



Illinois Center for Specialized Professional Support,
Illinois State University, College of Education

Bringing Your Best Self to the Virtual Workplace

Supporting the system during
COVID-19

April 8, 2020

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Illinois Center for Specialized Professional Support












- Phone lines will be muted for better sound quality
- Please 'introduce' yourself by typing your name in the chat/question box
- Please use question box to ask questions

What We Will Cover Today










1. Best practices for self-care and productivity that you can put to work immediately
2. Time for your questions

Other webinars in this series: [Thriving in a Virtual Work Place](#)

[Best Practices for Remote Work](#), March 25

 Reprioritize and focus on output	 Get your WFH infrastructure set up	 Create workspace(s)
 Adhere to routines	 Set work boundaries	 Be strategic about communication
 Focus on positives	 Don't neglect workplace culture	 Learn new skills

[Best Practices for Leading a Virtual Team](#), April 1

 Use your EQ: Emotional Intelligence	 Strategically communicate with your team	 Agree on guidelines for remote work
 Create a virtual work plan that works for your team structure	 Assess your team's strengths & weaknesses and redeploy as needed	 Make work visible and create clear measures of productivity
 Address technology issues for your team	 Have everyone brush up on their technology skills	 Maintain a sense of culture and camaraderie

Resources are available on the [ICSPS website](#)

Best Practices to be Your Best and Most Productive Self



Be Kind



Stick to a Routine



Protect Your Mental Health



Focus on Physical Health



Keep in Touch with Others



Develop a Self-Care Toolkit



Productivity Takes Practice



Don't Let Technology Get You Down



Find Fun and Laughter

Be a Kind Person – Not Toxic



When you're not the only one working from home in your home.

- Acknowledge that this is a weird and stressful situation
- Do what you can to accommodate one another
- Give each other physical space whenever you can
- Talk and work through problems BEFORE they get big
- Share the broadband – try to coordinate your high-usage times
- Remember to be kind – this is hard for everyone

- If all else fails...

[Weirded Out by Working From Home – 7 Tips to Make it Easier](#), Psychology Today

Be a Kind Person – Not Toxic



- Remember that everyone reacts to stress and change in their own way.
- Extend the benefit of the doubt to co-workers to avoid creating conflict.
- Don't rely on emails or texts to resolve misunderstandings, pick up the phone.
- Take time to encourage teammates who might be struggling.
- Show your appreciation and compliment good work.

Related Reading

[How to Be Kind at Work, No Matter How You're Feeling](#), Quartz at Work



Be a Kind Person – Not Toxic



Just blame it on Cheryl!



Who Do You Want to Be?



Routines Are Important



- ✓ Start your day in your regular way – do not sleep till 7:50 and then wake up to be at work at 8:00 a.m.
- ✓ Person hygiene is important to keep COVID-19 at bay but also to feel "normal"
- ✓ Eat breakfast
- ✓ Set up a workstation in your home - make your bed/don't work from it
- ✓ Create a workspace in your home – this helps you compartmentalize your day
- ✓ Start work and end work as you would if you were in the office. Wrap up your day and check out completely
- ✓ Communicate your work schedule to your family. Morning Huddle with the family.



"I can't remember—do I work at home or do I live at work?"

Five Important Routine Do's and Don'ts



Do: Take regular breaks from looking at your computer screen.

Don't: Insist on powering through an entire 8-hour day while staring directly at your computer screen.

Do: Set up a stationary workstation in your home.

Don't: Work while in bed.

Do: Keep regular work hours- including breaks!

Don't: Take 2 hours to cook lunch and then make up the lost time at the end of the day.

Do: Wrap up your day and check out completely. Go for a walk. Do a meditation. Change into sweatpants.

Don't: Continue to work in the evening because you're near your computer and can't think of anything else to do.

Do: Stay engaged socially.

Don't: Let physical isolation send you into an emotional slump.

"The Do's and Don'ts of Working from Home." Nuun, <http://nuunlife.com/blogs/news/the-do-s-and-don-ts-of-working-from-home>.

Stick to a Routine



Sample Schedule

7:00 a.m. - Wake up, stretch, take care of kids/animals

7:30 a.m. - Breakfast/family time
(touch base on what everyone is doing/needs that day)

8:30 a.m. - Work and check on updates with small breaks every 30 minutes or so

12:00 p.m. - Lunch break, get fresh air, stretch & exercise

1:00 p.m. - Work with breaks every 30 minutes, check in with co-workers

5:00 p.m. - Don't continue to work into the evening because you're near your computer and don't have anything else to do

7:00 p.m. - Self-care time

Go to bed in time to get 8 hours of sleep!

[Your Mental Health and Well-being](https://www.workplacementalhealth.org), Workplacementalhealth.org

DON'T FORGET



poorlydrawnlines.com

Family Huddles and Working with Children at Home



"O.K., let's find out if we like each other."



How COVID-19 Affects Our Mental Health



- Disruption of remote work and navigating new situations
- Job loss or fear of job loss
- Concerns about health and safety
- Anxiety related to state of the world
- Uncertainty about when things will be 'normal' again



"Should I sign my e-mails with 'Be safe,' 'Be well,' or 'AAHHHH!!'?"

Because Calamity is a Great Teacher



Stage No. 1: Security

- Make ample room to allow for a mental adjustment
- It's normal and appropriate to feel bad and lost during this initial transition
- Consider it a good thing that you are not in denial, and that you are allowing yourself to work through the anxiety
- No sane person feels good during a global disaster
- Don't compare yourself to others - they are on their own journey
- Know that you are not failing
- The best way to build a team is to be a good teammate

Stage No. 2: The Mental Shift

- Your brain can and will reset to new crisis conditions, and your ability to do higher-level work will resume
- Our essential mental shifts require humility and patience. Focus on real internal change. These human transformations will be honest, raw, ugly, hopeful, frustrated, beautiful, and divine

Stage No. 3: Embrace a New Normal

- On the other side of this shift, your wonderful, creative, resilient brain will be waiting for you
- When your foundations are strong, build a weekly schedule that prioritizes the security of your home team, and then carve out time blocks for different categories of your work
- Things will start to feel more natural. The work will also make more sense, and you will be more comfortable about changing or undoing what is already in motion. New ideas will emerge that would not have come to mind had you stayed in denial. Continue to embrace your mental shift.
- Understand that this is a marathon. If you sprint at the beginning, you will vomit on your shoes by the end of the month.
- Emotionally prepare for this crisis to continue for 12 to 18 months, followed by a slow recovery. If it ends sooner, be pleasantly surprised.
- Work toward establishing your serenity, productivity, and wellness under sustained disaster conditions

Organizational Ways to Focus on Mental Health



Figure 2: Top 10 ways organizations are dealing with increased anxiety during coronavirus pandemic

1. Create An Employee Resource Group for Remote Workers
2. Implement More Frequent Senior Leader Town Halls and Check in's
3. Bring in health specialists to host Online Q/A sessions about the coronavirus
4. Communicate frequent reminders on your company's EAP program
5. Create new Water Cooler Opportunities for workers to connect to each other
6. Launch an Employee Hot Line manned by doctors and counselors available to employees and their families
7. Make company wide announcements on adjustments to paid leave, PTO, carry-over vacation and other benefits
8. Create local solutions- such as setting up emergency response teams in regions with high densities of employees
9. Curate a list of online wellbeing resources, podcasts, exercise sessions and other self care courses
10. Acknowledge anxiety in one on one and group meetings and talk about it

Personal Ways to Focus on Mental Health



- Acknowledge the impact – transition is hard; distractions; other people in your house; children
- Be patient – not the time to expect perfection, adjust to new normal
- Create a routine – you have control over that when you don't have control over other aspects – routines give you some predictability back and familiarity - that can be comforting
- Be flexible
- Manage your information intake
- Recognize your needs
- Stream line – work with your team to streamline – identify essential areas of focus and save your energy
- Keep up good practices: Stay hydrated, get some exercise and fresh air if you can, eat healthfully, and avoid too much alcohol or sugar. Taking care of yourself in these ways is also going to have a positive impact on your mental health.
- Start each day with a gratitude practice, listing a few things for which you are grateful.
- Practice deep breathing exercises throughout your day.
- Seek professional help if your inability to focus or your feelings of sadness or being overwhelmed are making it hard to function



Focus on What You Can Control



When you find something you can control, control the heck out of it.

Four Resources If You Want Learn More



[A Brain Hack to Break the Coronavirus Anxiety Cycle, New York Times](#)

[Please Don't Be Guilted Into Being More Productive During The Coronavirus, Huffington Post](#)

[In Stressful Times, Make Stress Work for You, New York Times](#)

[Rethinking Stress Toolkit, Stanford University](#)



In Stressful Times, Make Stress Work for You



- Irony of stress being bad for your health and this being one of the most stressful periods for people since the Great Depression and the 1918 Spanish Flu Pandemic
- Research based on working with Navy SEALs, college students and business leaders... they weren't any less stressed, but they were experiencing their stress in an entirely new way and, as a result, were healthier and performed better.
- Three-step guide to adopting a “stress-is-enhancing” mind-set to harness the benefits of stress while minimizing its harmful effects
 - Acknowledge your stress
 - Own your stress
 - Use your stress

[In Stressful Times, Make Stress Work for You](#), New York Times

Stanford Rethinking Stress Toolkit



👤 You Are

A student, worker, instructor, or manager who wants yourself or others to work and feel better

✖ The Problem

People fail to benefit from stress and make it worse by viewing it negatively

🎯 The Solution

Eleven brief videos show you how to rethink stress to enhance your work and health

✔ The Result

Stress mindsets change, leading to improved work performance, mental health, and physical health

How to Do This Activity

At your convenience, watch short videos and answer questions about:

1. The role stress plays in our lives
2. The science of stress
3. The power of mindset
4. Acknowledging stress
5. Welcoming stress
6. Utilizing stress
7. Integrating and applying what you have learned

OPTIONAL: To evaluate the impact of this toolkit, start by taking [this survey](#) before doing the activities. You will receive emails in one week and three weeks asking you to take follow-up surveys in order to assess possible changes to your stress mindset.

Start Toolkit →

Focus on Physical Health



Make Sure Your Home Office isn't a "Pain"

"If people wait until things start to hurt, already they've waited a bit too long."

Alan Hedge, Director –
Human Factors and
Ergonomics at Cornell
University

- Place your monitor so that you're not looking down at it.
- 20-20-20 – Every 20 minutes, look at something 20 feet away for 20 seconds to give your eyes a break.
- Sit in a slightly reclined position, instead of straight up at a 90 degree angle to avoid hip pain.
- Make sure your feet rest flat on the floor to avoid leg cramps.
- Keep your wrists flat and straight when using a keyboard.

[This is What Happens to Your Body When you Work from Home](#), Huffington Post

Related Reading

[Ergonomic Tips](#), Cornell University

[Ergonomic Guide](#), Cornell University

Focus on Physical Health



Problem

- Neck/shoulders hurt
- Tired eyes
- Hips are tight
- Leg cramps
- Wrists hurt
- Backache

Adjustment

- Position monitor at eye level
- Take an eye break every 20 minutes
- Recline your seat
- Footrest
- Flat and straight
- Back Support

Related Reading

[Ergonomic Tips](#), Cornell University

[Ergonomic Guide](#), Cornell University

Keep in Touch With Others



No matter what your family unit looks like, you will need a team in the weeks and months ahead

Devise a strategy for social connectedness with a small group of family, friends, and/or neighbors, while maintaining physical distancing in accordance

Keep in Touch With Others



- Organize an online group call or group game night
- Leave goodies, gifts, or encouraging notes on your friends' and neighbors' porches – ring the doorbell and run, or text them and tell them to look outside
- Play interactive phone games with your friends and family – use the chat feature (Words With Friends, etc.)
- Write letters or send greeting cards
- Be mindful of milestones that your friends and family are missing (birthdays, graduations, baby showers, weddings, etc.) and send them a supportive note or card (snail mail or email) or give them a call, letting them know that you haven't forgotten them on their special day.

Good Tips for Staying Connected and Informed



Stay connected: Stay connected with family, friends, and support systems using technology like FaceTime, Skype, Google Hangout and other video-based options. Talk about your fears and concerns with people you trust. Chances are they are feeling the same way.

Stay informed: Knowledge is power, and it's good to stay updated on progress being made in combatting the virus. Stay informed on the latest updates from reliable sources like the [Centers for Disease Control \(CDC\)](#) and the [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#).

Limit media consumption: Avoid continuous exposure to news, media, and social media that may trigger or elevate anxiety, stress, or panic. Stay informed by following few, authoritative resources, but limit media consumption.

[Working Remotely During COVID-19 – Your Mental Health and Well-being,](#)
Workplace Mental Health

Develop a Self-Care Toolkit



- Tailor this to YOU: looks different for everyone
- Some self-care strategies involve a sensory component (seven senses: touch, taste, sight, hearing, smell, vestibular (movement) and proprioceptive (comforting pressure))
- Ideas: a soft blanket, favorite sweatpants, a hot chocolate, photos of vacations, comforting music, lavender or eucalyptus oil, a small swing or rocking chair, a weighted blanket
- A journal, an inspirational book, or a mandala coloring book is wonderful, bubbles to blow or blowing watercolor on paper through a straw are visually appealing as well as work on controlled breath.
- Mint gum, Listerine strips, ginger ale, frozen Starburst, ice packs, and cold are also good for anxiety regulation

Hygge or “Hoo-Gah”

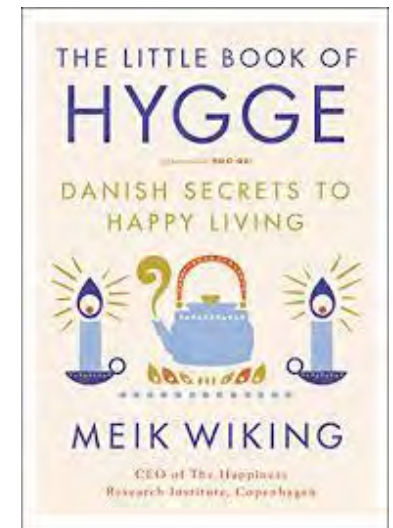
“Hygge is the art of creating a nice atmosphere, taking things slow and enjoying the simple pleasures of life,”

- Meik Wiking, CEO of [the Happiness Research Institute](#) in Denmark and bestselling author of [“The Little Book of Hygge: Danish Secrets to Happy Living”](#)

Hygge was created as a survival mechanism — an “antidote” to the harsh Nordic winter and the “duvet of darkness” that envelops it.

Derived from a Norwegian word for “well-being,” hygge also means “cozy togetherness,” “fun,” “safety and shielding from the world,” “the absence of annoyance” and the notion that your home is, literally and metaphorically, giving you a hug.

[The upside of social distancing: How hygge can help](#), Los Angeles Times





Productivity Takes Practice

Until I learned to be a less punishing boss to myself, I was (ironically) far less productive. Try to keep sticking your schedule overall but be realistic and merciful towards yourself when you're struggling emotionally or you just need to mix it up one day. And don't carry the guilt from one day to the next. Start with a clean slate and congratulate yourself whenever you accomplish something.

Heather Havrilesky, advice columnist and work-from-home expert

Key to Productivity: “Please Place the Mask Over Your Own Mouth Before Assisting Others”



Here is a list of ways you can honor the needs of your mind, body, and spirit. By honoring these needs, you will better process the situation and create the space to be productive, build a new business, learn new skills, or explore areas for personal growth.

1. Accept the moment
2. Laugh
3. Let yourself be angry/scared/vulnerable
4. Have fun
5. Get sleep
6. Make self-care a priority
7. Exercise
8. Meditate

Take 7 Days and Give This Program a Try



The New York Times

Be More Productive in 7 Days

Every day, for the next week, you'll get evidence-based techniques to help you work more efficiently and effectively.



DAY 1
Commit to 10 Minutes

ICSPS created a separate slide deck for this 7-day series.

[Check ICSPS website for link.](#)

Feel Like Listening? Productivity Podcasts



Megaphone

The image shows a podcast player interface. On the left is a yellow cover art with red arrows and the text 'FC | Secrets of the Most Productive People'. The main area has a dark background with the title 'Secrets Of The Most Productive People' in white. Below the title is a description: 'Fast Company deputy editor Kate Davis and assistant editor Anisa Purbasari Horton help listeners try to figure out how to work smarter instead of harder and dissect exactly how to get it all done.' There are three category tags: 'Business', 'Society & Culture', and 'Technology'. Below these are social media icons for RSS, Spotify, Apple Podcasts, YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter. A list of episodes is shown: '1 How to be More Productive Working From Home 25 min' and '2 PRESENTING: Book Smart from Inc. Magazine 4 min'. At the bottom is a progress bar for the first episode, showing '00:00' and '25:42'.

Secrets Of The Most Productive People

Fast Company deputy editor Kate Davis and assistant editor Anisa Purbasari Horton help listeners try to figure out how to work smarter instead of harder and dissect exactly how to get it all done.

Business Society & Culture Technology

1 How to be More Productive Working From Home 25 min

2 PRESENTING: Book Smart from Inc. Magazine 4 min

How to be More Productive Working From Home 00:00 25:42

[How to be More Productive Working from Home](#)

[How to Deal with Stress and Anxiety](#)

[Productivity with a Purpose](#)

Additional Productivity Resources



[Stop Trying to Be Productive](#), New York Times

- “I think that everyone is coping with this differently, and there’s a real tendency to shame people who aren’t coping with it the way you are or have different circumstances.”

[Please Don't Be Guilted Into Being More Productive During The Coronavirus](#), Huffington Post

- “Best is a relative term. Doing your best in this time is different from doing your best during non-pandemic times. Recognize that it can look different for each person, and don’t compare and despair over how others are managing hobbies and activities during this crisis.”

[Stop Feeling Guilty About Your To-Do List](#), Harvard Business Review

- “Reframe the situation. Gain perspective on your productivity. Recognize your limitations. Get pragmatic about your to-do list. Set expectations. Practice self-empathy. Be Patient.

[We have a lot more time now. So why can't we get anything done?](#), Washington Post

- “Focus and limit your ambitions. If a parent, coordinate coverage, meals, household tasks. Saying ‘this isn’t a priority reminds us that much of time management is a choice.’”

[I asked experts to analyze my to-do lists. This is what they found](#), Fast Company

- Figure out the big picture. Organize and maintain your lists. Pick a format that works for you. Know which Dos are actually Don’ts.



Don't Let Technology Get You Down



Find Fun and Laughter



- Find lightness and humor in each day. There is a lot to be worried about, and with good reason. Counterbalance this heaviness with something funny each day: cat videos on YouTube, a stand-up show on Netflix, a funny movie—we all need a little comedic relief in our day, every day.
- Provide lightness and humor each day, too! Video a funny anecdote, dig your high school saxophone out of the basement and serenade your friends, create your own news show by interviewing the other people in your house.

Find the Fun and Laughter



Laughable Links:

Some Good News – A good news show anchored by John Krasinski

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oilZ1hNZPRM>

Penguins Take the Tour at Shedd Aquarium – Wellington the penguin makes friends with a beluga whale

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XP34g1DrNxI>

Guy Makes His Neighbors Laugh by Posting Dad Jokes in his Yard Every Day of the Quarantine

https://www.boredpanda.com/neighbor-posts-daily-dad-jokes-in-his-front-lawn-quarantine/?utm_source=google&utm_medium=organic&utm_campaign=organic

People Share What They're Doing With Jimmy Fallon's #ImSoBored!

https://www.boredpanda.com/im-so-bored-quarantine-tweets-jimmy-fallon/?utm_source=google&utm_medium=organic&utm_campaign=organic

Find the Fun and Laughter



Emily Pugina
@emelainew

Replying to @jimmyfallon
#ImSoBored! made a toga for my dog out of an old T-shirt.



6:07 PM - Mar 30, 2020



Image credits: Juleagriff

COVID-19 support ribbon



Be Kind to Yourself

"With so many people working from home, the bottom line is we probably won't be as productive as we're used to being. To minimize frustration, it's important to reset your expectations around what productivity looks like. All productivity doesn't go out the window, but you do need to be flexible and adapt."



[21 Tips for Working From Home That'll Help You Reach Peak Productivity](#), The Oprah Magazine

Questions?

Contrary to popular belief,
Duct Tape is **NOT** the solution
to **EVERY** problem!



All webinar
resources
available
on ICSPS
website:

<https://isu.custom-social.com/covid-19-response/2-home/52-virtual-work-place>