Balancing Work and Life When Telecommuting
Recognize what COVID-19 has prompted in our lives…

- Change and lots of it!
- Uncertainty
- Anxiety
- Isolation
- Grief and loss
Flipside of what COVID-19 has prompted in our lives…

- Creating a new routine
- Prioritizing what’s important
- Connecting with people in new ways
- Re-visioning our professional and personal lives
Reacting to and coping with this pandemic…

- Everyone who experiences a disaster is affected in some way.
- Stress and anxiety are normal reactions to the abnormal.
- After an initial stress response, most people will cope effectively and grow stronger. This is resiliency.
# Emotions Serve a Purpose

- Communication
- Action
- Need

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emotion</th>
<th>Action Tendency</th>
<th>Communication</th>
<th>Need Indicated</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sadness</td>
<td>Slow down, withdraw</td>
<td>“There has been a loss”</td>
<td>Healing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fear/Anxiety</td>
<td>Get away! Avoid</td>
<td>“Danger” “Threat”</td>
<td>Safety</td>
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<td>Anger</td>
<td>Attack or Assert</td>
<td>“Someone is taking advantage”, “Not fair!”</td>
<td>Protect, Draw a boundary</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shame</td>
<td>Hide, Cover up</td>
<td>“There is something wrong with me”</td>
<td>Social acceptance/approval</td>
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<tr>
<td>Guilt</td>
<td>Make amends, solve the problem</td>
<td>“I have done something wrong to you”</td>
<td>Self respect</td>
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<tr>
<td>Love</td>
<td>Care for, nurture, protect, kindness</td>
<td>The recipient “is worthy.” “Stay close”</td>
<td>Connection, relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joy</td>
<td>Do more of the same</td>
<td>“This is good!”</td>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
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</table>

Fielding, 2015
Important to remember that we all experience a wide range of emotions when faced with a crisis.

- Identify your emotions and allow yourself to experience them without judgment.
- If you are struggling, it may be helpful to reach out for more support. Remember your EAP benefit.
Creating Ritual and Routines

Develop a routine as much as possible:

- Recognize that in some cases you will create a different work schedule to accommodate balancing work and life responsibilities. **This is natural and to be expected.**
- Utilize organizational tools such as calendars
- Take scheduled breaks
- Expect and accept interruptions
- Set aside time during your work day to engage an enjoyable activity
- Develop post-work routine
Consider Your Home Office Space

- Create a separate, physical workspace at home
- Set boundaries with those who you share your living space with
- Minimize distractions
- Consider ways to make it physically comfortable
- Make your workspace emotionally pleasant
  - Aromatherapy
  - Relaxation music
  - De-cluttering
Mindful Communication

- Stress and anxiety are commonly experienced during times of uncertainty. Be mindful of how you communicate.
- Avoid expressing unnecessary emotion by re-reading messages before sending them.
Schedule Times for Informal Chats and Collaborations

- Make time to have discussions with colleagues by phone or video chats
- Helps maintain interpersonal connection and increase work productivity
Create a Ritual to Transition from Work to Home

Differentiate work time from personal time.

- Set a time to stop working
- Let your colleagues know
- Turn off computer and/or phone

Create an after-work routine focused on self-care.
Give Yourself Permission for Self-Care

➢ Establish a healthy sleep routine
➢ Focus on eating healthy foods to boost your immune system
➢ Develop meditation and relaxation rituals
➢ Find ways to exercise and move your body
➢ Spend time with your pets by sitting down and petting them, playing with them, or taking them for a walk
➢ Keep a gratitude journal
Remember to Engage in Non-Work Hobbies

Benefits of participating in a hobby include:

- Enjoyment and satisfaction
- Distraction
- Stress reduction
- Sense of accomplishment
Limit the time you spend reading the news and social media

- Staying informed vs. oversaturation
- Take breaks from the news and social media
  - Rely on credible sources
Circumstances are different depending on living arrangements and responsibilities

- Living alone can trigger a strong sense of isolation and loneliness for some
- Living with others can put a strain on relationships or help bring people closer together
- Telecommuting parents providing care for young children or responsible for home schooling can make the work-life balance feel out-of-kilter
Living Alone

➢ Make a more concerted effort to reach out to friends, family, coworkers
➢ Reframe “isolation” to “constructive solitude”
➢ Reach out for psychological support if experiencing anxiety or depression. You are not alone.
➢ Some individuals enjoy this time alone and are comfortable
➢ Get creative
➢ Foster or adopt a pet
➢ Find a way to volunteer
Home With Children

- Create and maintain a schedule as much as possible
- Set aside quality time for fun and relaxation
- Simplify home-schooling standards
- Provide a structure
- Plan for meltdowns!

Keep Calm – Take a Pause – Listen to Your Kids - Model
During a Meltdown Think…

➢ “My child is not giving me a hard time; they are having a hard time.”
➢ “Behavior is communication, and my child is ‘telling’ me they need support.”
➢ “The teachable moment about behavioral expectations is never in the ‘hot’ moment. I must calm my child through empathy first.”
Mantras to Keep in Mind…

➢ “I am not homeschooling. I am doing my best to help my kids learn at home during a crisis.”

➢ “I am not ‘working from home.’ I am doing my best to work at home during a crisis.”

➢ “I cannot be as productive as normal because these are not normal times. I will focus on what I can accomplish in just the next 24 hours and let go of what I cannot accomplish right now.”

[Resource Link]
https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/how_to_reduce_the_stress_of_homeschooling_on_everyone?utm_source=Greater+Good+Science+Center&utm_campaign=0107c51a07-ED_NEWSLETTER_APRIL_2020
Supporting Teens

➢ Emphasize importance of physical distancing
➢ Understand their frustration
➢ Encourage healthy habits
➢ Validate disappointments
➢ Help them practice mindfulness
➢ Enjoy fun activities together

Keeping it Positive

- Mind your words
- Spend time outdoors
- Encourage learning opportunities
- Embrace the adventure
Engage via phone and video chats with friends and family

- Stay socially connected with those who are supportive of you and make positive contributions to your life
- Family and friends can help you keep things in perspective
- Social connectedness can reduce feelings of loneliness and contributes to sense of wellbeing
Examine Your Thoughts

- Notice what you are focusing on
- Catastrophizing? Redirect your thoughts to things you have control over
- Accept uncertainty
- Identify experiences in which you coped well in the past. What was helpful?
- Nurture a positive view of yourself and maintain a hopeful outlook
- Focus on the altruistic reasons for social distancing
When feeling stressed, ask yourself...

What **CAN** I control?

What **CAN’T** I control?

What is called for **NOW**?
Give yourself permission to take time to address your stress.

Self-care is the gift that keeps on giving!

“When we commit to action, to actually doing something rather than feeling trapped by events, the stress in our life becomes manageable.”

~ Greg Anderson
During this time of working remotely, the UAlbany EAP confidential information and referral service is available by contacting EAP Coordinator Brenda Seckerson by phone or email.

bseckerson@albany.edu

518-442-5483
References


➢ “Managing Stress During COVID-19” New York Office of Mental Health webinar

➢ Material adapted from “Managing the Stress of Social Distancing and Working Remotely” by the Employee Assistance Program at University of Texas, Austin and the Florida International University Office of Employee Assistance.


➢ https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/how_to_reduce_the_stress_of_homeschooling_on_everyone?utm_source=Greater+Good+Science+Center&utm_campaign=0107c51a07-ED_NEWSLETTER_APRIL_2020