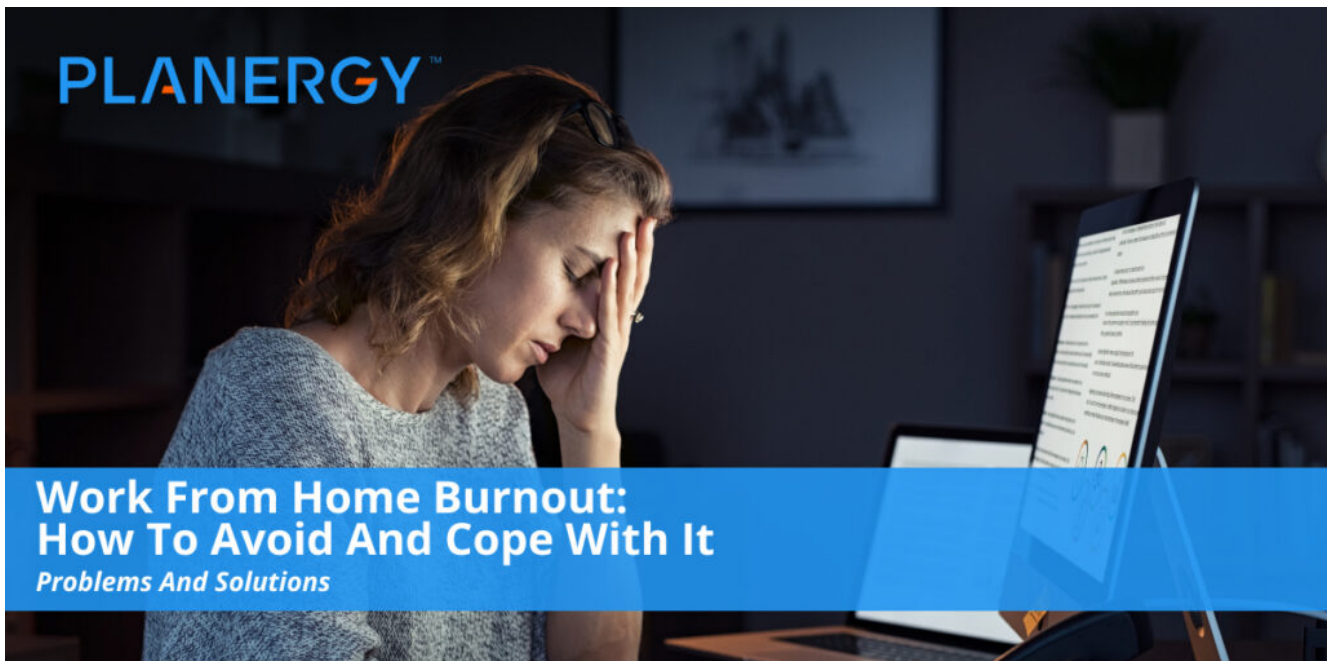


Work From Home Burnout: How To Avoid and Cope With It



As we enter a new normal amid the coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic, more employees are opting to continue to work from home full-time.

Some are opting for a hybrid environment where they are working from home more often than they are in the office.

Regardless, working from home comes with its benefits and some disadvantages.

Let's take a look at some of the most common causes of work from home burnout, and what you can do to fix it, cope with it, and hopefully avoid it altogether. This will go a long way toward setting you up for success.

Cause: Difficulty Disconnecting

From the second the alarm goes off, you feel like you have to be at work. You start checking email before your feet even hit the floor. You spend your lunch break on a conference call and end up working on a report after dinner. Your laptop has become your shadow.

On average, employees report working 3 more hours every day since working

remotely as a result of covid-19. That's 15 more hours a week which is almost another part-time job. Ever heard of too much of a good thing? that's definitely the case when it comes to your work.

Research from ASU describes how important it is to transition from home life to your work life as a result of these boundary-crossing activities.

This means the work you put some clothes on, make your coffee, and commute to work. Even if that commute is just a quick walk outside your apartment building before you clock in for the day.

These physical and social indicators of change help to create a boundary between the two aspects of your life. Though it feels convenient to skip these activities, maintaining these habits is essential for work engagement and your well-being.

Solution: Set Office Hours

If you find yourself having trouble disconnecting, set office hours. Make it a point to live as though you are still in an office.

Silence your notifications and turn on an out-of-office response outside your predetermined work hours. This way regardless of whether you're out running an errand, or spending some time on the couch, you, your clients, and co-workers know that your office is closed for the day.

When at all possible, develop a block of hours that you can consistently work within, and be sure to communicate this upfront with your co-workers and clients to avoid any surprises.

Next, instead of spending the day in your pajamas, put on a nice top, pants, and real shoes. Data shows that what you wear changes the way you think and improves your abstract thinking.

Replace the time you would spend in your car driving to the office for a walk outside while you listen to a favorite podcast or new audiobook. Getting the fresh air into your lungs increases oxygen in your brain to improve energy and concentration along with your memory.

After you finish your walk, walk through the front door if your home is so you're

walking into your office.

Choose a designated workspace in your home, that's away from your bed. It is ideal to have a place you can go where you can close the door and focus where there is plenty of quiet.

At the end of your day, establish boundaries and commit to honoring them. If someone tries to schedule a late meeting, stand firm. Let them know you're unavailable during that time and suggest an alternative time.

During your work time, focus only on work related tasks. Let your family members know what these hours are, and avoid working at the kitchen table if you can.

This will help keep those boundaries clear and help you avoid wfh burnout. It will also support your work-life balance.

An important part of taking care of yourself and your office is investing in workplace ergonomics. This can keep you comfortable throughout your days in the office.

Cause: No Inspiration

Do you find yourself dragging your feet when it comes time to jump on a conference call?

Are you constantly watching your inbox fill while at the same time watching your desire to respond to those messages drain? when we feel burned out at work, it's common to want to do everything but.

It's not just an emotional response. The chronic stress that causes burnout is actually changing your brain function and anatomy. These changes overwhelm your ability to think, learn, pay attention, and reason.

Living in this constant state of stress switches our brains into survival mode which impairs our ambition and responsibility.

Solution: Get Creative

When you start to feel yourself procrastinating on projects, ignoring email messages, and otherwise avoiding work, think about what made you excited about your career in the first place. What is it that excites you?

Work on creating a plan to implement this aspect of work back into your life. If you enjoyed presenting at your quarterly meetings, ask to host a virtual meeting with your coworkers.

If you enjoyed researching new products or possible solutions, make time to do this.

Before you get a jump on the email and get buried in your day-to-day workload, make time for whatever it is that excites you. Block an hour on your calendar every morning for an inspiration session that allows you to work on what you love most without interruptions.

If you're having trouble determining what inspires you at work or where your greatest strengths are, try spending time defining this. Talk with your superiors, too.

Remember, you're in control of your career so it's time to take pride in what you do best and find joy in doing it.

Cause: Feeling Unsupported at Work

Working alone is both a blessing and a curse. You don't have to deal with coworkers dropping by your desk to ask a question, or navigating the conversations after your meeting ends. But now, you find yourself craving those instances because you're alone all the time.

If things go badly at work, co-workers or laid off, or your manager isn't the best at leading things remotely, the social isolation of remote work may make you feel as if you don't have anyone to turn to for support.

Losing a sense of community and connection can change your perception of the world causing you to feel threatened and just trusting of others. You may activate defense mechanisms.

Working remotely doesn't stop problems from arising. But when they do, you are alone isolated in your home office, and you may struggle to cope with the impact and find a solution.

Solution: Communicate with Your Coworkers and Supervisors

Due to the lack of personal interactions in the office, it is harder for your coworkers to notice those shifts in your behavior and address them with you.

It's your responsibility to be aware of your behavior and speak to it with others. Hiding your concerns behind a smile will only make them worse in the end.

If you're starting to feel burned out, tactfully communicate this to your coworkers or your boss. If the thought of this leads you to fear losing your job, put a positive spin on it.

Say something like, "I want to deepen my commitment in this position and would like to discuss with you ways that I can remain engaged and focused while working remotely."

Framing the statement this way indicates that you are committed to and want to do your best and then you can speak about what is and isn't working for you in the current workplace environment.

There's a strong link between social support in the workplace and reduced levels of burnout. One study indicates that the most important factor in workplace happiness is positive social relationships with co-workers.

Just because you aren't in the office anymore doesn't mean that you can't maintain friendships remotely. Consider putting together a fun group call for "happy hours" or setting up a socially distanced meeting in a local park if you find yourself suffering from Zoom fatigue.

Cause: Feeling Overwhelmed

If you're starting to feel overwhelmed by work to the point where you're having trouble sticking with those boundaries we talked about above, you're not alone.

It's just as easy to feel overwhelmed with work when you're handling it remotely as if you were still working in the office.

Solution: Take Your Breaks and Stick to a Schedule

One of the most important ways to cut feeling overwhelmed is to make sure that you're sticking to a schedule with work.

That schedule should also include breaks. And even if you're in the middle of something important, if break time comes around, you should stop and take your break.

Give yourself a few minutes to walk away from the computer. Sit outside and enjoy the sun or have a nice cold glass of water. Even if you only take a 10-minute break here and there, it can help give your brain a break so that you can refocus and prioritize your efforts.

It may be tempting to take advantage of the extra time you have since you no longer have to commute and attempt to be incredibly productive. Well, it sounds good on the surface, it's actually one of the fastest ways to send yourself straight into work from home burnout. The unnecessary extra pressure will definitely backfire.

Remember to take your vacation time, even if you end up having a staycation. This gives you time to enjoy your personal lives and relax. If you're experiencing burnout symptoms or noticing signs of burnout, it may be time to step back for a few extra days off as soon as possible.

Cause: Feeling Isolated

Feeling isolated is common when working from home. A lack of communication is also a huge factor in stress.

Even though everyone is more connected than ever, staying in touch with your colleagues can help alleviate the isolation you may feel from working remotely.

Checking in with your boss on a regular basis can reduce stress regarding deadlines, expectations, and productivity. Don't wait until you start to feel cut off from the rest of the group to take action.

Solution: Maintain a Social Connection Whenever Possible

Even though you're not meeting at the physical water cooler anymore, take a few minutes to indulge in casual conversation with colleagues and send each other funny memes to help ease your stress.

Make it a point to foster social connections outside of work and office hours with family and friends whenever possible.

As long as you do it in a socially responsible way, you can continue to maintain social connections in spite of the pandemic.

Cause: Stress

Workplace stress is nothing new. Working remotely adds a new layer to that stress since you are having to deal with a completely new routine.

You're working alone where you're used to working in a group.

Soon meetings don't quite offer the same opportunities as a face-to-face meeting. Regardless of what the actual stress is, taking time for yourself is important.

Solution: Make Self Care a Priority

Self-care is definitely a buzzword that we've been hearing a lot more lately. That's because in unprecedented times like the ones we are currently living in, taking care of yourself is Paramount to remaining healthy.

What self-care means to you may not be what it means to someone else. For some, self-care means shutting the negativity out and opting to engage in positive activities that bring you peace and happiness. Self care activities may include:

- Reading a book

- Spending time in the kitchen preparing your favorite meal or baked good
- Taking a nap
- Watching a funny movie with your partner or friends
- Playing a video game
- Meditating, exercising, or stretching
- Working on a hobby you've put on the back burner
- Or taking a nice hot bubble bath

Think about some things you enjoy but often don't get to do anymore because you're so busy with work.

Make it a point to stop working all the time and treat yourself with something fun.

For instance, a remote colleague of mine has designated Sundays as self-care Sundays. Every week, she indulges in an at-home pedicure and trashy reality TV to disconnect from the noise of the rest of the world.

No matter what you choose to do to combat work from home burnout, what matters is that you can recognize it and take action to resolve it.

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