



Health, Safety and Wellness Division

Parenting and Working from Home

Being a parent is a big job on its own. Being a parent, working from home and keeping kids appropriately occupied can seem overwhelming.

How can you occupy your toddler and keep your work up to date? How do you finish that report while also managing the school's expectations of what school-aged children should be learning at home? Anecdotal evidence suggests parents sometimes struggle to meet these dual demands.

Working productively from home with kids around can be very challenging, however there are some simple strategies that can help. Some of these strategies are particularly helpful if you have very young children, others are helpful if you are caring for kids of any age.

Maintain your normal routine as much as possible

If you usually get up early and exercise or meditate, keep doing that as you would if you had to leave for work. Sleeping in can seem tempting if you are working from home, but you are going to have many more interruptions to your day than normal, so keep some buffer time to help reduce stress levels.

Make the lunches the night before

If you usually make lunches the night before, keep doing that. You can stop working and have lunch with your child/ren, spending time with them and not spending time making them something to eat. Have healthy snacks easily available for them, so you have fewer interruptions during the day.

Make a 'to do' list

Having a prioritised 'to do' list saves you time and helps you feel more in control of your day. Try to create a 'to do' list for the next day before you head to bed. When you finish up your work for the day, note down the key work and home activities you will need to achieve the next day. Consider things such as conference calls, zoom meetings and other deadlines. Schedule activities with your kids between these work commitments. The next day, get started on your key activities as soon as you can.

Plan the day for primary school aged kids

Whether your kids are officially on holidays or not, it's essential that you have some activities and options planned for them. There might be work that the school has sent home, or other activities that you can organise for them. Work with what you know will work for your child/ren and provide some structure to their day. Where possible, include indoor and outdoor time and use screen time sessions strategically for when you need them to be quiet so you can concentrate on work.



Use the early morning hours

The quiet time before the whole house wakes up is a great time to start your workday. This can be difficult if you are not normally an early riser. However, during the current circumstances it might be helpful if you can adjust to working early in the morning before the house erupts with morning activity of chatter, breakfast and ‘what can we do now’?

Early dinner time

Try and plan early dinners, so that you can fit in another hour or two of work at the end of the day if you are feeling a bit anxious about timelines. If you have a partner, make these plans together, so you both feel heard and get your work and relaxation needs met. For example, one of you can organise dinner and the other person cleans up. It’s important that everyone is aware of expectations and any changed responsibilities during this time. If you don’t have a partner, choose easy, nutritious meals that don’t take much preparation.

Noise and mess

Some people struggle to concentrate if it’s noisy or your work area seems messy. Talk with your child/ren about your expectations around these things – let them know how much noise they can make and how messy they can be. Let them know that if you ask them to be quiet, you expect them to listen and do a different activity. Also let them know they will have to clean up, or at least help you clean up, when they finish playing.

Set additional household tasks

Ask your child/ren to help you with some age-appropriate household tasks. Folding washing, putting toys away, feeding pets, pack/unpack the dishwasher, simple gardening (eg raking leaves).

Stay active

Go for a quick walk, or do some simple exercises, at morning and afternoon tea time. Some fresh air and physical activity is essential towards supporting our overall health.

Sources and websites for additional information:

planningwithkids.com

<https://www.thecut.com/2020/03/how-to-work-from-home-with-kids.html>