



How to leave work at work when working from home

One of the challenges that people must face in this time of stay at home orders and directives is, “How can I leave work at work when I am working from home?” The need to maintain some level of work-life blend is a challenge when the work and home are mixed up in a blender.

I have found what works for me, but I understand that what I do may not work for others, so I reached out to colleagues and friends and asked what they are doing to separate work and life. Below are some suggestions:

Incorporate or maintain routines

- Follow your pre-pandemic routine of getting up showering, eating breakfast, exercising, etc. If you walk to work, walk around the block to start your day.
- If you only drink coffee or tea at work, follow that practice. Put your coffee or tea in a travel mug.
- Dress like you are going to work. You don't have to wear a suit or a tie but maintain a business casual appearance or follow your organization's Friday dress code. By doing this, your brain maintains a level of professionalism. Plus, at the end of the day, you can change, which also creates a separation.
- Take lunch at your normal lunchtime, or schedule lunch with your partner so you can have a lunch date.
- Create and prioritize a to-do list for the next day before you end the workday, so your brain does not have to think about tomorrow.
- When you start working, decide on a time to quit working and stick to it.
- If you have not completed your daily to-do list by quitting time, still stop. Give yourself grace and understand that you did your best for today and it will still be there tomorrow.

Have a separate workspace

- If you have a separate room in your house or apartment, then make that the “office” so work happens there, and life is everywhere else.
- If you don't have a separate space, find a location that can be designated as your workspace, and position your equipment so you can't see the screen or your notes when you're not working.
- You can choose to set up and tear down your computer every day for more separation. This could be advantageous, because that set-up time allows for you to mentally prepare for your day, and the tear down lets you mentally shut down work.

The Village EAP is taking COVID-19 very seriously and we are working to provide the best continued services to you. If you feel like you or an employee could benefit from talking to a counselor and have our EAP contract, please contact The Village EAP at 1-800-627-8220 to access your free and confidential sessions. We are here so you don't have to go it alone.

Technology

- Leave work on the computer.
- Turn it off. Don't let your computer just sleep because it is too easy to wake it up.
- Don't have your email on your phone, or at least turn the notifications off, because the temptation to check it is too great when you see the notification bubble.

At the end of the day

- Change out of work clothes.
- Do something relaxing. Walk your dog, play with your kids, go for a run or workout, make dinner, etc.
- Close the door to your workspace.
- If you must transfer phone calls, use this as your clock-in and clock-out method. When you are starting your workday, transfer your calls to your home or cell phone, and clock out by transferring the calls back to your office voicemail.
- As you are shutting down for the day, visualize turning an office sign from open to closed. If you must, make an open and closed sign so you can physically turn the sign.

At the end of the day, we need to set hard boundaries between life and work. If we allow the lines between work and home to become blurred, we will become overworked and exhausted, lose efficiency at work, and potentially develop struggles with our families. We need to remember that boundaries are created to protect the things we love about ourselves and protect us from the things that could hurt us.

Set those boundaries, share those boundaries, and practice those boundaries.

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