Mind, body and working at home - *Working effectively*

Hints, tips and links to keep you and your teams calm, connected and well

Working from home, if you're not used to it, may take a bit of adjusting to. There probably won't be as many interruptions as in the office but there will be other distractions in your home environment that could throw you off track. Whether you've got a young family and are juggling work and home schooling, or you're thinking about what project you can tackle at the weekend, there's plenty to make your mind wander and interrupt your thinking.

If you've already read our top tips on working from home, you'll know that it's important to have a defined workspace, stick to a schedule, stay in touch with colleagues, take breaks and set realistic daily goals to keep you on track.

Once that's all in place, how do you go about being as productive as possible during your working hours to help you achieve your goals? True productivity isn't just about ticking tasks off a list, it's about doing more of what matters. Here's some tips to help you work more effectively at home.

Setting yourself up for a productive day

- Set yourself 3 – 5 tasks to complete during your working day – if you finish early you can always add more, but 3-5 should be achievable

- Prioritise your tasks for the day – what's going to make the biggest difference?

- Remove as many distractions as possible – If you're easily distracted by emails close Outlook if you don't need it, set your phone to silent if you can to avoid app notifications and commit to catching up on social media during breaks

- Take regular breaks during the day – make sure you get up and move around and at lunchtime move away to another space to relax, unwind and enjoy your meal

- Stick to your hours – avoid temptation to work longer than you usually would

- Shut down and put things away at the end of your working day – this will create a physical separation between work and home

Focussing on your task

Whether you need silence to concentrate, music to drown everything out or a pint of coffee it's important to figure out how you work best and change your environment to suit you. There's no magic formula, but if you struggle to focus on tasks during the day, or want to improve your productivity it could be worth considering the Pomodoro technique which is widely adopted and praised. There's certainly nothing to lose by giving it a go, all you need is a timer.

Developed in the late 1980's, it's a time management system that encourages you to work more productively with the time you have; breaking your working day into 25 minute chunks buffered with 5 minute breaks. These 25 minute 'Pomodoros' allow you to concentrate completely on one task without shifting focus or multitasking, helping to reduce mental fatigue and keeping your creativity fresh.

Get Ready	Work	Break
00:00	25:00	05:00

How to use the Pomodoro Technique

1. Choose your task and total time to work on it

2. Set a timer to 25 minutes (either with an egg timer or an app)

3. Work on the task for 25 minutes

4. Take a 5-minute break for energy renewal, start another Pomodoro

5. Take a 20-30 minute break after completing four Pomodoros

Avoiding procrastination

The word procrastination comes from the Latin 'Pro-Crastinus' which means 'belonging to tomorrow'. When we procrastinate, intentionally or habitually, we put things off because we're having trouble persuading ourselves to do them for a variety of reasons and instead of working on important meaningful tasks, we end up doing trivial activities to keep busy.

Most of us have done it at some point and according to Think Productive, procrastination is one of the biggest disruptors of productivity. Learning to avoid procrastinating could help us improve our effectiveness and allow us to get more done. Here's their suggestion for understanding why you might be procrastinating and how you can move forward.

Think about DUST:

- **Diffcult:** If your task is difficult, break it down into pieces

- **Undefined:** If you need clarity, ask for more information

- **Scary:** If it's worrying you, talk to a colleague for moral support

- **Tedious:** Delegate if you can. Or give yourself a reward once you've done it

Working effectively is different for all of us, but if you set yourself up for success you can avoid procrastinating and 'Pomodoro' your way to productivity!

Useful links and further reading

- Five ways to work well from home:
  https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-51868894

- 13 Strategies for working effectively:
  https://www.wrike.com/blog/how-to-work-effectively-13-strategies/

- Think Productive, productivity Ninja Infographic:
  https://thinkproductive.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2020/03/Infographic-The-Productivity-Ninja-Remote-Working-2.pdf

- Pomodoro technique:
  https://thinkproductive.co.uk/the-pomodoro-technique/

- Staying productive at work:
  https://www.theguardian.com/culture-professionals-network/culture-professionals-blog/2012/jan/19/stay-productive-work

- What is procrastination:
  https://procrastination.com/what-is-procrastination

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