

42 tips for self-care success whilst working from home

Stop worrying, start living.

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1. Celebrate your progress every day, writing down 2 things you were proud of doing.

Progress, not perfection.

Too often, you might end up looking at what you didn't manage to do, rather than what you actually did. That isn't the most helpful.

When you start celebrating your progress, you start to build up the motivation and the momentum to complete ever-bigger tasks.

2. Write down 1 thing you could have improved on.

Writing down 1 thing you can improve helps you recognise that you're not perfect.

That's okay.

What's good is that in doing this, you also take efforts to think about what you can change to improve.

You commit to being better. You become the change you want to see.

3. Set out three things you would like to complete before the workday ends.

J.D. Meier, a former Microsoft employee, developed this for his staff to be more productive. Before you start the day, set out three goals you want to achieve.

This brings focus to your day, allowing you to say no to things that don't matter. More importantly, it allows you to hold yourself to account.

At the end of the day, you get to ask yourself:

Did I finish what I set out to do?

4. Timebox your schedule by arranging fixed start and end times when you would like to do certain tasks.

Nir Eyal, the author of *Indistractable*, suggests that we spend 5 minutes at the start of each day planning out what we want to do.

This allows you to work more efficiently and effectively because you have a clear idea of what you're trying to do.



5. Spend time with your children and loved ones *during* work, such as during lunch hours, tea breaks, and occasional breaks.

Children might end up complaining that daddy and mummy are always on the computer, even though they might be at home.

You can spend time with your children during the times you are not working, or whilst you are on a break.

Laugh with them.

Find out about their day.

Be with them. Emotionally and physically.

6. Arrange with your spouse on who is going to be in charge when.

Having a plan, even if you don't follow the plan, is important. You don't end up leaving things to chance.

You are able to discuss what went well, and what went wrong. Leaving it to chance will make things difficult and conflictual. Each party might end up expecting the other to take initiative and step in.

When that doesn't happen... oh boy.

7. Be clear with your spouse about what you need and clarify expectations of each other.

You might be good at helping people with what they need. But how about helping yourself with what you need?

Working from home demands a lot.

Being clear about what you need is vital in making things work. Lay out your expectations of each other. What's okay and what's not. This might sound too formal. But it's better to overcommunicate your wishes, rather than boiling in anger when something doesn't happen.

8. Arrange your work week so that you do tasks requiring more focus when someone is helping you with childcare.

Tasks requiring more focus will need focus. You don't want to be interrupted by your child whilst trying to make a detailed analysis.

Do the shallow work like emails and the administrative work requiring less deep thought when you need to help with childcare.

On other days, focus on the uninterrupted deep work.

9. Explain to colleagues before a work call that you might need to occasionally pop out to see if your child is alright.

There's no shame in needing to care for a child. In fact, it's something to be celebrated.

You are doing so much to make things work.

Explaining to your colleagues will establish mutual understanding, rather than pretending that everything is fine.

Colleagues might not know what you need to do outside of work. Explaining to them will help.

10. Explain to your child that you might be busy but that doesn't mean that you don't care about him.

Children need attention and love.

But your job also needs your attention. How do you balance that? By explaining to your child that your busyness does not equate to a lack of love for them.

11. Switch off your email when trying to focus.

Email is evil. The notification that pops up? The red flag that calls for your attention? The meeting invite? When you're trying to focus, having these popping up all the time can end up splitting your attention. You don't want to end up doing shoddy work. So, switch off your email. Nothing much will happen to *others* when it's off. But lots of productivity will happen for *you*.

12. Check your email at fixed times, like 11am, 2pm, and 5pm.

You wouldn't think of doing your laundry one piece at a time, right? So why are you doing your email one at a time?

Rather than clearing it one at a time, why not collect it? This way, you get to clear more at any single time.



13. Monotask by only opening one application, and one tab at a time.

Multitasking is a myth. Monotasking is a must. In Sherry Turkle's book *Reclaiming Conversation*, she observes how studies show that an office worker is distracted (electronically) every three minutes.

Here's the curious thing.

It takes an average of *twenty-three minutes* to get back on track.

Yup, 23!

Multitasking may not be that useful after all.

14. Keep to fixed working hours.

Procrastinating?

Telling yourself that you will always do it later is classic. But what if there was no 'later'? When your work is always within reach, there's the temptation to keep putting work off since you can always do it later.

But that's not effective.

Keeping fixed working hours helps you to be more effective, because there's no 'later'.

15. Keep your work laptop and your work phone off after work hours.

Blurring boundaries between work and home are exacerbated since your work laptop and work phone are now within the confines of your house.

Switching it off allows you to keep the boundaries clear, and prevent colleagues and clients from contacting you after work hours.

16. Put your work laptop and work phone out of the room where you sleep in.

Keep work stuff out of the room you sleep in.

The inbuilt habit of doing work when you see those items can lead you to picking it up, and firing off another email. Leave it out of your room.

And don't bring it to bed with you.



17. Talk to your boss about the difficulties you might have managing children, colleagues and clients.

Talk to your boss about your struggles. Being open and honest is important to help others to understand your unique position.

Hoping that others will understand without you explaining is hoping for too much. Be clear.

18. Ask for help from your supervisor when things get overwhelming.

It's okay to be not okay. It's not okay to pretend that everything is okay, when it's not. Asking for help is not a crime. Your colleagues aren't always there to harm you. They can be there to help too, if you ask for it.

19. Arrange regular meet-ups with your friends, to engage support *before* you seriously need it.

When you are not physically with your colleagues, it can be hard to get that emotional support from being around people. You can probably be more intentional about your efforts to engage with your friends, seeking support from them.

20. Smile to yourself when feeling down.

When you are feeling down, smile. Find something funny about the situation. Laugh at yourself. It's free. And it helps you to think: How important is this, really?

21. Listen to music you love.

When you listen to music you love, you start to relax, tune in, and momentarily forget the troubles you have at work. Sometimes, that's necessary. When you take your 5-minute break, why not listen? Just listen. Don't listen whilst trying to do something else. Just sit in your chair, and listen to your favourite track. Allow yourself to sink into it.

22. Have a little concert to yourself.

Be silly. You are at home! When you accomplish something at work, have a little dance. Sing to yourself in the shower.

Have fun.

Working from home may not be the best option, but you can make it the best experience you've had.

Choose joy over fear.

There's too little time for fear.



23. Play with a desktop toy like Lego, or a figurine.

There's some Lego on my table. I play with it when I'm bored in a virtual meeting. That might seem disrespectful, but it reminds me of something important: that change is built one block at a time.

Sometimes change might seem slow from the outside, but it's built one block at a time. Having a desktop toy can be a reminder to you about a certain principle in life. It can also keep you engaged.

24. Have a picture you love on your work desk.

You might have someone you love. Or something that inspires you to do the great work you do. Remind yourself of it every day.

It keeps you motivated and committed to working from home, even when things are hard.

Think of working as farming. In farming, the farmer has to plough the land before sowing the seeds. When you work from home, there are days when you need to clear all the admin work before you get to the more exciting work. Having days when you plough through all that is useful.

28. Mix it up like *rojak*, having a variety of tasks in the day.

It can be boring to stare at the computer all day, wondering what will happen next.

Mix it up.

Have a conversation.

Have a video call with a client.

Craft a new programme proposal. Read up on some research.

Mix it up.

29. Know when you are most productive and do the most difficult tasks then.

Our energy ebbs and flows during the day.

Are you a morning person? Do the most difficult task then.

Don't leave it to the end, when you know that you are less productive.

When you do this, you start caring for yourself.

Instead of subjecting yourself to torturous work at your worst hours, you start tuning into your body's ebb and flow.



30. Keep meetings to the beginning or the end of the day.

This sounds nonsensical.

Why do this? If you've worked long enough, you probably realise that most meetings don't end on time.

A meeting can consume more time and, more energy than you realise. Keeping it to the beginning or the end of the day helps to prevent your workday from being interrupted by constant meetings.

31. Arrange calls after lunch, so that you can keep awake.

You probably find it hard to fall asleep when someone is talking to you. It's easier to fall asleep when you're reading through a heavy text.

The post-lunch coma is a common effect, as your body works through the difficult work of digesting your food.

Your energy is channelled to the stomach instead. Why not have a call during those less productive times?



32. Have walking work calls to keep active and think better.

I learnt this tip from Dr Jonathan Singer, the President of the American Association of Suicidology.

You might want some sunshine.

Having a walking conversation is a great way to combine walking and work.

You get to be more alert whilst having the conversation, and you also breathe in some fresh air!

33. Get out of your house for a short walk during lunch.

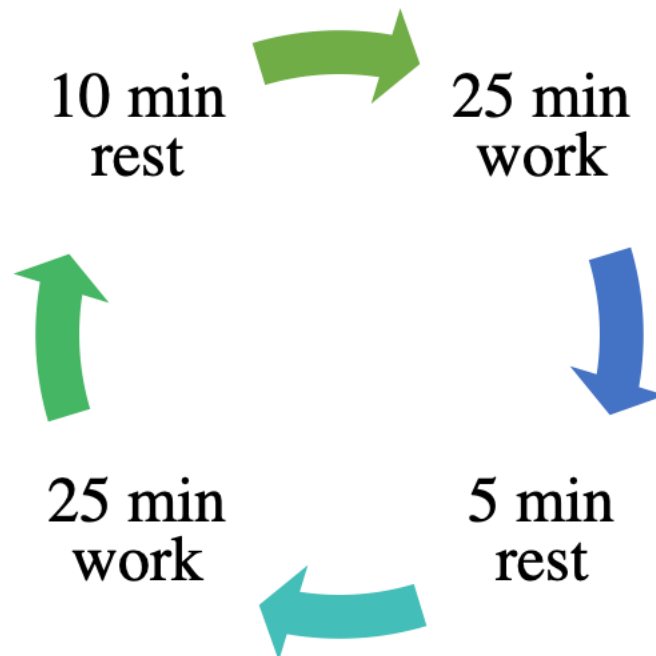
Being cooped up in your home for the whole day might not be your idea of fun. When you are having lunch, why not take a short walk too?

It rejuvenates the senses and helps you to connect with nature. It also helps you to get the post-lunch coma out of the way by giving your stomach some exercise to work through the food.

34. Set a timer for a stretch and a walk away from your desk every 30 minutes.

Ever had the experience when you've worked for a long time in front of the computer and felt, wow, I never felt so drained before!

That's what happens when we don't take regular breaks from the computer. You might end up with a stiff back, a sore neck, and sloppy work. Take a break.



35. Eat your lunch away from your work desk, emails, and phones.

Eating lunch at your desk? Move away instead.

Take your lunch away from the desk so that you can fully enjoy the break. You're a human, not a robot. You don't have to work through lunch too.

36. Have water instead of a wafer.

Have a break, *don't* have a KitKat.

Grazing in front of your fridge? Have some water instead. Water fills the stomach, helping you to fill fuller without adding unneeded calories to your waistline.

37. Plan out your rest day on the weekend, instead of leaving it to chance.

With many things still being closed, you might not have much to do on the weekend.

Each working day might blend into the weekend, reducing the sense of anticipation you

have. Create a sense of excitement for the weekend by planning it. Plan a walk. A meal with a friend. A movie at home. Plan something. Don't just leave it to chance.

38. Dress up for work, and dress down after work.

Dressing up for work, even if you're at home, helps remind you that you are working, not slacking. When you dress down, it reminds you that work is over. This simple tip, from Guy Winch, helps you to create clearer boundaries between work and home.

39. Write down a list of skills you would like to develop during this time.

You don't have to spend time traveling to work now. You have more time to yourself.

What do you want to develop?

Write down a list of skills you would like to develop.

This helps you to feel a sense of accomplishment as you work towards these skills.

Then, find the opportunities to develop them.



40. Develop yourself during this time, signing up for classes and free webinars.

Without the ability to meet physically, many classes have moved online. There is a plethora of useful skills that you can learn virtually. The question is which one to pick.

There isn't necessarily the best one. Only better ones. Rather than fussing over the best, why not suffice for 'good enough', and start learning?

41. Read books that enrich you.

With so much negativity in the world now, reading a good book can help you stay motivated and excited.

These books don't just help you to feel good, they help you to do good too. Filling your mind with good stuff, rather than the persistent negativity, can do you much good.

42. Stop reading the news.

The news can be filled with horrible things these days.

The number of cases, the conflicts, and the lack of control that everyone feels.

Reading it can make you feel negative. Rolf Dobelli's brilliant manifesto *Stop Reading the News*, argues that reading news *makes* us feel productive.

But it doesn't actually change anything. You end up with a lot of information, but little that you can act upon.

Conclusion

I struggled to sleep for days when I found out that my supervisor was planning to fail me for my student placement.

I didn't know what to do.

I struggled to stop myself from worrying.

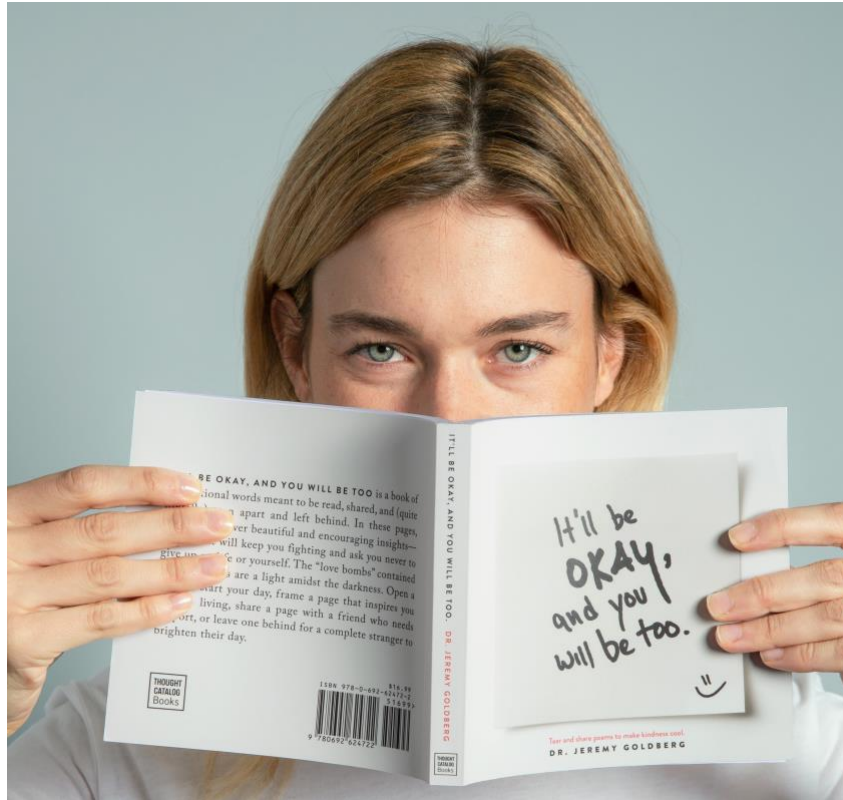
As a social worker, as you work from home, you will find that your clients, colleagues and children are now even closer than before.

You can't get them out of your life... or can you?

Can you detach, care for yourself, and laugh amidst the difficult work you do?

You can.

If you want to.



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