

## **How to Stay Motivated When Working From Home<sup>i</sup>**

Most people find working from home to be challenging—especially at first. From piles of dirty laundry to day time TV, there are tons of distractions. And sometimes, pajamas and a comfortable seat on the sofa just don't provide the same type of motivation you get from a suit and an office chair.

Whether you're home alone and the house is too quiet, or you're home with the family and the kids are out of control, you may find it's tough to stay on task, get your work done, and feel productive. Fortunately, the following strategies can help you stay motivated when you work from home.

### **1. Create a Schedule**

- Without a structured workday, time can get away from you. You might find that you start shifting your workdays later and later as you sip an extra cup of coffee. Then, your work hours extend later into the evenings, which causes you to stay up later at night as well.
- Or you might find that you easily get off track or distracted while working. And projects that used to take 20 minutes are suddenly lasting 2 hours.
- That's why it's important to have a clear schedule. Establish a time to begin and end work. Try to stick to it as much as you can.

### **2. Establish a Dedicated Workspace**

- You might be tempted to work in bed. After all, it's likely the most comfortable space in the house.
- But when you associate your bed with work, it can interfere with your sleep. And trouble sleeping will affect your performance the following day. Most sleep experts recommend reserving your bed for sleep and sexual activity.
- So even though your bed might feel like a comfortable spot, create a workspace somewhere else. The kitchen table or a desk in the corner of the living room might be better alternatives to your bedroom.

### **3. Work in Small Blocks of Time**

- Blocking out small amounts of time—and planning what you'll do during that timeframe—can make big tasks feel more manageable.
- You might find you have more motivation when telling yourself that you just need to complete one invoice in the next 30 minutes, rather than telling yourself that you have 50 invoices to create by lunchtime.

- Scheduling your time will also hold you more accountable. You'll be less likely to get lost on social media when you know you only have 15 minutes to complete a task. And you'll be less likely to procrastinate when you've given yourself a tight deadline.

#### **4. Limit Your Distractions and Interruptions**

- You might find that you struggle to get back on task each time you're interrupted. You can stay motivated by limiting the distractions and interruptions you experience.
- This may mean muting your phone notifications and only checking your email once an hour. Or place your phone on "Do Not Disturb" until you complete a specific task.
- If you're working from home with kids, keep them occupied to reduce how often they interrupt you. Give them tasks to do and plan to check on them at a certain time.
- Establish some ground rules about what constitutes a legitimate reason for them interrupting you while working. Then, you can reward them for playing well on their own with a chance to do something extra fun when you're finished working.

#### **5. Practice the "10-Minute Rule"**

- It can be hard to convince yourself to start working on a task you really don't want to do. Whether you know it's going to be boring, frustrating, or just really challenging, convincing yourself to get started is tough.
- One of the best ways to get moving on something you don't want to do is by using the "10-minute rule." Tell yourself that you only have to work on something for 10 minutes. Then, after the 10-minute mark, you can take a break if you want.
- More times than not, you'll likely find that at the 10-minute mark you'll choose to keep going. Usually, getting started is the toughest part. But once you do, it's easy to keep the momentum going.

#### **6. Reward Yourself**

- You might find you work best when you know there's a little reward waiting for you. For example, tell yourself you can watch your favorite show if you get your work done by 6 PM. Or tell yourself you can have a cup of your favorite tea as soon as you finish this report.
- A little incentive can often go a long way toward helping you get work done efficiently. And it'll help you see what you're capable of accomplishing.

## **7. Challenge Yourself**

- Sometimes, a little challenge can help get you moving too. For example, you might try to write a certain amount of words in 30 minutes. Once you see how many words you write in 30 minutes, you might try beating that during the next 30-minute time slot.
- You might also make some discoveries about yourself. Maybe you type faster when you're sitting at the kitchen table, or perhaps you have better focus right after lunch. Learning these things about yourself might help you set your day up for success.
- Being more aware of your time helps you use it wisely. And challenging yourself in some way might provide the extra incentive you need.

## **8. Practice Good Self-Care**

- You'll never be at your best if you're exhausted and running on caffeine and sugar only. You need a healthy diet, plenty of rest, and good self-care strategies to perform at your peak.
- But meeting your physical, social, and emotional needs right now will be a bit more challenging than usual. Eating a healthy diet might not be as easy when you're limiting your trips to the grocery store. And video chatting with friends isn't the same as meeting in person.
- So, take a step back every once in a while and ask yourself what else you can do to take care of yourself better. As your stress level increases, your self-care should increase right alongside it.

## **9. Experiment With Different Strategies**

- There are plenty of online tips about how to work well from home. But everyone is different. And what works for one person might not work well for another.
- So, it's important to experiment with different strategies to discover what works well for you. You might find you feel more motivated in the evenings, or you might have more energy after a morning workout.

## **10. Practice Regulating Your Emotions**

- Research shows we tend to put off tasks that stir up uncomfortable emotions.<sup>1</sup> If you're anxious about a medical appointment, you might not be motivated to call the doctor. Or if you're afraid studying will bring frustration; you might find yourself binge-watching Netflix instead.

- In these cases, the lack of motivation stems from your desire to avoid discomfort. And when you're working from home, there are always plenty of opportunities to engage in something more fun than the work you're supposed to be doing.
- So, consider what emotion(s) you're trying to avoid feeling. Acknowledging the emotion might make it feel less scary. Remind yourself that you can handle feeling uncomfortable.
- Additionally, remind yourself of how good you'll feel when you get the project done as opposed to how bad you'll feel if you don't do the work. This might remind you to take action regardless of whether you feel like it.

### **Key Takeaways**

- Working remotely is even more challenging during COVID-19 with extra stress and added distractions from family members.
- A few simple strategies can help keep you motivated and on task.
- Don't be too hard on yourself right now; we're all doing our best under these unprecedented circumstances.

### **What This Means For You**

- Working from home can be challenging in the best of circumstances. But if you find yourself working remotely during the coronavirus pandemic, the added stress of the situation will make it harder than usual to stay motivated.
- Be willing to cut yourself a little slack if your productivity isn't on par. Rather than beat yourself up for not being motivated enough, you might find a little self-compassion goes a long way toward helping you feel your best.

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<sup>1</sup> Morin, A (Aug. 6, 2020). How to stay motivated when you are working from home. Accessed from Verywell Mind, Coronavirus News Online, <https://www.verywellmind.com/work-from-home-motivation-4802480>