

# Mastering working from home

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The Covid-19 global pandemic has caused a shift in the workplace. This new shift will most likely become the norm for professionals and organisations globally. An international study by the Boston Consulting Group (BCG) found that over 53% of South Africans would prefer to work from home at least occasionally, post the pandemic. South Africans have embraced remote work. The study found that 44% of South Africans would prefer to work from home permanently while the global average was 24%. This may be understandable given the amount of time spent stuck in traffic and the ever-increasing fuel price.



Working from home presents various advantages e.g. the ability to be around family during the work day, saving on transport costs and the flexibility of working around one's home life. On the other hand, working remotely has resulted in a blend of work and home life which can be overwhelming. This can sometimes mean choosing between family time or quickly submitting your "last" email. Sometimes we push the workday longer by taking that last business call at 6pm, instead of teatime with the family or playtime with the kids. It is essential to set boundaries to have a balance between family and work time. How can one achieve balance?

## Develop and stick to a routine

Treat each workday like you would if you were going to the office. This can be as simple as making your bed instead of starting your day while in bed. Wake up early, take a shower, make yourself /family breakfast, and get ready to start your tasks. The benefit of not having to drive to the office is that you can spend that extra time with "self" or with your loved ones – such as driving your kids to school, watching Peppa Pig with your toddler, meditating, or going for a morning run. Routines are there to ensure you stick to your daily goals and honour them.

## Keep track of working hours

It is natural to have the pressure to prove that you are working while you are at home. However, it is essential to remember

that you still have a life outside the office. Create a daily to-do list and allocate times for each task. Avoid distractions and slacking during your working hours; this will help you finish your day on time.

## Set boundaries

It is easy to lose track of time while catching up with family, resulting in missed deadlines and decreased productivity. Set clear boundaries with the people around you by making them aware of your work commitments. This is where a to-do list can come in handy.

## Take breaks

Working without breaks will lead to a breakdown and decreased productivity. Take a walk around your yard, have a snack with your family, watch your favourite comedy or rest for a few minutes in between meetings and tasks. Take your lunch break; this will enable you to keep to your meals. Missing meals during the day can also contribute to one feeling sluggish.

## Set up a home office

Set up an area at home with a desk and comfortable chair to ensure you have space in your home where you can focus. An "office" at home will make taking breaks easier as you can walk away from this space or close this door at the end of the workday. This will also make your virtual meetings easier from home.

## Use your loved ones for support

It can be challenging at times to be a working professional. Pause and ask for help. Working from home means you can pause when you feel overwhelmed and talk to someone you trust. Use the opportunity when it arises to lighten the load and reboot.

As we transition to different ways of living, working and communicating, it is essential to remember that you are not alone. Many companies have counselling services available for their employees should they need to talk to someone. There are also NGOs, such as the South African Depression and Anxiety Group (SADAG), that one can use. Mental health is as important as physical and emotional well-being. Balancing work and family responsibilities is not easy. Talk to your manager or supervisor to make working arrangements that will work for you without affecting your productivity or family life.

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