
Looking after your well-being while remote working

October 2020

Purpose

We thought it would be helpful to put together a few tips and resources focusing on well-being whilst we are, mainly, working from home.

- Remember, everyone is in the same position and productivity is likely to drop. Doing what you can is good enough. Family and wellbeing come first;
- Stay connected (but not all the time) – check in with your team on Slack, there are different channels for work and non-work chat. But, remember, if you're finished working for the day or do not work on specific days, avoid the temptation to check-in;
- Join us at FIKA. FIKA is held via Zoom every two weeks on a Thursday at 11am for around 45 minutes. This is an opportunity to catch up informally with the rest of the team (including the professors) and talk about what you have been up to, what you've watched on the TV, anything other than work. Bring a coffee and some cake (!);
- Get dressed – casual is fine, pyjamas is not (especially if you have a virtual meeting to attend). This helps to switch you between 'work life' and 'home life';
- If you can, set up a dedicated workspace in your house, it will help to differentiate between 'work' and 'off' time and create a boundary between relaxed, social space and work-space. If you need anything to help you achieve this, let us know. There is some useful guidance [here](#) from NHS England about how to sit at your desk correctly - try adapting this to your at-home set up;
- Maintain a routine, this will look different depending on your circumstances, but can include things like getting up and ready as you usually would, taking a morning and afternoon walk instead of your commute, and taking regular breaks away from your workspace;
- If you have any concerns about caring responsibilities, speak to your line manager about how to manage your work around these. It is likely that this will be a changing situation and will require ongoing discussion. The University has also published advice for staff whose children are self-isolating [here](#), but please speak to you line manager in the first instance;
- Try and define the hours you will be working and resist the temptation to check-in outside of these hours;
- Think about creating a schedule to stick to or having a defined task to work on for the day (rather than flitting between tasks);

- In a similar vein, create a 'to do' list for each day with a set, of clear, achievable goals;
- Consider the [Pomodoro](#) method:
 - (i) Choose a task you'd like to get done or work on;
 - (ii) Set the pomodoro (and a timer) for 25 minutes;
 - (iii) Work until the timer rings;
 - (iv) Take a short-break (anything not work-related);
 - (v) Every four pomodoros take a longer break of 20 or 30 minutes.
- Nobody works all day, make sure you take breaks – the 3pm brew is a perfect example of a team break;
- Make working from home, work for you. Change where you sit, put on music, etc;
- Email is not always the answer – the temptation when working from home is to only communicate by email when it might be better to have a conversation. If you want to call someone, we just ask that you email/text/Whatsapp/DM them first to check that it is a convenient time.

Support

- Ask for support when needed – speak out if you need assistance, further support or training, or if you just want to chat to someone;
- Talk to your peer-support group. There are peer-support groups for both the admin team and for researchers. These are informal meetings via Zoom giving individuals the opportunity to talk with their colleagues about any anxieties or worries they may have, to offload, or anything else they might want to have an informal chat about. The admin team meet every Tuesday; researchers are meeting on the first Tuesday of every month;
- Email or talk to your line manager. Your line manager should be regularly emailing you (i.e. weekly, bi-weekly) to check-in on your well-being. If you feel you would benefit from an informal face-to-face meeting via Zoom with your line manager, let them know;
- If you don't want to speak to us, [Togetherall](#) (previously the Big White Wall) is a free online mental health and wellbeing support available to all staff 24/7. The UoM [Counselling and Mental Health Service](#) also offer a wide range of support. Externally, [MIND](#) have also produced some online information and support on coping in the time of COVID-19.

Exercise for wellbeing

- Even if you are isolating with symptoms, light exercise is recommended, try these [at home](#) and [at your desk](#);
- UoM Sport have launched #ActiveAnywhere – a range of events throughout the year and weekly activities that you can log in to from your home via Zoom. Further information and the timetable are available [here](#).

Resources

- There are resources on the UoM website to support your well-being, including podcasts and apps on mindfulness and well-being. See here:
<https://www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/wellbeing/coronavirus-wellbeing-support/>;
- The [Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development \(CIPD\)](#) have produced their own top tips of working from home. As have the University of Manchester [Business School](#);
- [MIND](#) have also produced guidance on maintaining wellbeing at home.