

THE NEW GUIDE TO WORKING @ HOME

People have worked remotely for generations. And, they have proven it can work. But, today, with more people working remotely, there is an undeniable strain on businesses, which is testing the strength of organizational culture, process and design, and creating new challenges for the modern workforce. Technology provides a critical pathway for communication, but introduces a lack of human interaction, energy and connectivity. We have begun to rethink the remote workplace and how we can perform at high levels, stay better connected, maintain our mental wellbeing, and thrive, even with limited space, increased distractions and diminished privacy.

THE BASICS...

- 1. Set your schedule.** Be intentional by scheduling time for work, for health, for fun, for personal growth, for friends, for family, for mindfulness, for spiritual time, and for relaxation. Balance is difficult, but necessary, especially with your your full 24-hour cycle taking place within the home, for each family member present.
- 2. Focus is mandatory.** Find new ways to increase your focus and become even more productive – this is now your office – make it work for you. Recognize that your attention may be drawn away or that you may experience boredom due to the extra effort needed to stay on task. This is normal when working under less than ideal circumstances. Try to identify what can be adjusted to continuously improve the work-at-home experience. Feel free to upgrade every day.
- 3. Embrace values and corporate behaviors.** Your home, your values, but strive to maintain and work to embrace the values and behaviors of your company – they matter and keep the company connected. Share them with your family since they are now sharing both your work day and work space with you.
- 4. Eliminate judgement.** This is new for most people, don't judge yourself – embrace where you are the moment and keep thinking forward instead of in the past.

THE NEW NECESSITIES...

- 1. Express vulnerability** – We are all feeling something. Some of us feel despair and anxiety. Others feel very differently based on their work and our world situation. My emotions range from worry to extreme creativity. What we cannot do is keep any of these feelings hidden inside. Show and share your vulnerability. Express the anxiety over change and worrying about what is next – next day, next week, next month. More than social media, it is important to connect with workmates, friends and family in a more genuine way – share what you are feeling with the spoken word through a phone call or face time, instead of a simple post. You may even try to ignore social media for a day – other people are not having more fun than you. Reach out to people you trust – share where you are with work and with life. And, yes, everyone knows you are working from home so just be that real, vulnerable and authentic you – with or without full dress and make up.

***Try This:** Reach out to a co-worker and ask how they really are and what one thing they are struggling with. Listen carefully and share openly.*

2. Shun labels – We have been introduced to new concepts and labels (mostly negative), like social distancing, that in theory are helpful, but in spirit are destructive. Let's remake social distancing and think about it as physical distancing as we create more social and human connections. Why think about gatherings of less than 10 as a burden? Let's embrace the rule of family and our closest friends – it only takes two to make a party. Don't think about the term home office – think about it as just your office. It's natural to assign labels to things that are new or challenging to understand. As your classroom moves home, there may be a convergence of roles – professional, parent, child, partner, friend. You may wear many of the roles, especially if you live with others. In challenging times like these, there is only one label you need to succeed and survive –LEADER. Especially in crisis, be the leader of you and your life.

***Try This:** Identify 5 labels that you or others assign to you. How many are actually limiting you? What would change if you replaced that label with LEADER?*

3. Reconnectconnections – Fear and crisis create unnatural barriers that limit our connections with people and important things. We must not limit human connections, even if we cannot experience others in person. We must rethink how we work and how we stay connected with our coworkers, managers, leaders, vendors, partners and clients. We can use video to make this happen, but we also must rethink other ways – including hosting walking meetings, virtual lunch dates and celebrations, visioning or dream sessions, brainstorming, as well as work groups. Also, find ways in your everyday communications to create connections – two of my favorites are eliminating the question “why?” from the conversation as it creates unnecessary barriers. Instead, ask “help me understand” or “can you explain what...” Also, try adding 15 seconds to every conversation you have. When speaking to someone, that 15 seconds equals 30 extra words, which add meaning, color and description. Anything we can do to create connections helps our performance and overall wellbeing.

***Try this:** Set up a virtual meeting and create a walking work session (even if in your apartment or home)*

4. Practicerecess – When we were in elementary school, we thought about recess as simply fun. We know better today – this time is essential to let the mind and body have a release and a physical break. So, why is it that we take recess away from kids that are misbehaving or from adults in general? Schedule in recess for you. Give your mind a break and reenergize your body. Do something physical – even if it is running in place, creating an in-home scavenger hunt, learning a new dance, or some other form of physical activity. And, don't forget about adding a period of creative art time in your day as well, with tactile things like paper and crayons/pens, playdough, pipe cleaners or any fun supplies you have at home. Creative expression and exploration is key to drive away the monotony of work from home and keep the right side of your brain engaged.

***Try This:** Try a new exercise routine or create a new piece of art today. It is your choice, but try something that engages both your mind and body.*

5. Color-codeconversations – Color is powerful in all facets of our lives. We have identified a system, Humanize MindMaps™, that color codes conversations, meetings, and interactions. Colors are powerful in helping to acclimate the brain to what is happening or expected in that moment. Is the conversation about fun get it done? Or, navigating challenge and ambiguity? Or, is it blue sky dreaming? Whatever the conversation, there is a color to coordinate the conversation and set the tone and get people connected on the task or conversation at hand (visit braddeutser.com/resources to find Humanize MindMaps™.)

***Try This:** To enhance your mood, try the positively pink exercise, which is the one that focuses on having fun and getting things done. It is all about positivity and being upbeat.*

6. Design your workspace – Inject intentionality in your work environment, whether your home workplace is a kitchen table, bar top, or bedroom. Be purposeful in how you design or rethink your work environment at home, taking into consideration space, distractions, family, boredom, etc. Consider naming a space “my office,” adding color to space, adding pictures (family, friends, co-workers), adding inspirational quotes each day, reorganizing your desk or finding a new “desk” every day in your home. Can you identify an area to stand and work from for part of the day? Can you go on a creative work walk (even if you are quarantined) by looking at a scenic view on the computer? Set a schedule of when you work where in your home and share that with your family so they know and respect your work space for that given point in time.

***Try this:** Find 3 different spaces in your home that you will make your workspaces and name them for the different meetings and or work you will conduct in each.*

7. Reset your mindset – Use this moment to reset, rethink, reestablish, refocus, reframe, redirect, reform, reimagine – and any other “re-“ you can think of. It starts with your mind. And, yes, rejoice in the moment and the space you are in – regardless of the hardship or impending challenge ahead. Read up on the benefits of being mindful. Practice mindfulness, meditation or intentional breathing. When strong emotions hit us, it triggers a flight or fight mechanism that takes us deeper into hyper-sensation. Breath is one of our most powerful tools to impact our minds and our ability to slow our brains. We offer meditation every day to our team members and encourage them to have an accountability buddy to keep it real. Embrace the reset. It is a gift to be able to connect and reconnect in new ways – that starts with each of us. Everything seems out of balance right now, so create a new balance that works for right now in your work and your life.

***Try this:** Read one article on mindfulness and be open to attempting a 5-minute daily meditation on breath.*

8. Make your own fun – It is a natural struggle for fun to find us, especially during a crisis. Regardless of how hard life is, it is important to actively seek out fun and find a way to live out happiness (even if it is momentary) in this chaotic time. You can make your own fun – it may be with others or yourself. Regardless of the challenges we are facing, we are making fun a priority and finding new ways to breathe life into our work culture while at home!

***Try this:** Be the social director for one week and plan 7 days with at least one fun activity for you and your team. Be free to create fun!*

9. Celebrate moments – It is hard to celebrate in times of challenge but there are still wins in the darkest days – find something to celebrate each day. We end every meeting with each person celebrating one positive take-a-way. And, while you are at it, celebrate you! Do a daily exercise where you identify one and only one thing that you are grateful for about you. Each day pick something new. After 30 days, you can start over and repeat any of the previous things for which you are grateful.

***Try this:** Start a positivity journal and write down one thing that you are grateful for about you each day.*

Working offsite can work. In fact, it can be invigorating. I have learned so much about the resilience and creativity and drive of everyone around me. It has shown me about the human spirit and how it cannot be held down. It has also reminded me that if you have the right cultural foundation, the right values and behaviors that are fully defined, then they travel anywhere – especially home.