stay virtually connected

Designate a work from home area

You might not have the luxury of a study area so may use the dining table or common living areas. Set it up so it works for you. At the end of the day, pack away your workspace. This is a process which will assist you to shut off and wind down, as well as reduce any temptations to work at times outside of your scheduled work hours.

Prepare for work

Dress in office appropriate attire. Avoiding working from home in your pajamas or tracksuit may impact on your focus, energy and mental preparation for a day of work. Consider wearing your "casual Friday" attire.

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Take frequent breaks

Go outside, walk around, stretch. Without the incidental breaks or walking around in the office (such as going to speak with a colleague, collecting printing etc) working from home has the potential to see us sitting at our computers for longer periods of time.

Stay connected with your manager and team

Let your manager and team know when you are taking a quick break or stepping away from your computer. Keep connected as a team to allocate tasks and have a shared understanding of what everyone is working on. Being outside of the structure of a natural office rhythms can lead to people jumping around from one task to another.

Make yourself accountable to avoid distraction

It's often easy to find things to do at home, such as putting on a load of washing or preparing dinner. A little distraction can cause disruption to your day. Ensure you prepare your day in the same way you would when attending work at the office. Use coffee breaks or lunch breaks to do any non-work-related activities.

Support is Available

If you have teams or individuals who are struggling with heightened anxiety, loneliness or other mental health concerns whilst working from home, reach out so we can provide guidance and support.

Acacia EAP offers support 24/7/365
1300 364 273

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