**Maintaining your motivation when working remotely**

# Purpose

Maintaining motivation when working from home can be challenging. Not having the immediate stimulation of the physical team environment can impact energy and focus as can distractions from the home environment. This guide provides tips for being, and staying, motivated throughout the day.

# Tips for maintaining your motivation

**Have a set Schedule - Plan your work hours**

Determine when you do your best work, and then set a regular work schedule around that time. For most, that may mean waking up early, showering, getting dressed for work (to create the right mindset), eating a healthy breakfast, and then making a checklist of everything you need to accomplish for the day. If you used your morning commute to kickstart work mode, you can mimic this by including a healthy morning routine such as exercise. As you get into your routine, you’ll find it’s much easier to stay motivated and accomplish your goals, and you will feel more positive about each day. By setting a start and end time you will be able to establish a work life balance.

Keep work to usual workdays and try not to blend work into the weekend or scheduled rest days. This helps to maintain a healthy work/life balance and maintains a positive mental state.

It is imperative that you do not get immersed in your work to the point that you forget to take care of yourself. – this is of utmost importance to ensure you maintain energy and focus. Without the need to walk between meetings, it too easy to stay in the one spot for a long time. Taking breaks and having your day planned with defined work hours can help you manage yourself better.

**Have an office space**

Having a designated place for work plays a useful role in creating the right atmosphere, away from distractions.

Set up a functional and comfortable workstation away from the rest of the family or roommates that you can go to when you need to. If possible, find a place you can go to every day. Make that area tidy and remove any clutter. Natural light helps, so a position by a window is recommended provided there is no glare on your computer screen. Inform the rest of the household of your work hours so they know not to disturb you.

Try to avoid gravitating towards a couch or bed to relax and work at the same time – this can impact your work mindset and you can lose focus.

**Set boundaries with colleagues, family and friends**

Without clear boundaries people may assume you are always available with family and friends disturbing you during work hours or your team reaching out to before or after working hours. Set boundaries by letting them know which times you will not be reach-able, unless there is an emergency and keep the communication open and transparent.

**Take regular breaks**

When we work on our own, we often neglect to take breaks. Taking breaks improves brain function and helps you to stay focused. Build them into your schedule and stick to them.

**Build relationships professionally and personally**

It is an essential stay connected and build and maintain your professional and personal networks. We are social beings and wired to thrive in collaborative networks of people. Find opportunities to build your networks and work collaboratively.

Join the [Innovation Network](https://innovationnetwork.vic.gov.au/) which provides all VPS employees the opportunity to connect, share and learn around the innovative work underway across Government.

It is important to stay connected with the people you work with on a professional level, but you should also identify ways to interact socially while working remotely. By building this in to how you interact with each other it avoids you or others feeling isolated and lonely. This is true for all remote workers, but particularly so for workers who have been abruptly transitioned out of the office and for those living alone.

The easiest way to establish basic social interaction is to leave time at the beginning or end of calls for non-work items. Other options include virtual coffee breaks, lunches or office parties. Virtual events help reduce feelings of isolation and promote a sense of belonging. Ensure the approaches you take are inclusive for everyone in your team.

Apart from work, it is crucial to socialise outside of your job, as well. Do not lose track of the outside world and find ways of staying in touch with people.

**Prioritise your performance development**

It is important that you continue to focus on your performance and development. The purpose of performance discussions is to clarify expectations, gauge whether you are on track to meet agreed goals and help you to thrive and excel.

In addition to the formal Performance and Development Plan (PDP) discussions, schedule regular performance discussions with your manager. Use these to identify opportunities to grow and build capabilities. In the performance discussion consider:

* the virtual working context - what are you finding challenging by or where have you come up against roadblocks?
* your development goals and how they are aligned with organisational and team objectives
* identifying their strengths which can be turned into assets
* focusing on a few goals to focus on meaningful development and make sure it is achievable
* recent PDP discussions and feedback you have received from your manager or others
* the development opportunities available in a virtual working context that suit your learning style.

Explore the Department’s [Online Learning & Development Resources](https://edugate.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edrms/keyprocess/PDEV/Pages/online-resources.aspx) page for a wide range of online learning resources.

**Exercise**

During your breaks, take the opportunity to exercise and if possible, leave the house for some fresh air.

**Discuss your concerns**

It is important to acknowledge stress, anxieties and concerns. If you are struggling with remote working or other issues speak to your manager and/or explore the resources available on the [Employee Health, Safety and Wellbeing HRWeb page](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/safetyhw/Pages/employeeservices.aspx).

**Mentally close the door on your work**

You do not have to follow a traditional 9.00am-5.00pm, however it is easy to fall into the trap of working overtime at home and losing site of your work life balance. Set a time when you will stop working.

If it helps, write your job list for the following day. Creating a list can act like a "brain dump", helping you to close the door on your working day and switch off.

*Adapted from* [*Tips on working from home: how to stay motivated and sane*](https://www.creativeboom.com/tips/tips-on-working-from-home-how-to-stay-motivated-and-sane/) *by Katy Cowan (2020)*