



## Home Working for Parents

Navigating both a full-time job and parenting is already challenging enough, and when you lose the separation between work, home, and school, the word nightmare might pop into mind. Fortunately, there are some measures you can take to ease the stress.

### It's not going to be perfect

First and foremost, recognise that distractions and interruptions are inevitable. If you let every single one get the best of you, you will drown in a pool of frustration.

### You're not the only one going through this

Communication is essential. Make sure your manager is aware of your situation, which might include reminders that your children might walk in during a Skype meeting or that you will be completely unavailable during the lunch hour. If you have a partner, spend a few minutes each morning discussing the day ahead. Identify when you each have important meetings or calls that may require the other to help out with parental duties. Also, don't forget about communicating with your children. Talk to them about boundaries, and consider using a tool, like a paper stop sign, that you can post up when you need quiet time.

### Get into a routine

Routines are how families organise themselves to get things done, spend time together and have fun. Every family has its own unique routines. Routines help family members know who should do what, when, in what order and how often. Routines also let your children know what's important to your family.

### Have a schedule

Arrange important calls and meetings to take place during your child's regular nap time. If your children are too old for naps, establish a "quiet play time" every day where they can read or play quietly and use this time for calls or work that needs your full attention.

### Organise a designated workspace

Try to clear a space in your house and make it the dedicated office/school work area, ideally where you can shut the door. Doing so can make the transition from work or school time to home time, much easier and ensure that your house still feels like a home that you can relax in when you are done for the day.

## Get the support you need

Remember to take breaks, whether it's to complete a jigsaw with your child, call a relative, friend or colleague, or just stepping outside into the garden for a few minutes. Parenting in general, even when things are normal, can be isolating, so setting-up virtual hangouts with your friends and family to get human interaction is important.

## Embrace Technology

Children are sociable and there are many technological tools that allow people to stay in touch, from FaceTime to playing games together online. Involve other family members in your daily routines such as calling Grandma to spend 30 minutes reading a book to your children on WhatsApp or FaceTime. You can include online interactions with friends and family into your schedule.

## Don't expect to work at your normal capacity

Most people are going to be less productive during this time. Being proactive with your manager and co-workers and setting realistic expectations about what you can accomplish is necessary to prevent misunderstandings down the line:

- identify what your optimal working hours will be;
- when you'll be most available;
- and how much you think you can get done.

Alternatively, unconventional working hours may well be necessary. Identify what will work best for you and discuss this with your manager.

## Shift work

For two-parent homes, consider working in shifts if possible, especially if there are small children that require more attention. Breaking it up into two, two or four hour shifts apiece can ensure that each partner has dedicated time to focus. But even then, be prepared to help out if things get tricky, especially if there are multiple children.

## Finally

Set a maximum of five goals for the day:

- one or two things you really need to accomplish at work;
- one or two things you want your kids to accomplish;
- one family or partner activity

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