

SUCCESSFULLY NAVIGATING HOMEWORKING

Working from home can bring many challenges for both adults and children, especially during times of crisis. Mental & physical health, motivation and relationships can all suffer.

Our *Top Ten Tips* can help you and your family to stay healthy, happy, productive, connected, mindful and compassionate whilst working from home.

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the Facebook group for mental health and wellbeing support, courses & resources.

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1 Get up, set up!



Although it may be tempting to lie in or spend the day in your PJs, setting boundaries around your space, time and mind will enhance your productivity. Start the day right and your brain will learn that you're in 'work' mode.

- Get up and go to bed at the same time each day, allowing for sufficient sleep.
- Start each day with 10 mins of meditation to foster calmness, focus, resilience and compassion. There are several types of meditation to explore and a wealth of free resources out there. We recommend *Tara Brach*, *Insight Timer* and *Headspace*.
- Get ready, washed & dressed as normal. This fosters a productive 'work' mindset.
- Set up a dedicated workspace. Consider removing televisions, rearranging furniture and using screening to separate your workspace from the rest of the room.
- Invest in your workstation - you could be using it for quite a long time, so comfort is crucial. Use a quality chair and a suitable desk rather than an upturned box and an ironing board!
- Ensure your workspace is clutter-free and a pleasant place to be: surround yourself beautiful objects like flowers, candles and photographs that make you smile.
- Use NHS guidance to sit correctly:
<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/how-to-sit-correctly/>
- Follow this Health & Safety Executive guidance around healthy screen use:
www.hse.gov.uk/msd/dse/





Without our routine of daily trips to the office or school, our physical activity may decline or we may fall into unhealthy consumption habits. This can be detrimental to productivity and our mental health, which goes hand-in-hand with our physical health. Setting non-negotiable boundaries around how we treat our bodies helps us stay physically and mentally fit.



2 Physical health

- Have a water bottle beside you all day and aim to drink 2 litres of water each day.
- Eat a healthy, balanced diet with lots of fresh vegetables and fruit. Start with an ace brekkie!
- Consume snacks mindfully. It's probably not a good idea to have a whole tube of crisps or a family pack of biscuits on your desk!
- Avoid alcohol, cigarettes, drugs, caffeine & refined sugar to boost energy, focus & sleep quality.
- Aim for 30 mins of daily strenuous exercise to aid physical & mental health, alertness, productivity and sleep quality.
- If you can, get outside to benefit from the beauty of nature and to absorb some crucial vitamin B from the sunlight. Go for a walk or run, at the start, middle or end of each working day.
- If you are self-isolating, find an online yoga or fitness class to follow.
- Pushed for time today? Try the 7 minute workout: www.youtube.com/watch?v=U6etLKswjq8
- Feeling adventurous? We love practising the Wim Hof Method daily, which has scientifically proven benefits for the brain and body: www.wimhofmethod.com

3 Routine is key

Human brains - both adults' and children's - love structure.
Train your brain by maintaining a disciplined routine of positive habits.

- Build daily and weekly routines; set times for work, meals, rest, exercise and play.
- Co-create a timetable with your kids... encourage them to be creative with it!
- Maybe you used to commute to and from work and school and no longer have to. Congratulations: you have just won some extra time each day! Use it to 'bookend' your working day with a healthy daily practise like running, walking, yoga or meditation.
- Maintain as many positive routines and habits from your workplace or school as you can.
- Model good working practices to your children; when you are working, act like you are in the office.
- Set timers to ensure you take a screen break every hour.
- During breaks, move around, stretch and take some deep breaths. Talk about things that are not working!
- At the end of each day, write down three things you want to achieve tomorrow on a sticky note.
- Once you have finished for the day, close your laptop down and do not reopen it until the next day. This helps to maintain a healthy boundary between work time and home time.
- Turn off all of your family devices at least 1 hour before bedtime to wind down & improve sleep quality.
- Leave devices out of bedrooms to avoid their tempting distractions. Use an alarm clock to wake you.



4 Be productive

Working from home can be a very different experience to what we are used to. We are no longer surrounded by our peers, managers or teachers. We may not associate the comforts of our home environment with business or schoolwork. However, we can embed positive habits to help us focus & be just as productive at home as we are at work or school...



- Turn off device notifications & anything else that may break your focus.
- Work in 45-60 minute focused bursts...then take a short break with a change of scene.
- Prioritise tasks: urgent and important first.
- Set a few realistic goals for each work period. Over-achieving feels good!
- Buddy up with a peer: check in at the start & end of each work period to set goals and review progress.
- Work on one task at a time; multi-tasking is possible but multi-focussing is not!

- Recognise that, if you are normally at work or school for 7 or 8 hours per day, you will not be working solidly throughout that period. Allow yourself the flexibility of 'brain breaks'.
- Feeling the after-lunch energy dip? Stop. Refresh yourself with some invigorating movement (star jumps in the back garden, perhaps!), a healthy energy snack in the fresh air, a family hug or a 15-minute nap.
- Adapting to changing working, schooling and global conditions takes time and may increase anxiety for you and your children. This could result in reduced productivity; this is a normal reaction. Be mindful of this fact and try to be compassionate to everyone as you learn to navigate your new environment.
- You may find that you complete more work at home than you would at work or school. Could this be because you are spending less time interacting with others - meetings, chats, drinks breaks, etc? Make time for bonding with your peers - see tip 5, below.
- Give yourself and your children to small rewards frequently. Worked solidly for 50 minutes without looking at your phone? High five! Finished a maths paper? Well done; indulge in a dance to your favourite song! Completed that huge project? Great: treat yourself to your favourite meal.
- To boost creativity, stop working. It may sound counter-intuitive, but giving your brain a break can give it the space it needs to produce new ideas, perspectives and solutions. Try turning off all devices and having a shower, going for a walk or run, meditating or just sitting in a peaceful place - you may be surprised how much creativity flows when you stop working!

- Are you a procrastinator? Do you find yourself organising your sock drawer or alphabetising your vinyl collection when there is a significant piece of work that requires attention? If you feel overwhelmed by the sheer scale of the task ahead of you, try breaking it down into small chunks and ensuring you make some progress on it during each work period. This helps to provide a sense of progress and achievement.
- Procrastination could also be a sign of perfectionism. Do you spend so long getting pieces of work 'just right', aligning images and text with laser-precision and finding that you do not have enough time to complete the rest of your work? Maybe you are a perfectionist. Perfectionism can be detrimental to your productivity and mental health.
- Download Pathlight's FREE resource on perfectionism by joining the '**Pathlight Thrive Hive**' Facebook group - the place for mental health and wellbeing support, resources & courses. Click the image on the right or search **@PathlightThriveHive** on Facebook.



5 Stay connected



In stressful times we may be inclined to isolate ourselves. Indeed, we may be forced into isolation. However, as social creatures, we must maintain human interaction to feel supportive energy, boost motivation & reduce anxiety.

- Maintain frequent communication with your peers, manager, teachers and family.
- Use video calls using Zoom, Skype, MS Teams or similar instead of emails or texts.
- Have short check-in & -out calls with your team, peers, manager or teacher (if appropriate) at the end of each day, plus ad hoc discussions to explore concerns or queries.
- Turn morning or afternoon breaks into virtual café breaks to connect and smile with others. Talk about things that are not work-related.
- Foster positive relationships and a culture of belonging by showing appreciation to others. Offer explicit praise and gratitude for jobs well done, favours performed or deadlines met.
- 'Be kind whenever possible...it is always possible.'
- When communicating by email or text, be mindful that the recipient cannot see your face or hear your tone of voice. Messages written without the receiver in mind may seem bland or harsh...and could be easily misinterpreted. Before clicking 'send', take a pause, re-read your message from the perspective of the recipient and add in some praise, gratitude and humanity, if required.
- Enjoy some fun stuff like an online team quiz, exercise-related competitions, sharing jokes, recipes, pictures of your pet and creativity. Laughter is good for you!





6 Engage the kids

Foster trusting, loving relationships with your children by being open and genuinely taking an active interest in their learning and wellbeing. It is also important to agree clear, healthy boundaries and expectations. This may be a new and challenging way of being for everyone in your household. Remain mindful of and compassionate towards your family's needs and also your own needs.



- As soon as possible, discuss expectations around quantity, quality & place of work (preferably in a public part of the house rather than their bedroom), device usage, communication, relationships, health and balance. Revisit this agreement as often as necessary, especially if and when children test the boundaries.
 - Take an active interest in their learning and needs, using active listening skills to *really* hear them.
 - Regularly monitor your children's device usage, setting appropriate limits on screen time and distracting apps. Discuss potentially locking devices away during learning periods.
- Implement safety/privacy controls; learn & teach about online safety: www.thinkuknow.co.uk
 - Insist upon regular breaks away from work & screens, with non-negotiable time for play, reading, exercise, creativity, outdoor activities and pillow fights!
 - Monitoring your children's wellbeing frequently. Maintain a sensitive dialogue and encourage them to speak openly about their feelings. This will help them to become more 'emotionally literate' - the ability to recognise, name and understand their feelings - and also helps to build emotional resilience and a strong bond of trust in your relationship.
 - Children may get bored after the novelty of working at home has worn off. Try to appreciate how difficult this situation may be for them...build some empathy by imagining how you might have felt if you were faced with the current challenges when you were their age.
 - Behind every behaviour there is a need. Try to understand what your children's needs are - they may be able to express them clearly given sufficient emotional maturity and trust - if not, perhaps you can use your experience as a parent and a child to compassionately put yourself in their position.
 - Practice VEPS:
 - Validate your children's feelings.
 - Express empathy and compassion for their difficulties.
 - Praise them for their efforts.
 - Support them towards getting their needs met whilst maintaining healthy boundaries.
 - Empower them to remain stimulated by finding fun learning resources for themselves; show them some age-appropriate examples, if necessary.
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Non-violent communication

- Be mindful that children are going to be competing for scarce resources: space, your time and attention, devices and other sources of stimulation.
- In this new environment, be prepared for more squabbles and emotional outbursts, especially if boredom or anxiety are also present.
- Explain and demonstrate the practise of '**non-violent communication**' to reduce emotionally-heightened clashes.
 - The key to managing conflict is to learn how to express how you are without blaming, judging or criticising the other party.
 - The other party must then show empathy whilst repeating how you are, without hearing any blame, judgement or criticism.
 - To access this FREE non-violent communication resource (© Marshall B. Rosenberg), join the '**Pathlight Thrive Hive**' Facebook group - the place for mental health and wellbeing support, resources & courses.
 - Click the image above or search **@PathlightThriveHive** on Facebook.



- Foster **positive relationships** by showing appreciation to family members.
 - Offer explicit praise & gratitude for their efforts, focusing on how hard they have tried rather than judging the quality of their work.
 - Rewarding effort with your heartfelt words can make children feel more special than passing them gifts or treats. The greatest gift you can offer your children is your time and loving presence.
- Remember that children are not a distraction; they are just another priority that you may need to juggle. Be mindful of their needs and compassionate towards yourself as you attempt to meet them. Do not expect that you will be able to get through a whole working day without having to attend to your family.
- 'Be kind whenever possible...it is always possible.'
- If you have children aged 4-13 who are experiencing anxiety about the future, there is a wonderful book by Eckhart Tolle called 'Milton's Secret'. It is effectively a children's version of his multi-million selling 'The Power of Now'. Both books explain the benefits of living in the present moment rather than worrying about the future or hanging onto the past.
- Go easy on yourself - this is a new situation and you a human being who is doing their best...you cannot be the perfect worker, parent and housekeeper 100% of the time! Practise self-compassion as well as compassion for those around you.

7 Mental health



It's okay not to feel okay, especially in times of personal, familial, school, work or global stress. Mental health is a continuum and every single one of us is vulnerable to experiencing poor mental health at times. At least 1 in 4 people will report experiencing a mental health issue this year.

Working from home - for both adults & children - can cut us off from the regular social contact we need and may disrupt our rhythm of life. Looking after our mental fitness is just as critical as looking after our physical fitness.

When stressed, we may be tempted to reach for coping mechanisms like smoking, drinking & comfort eating, but these are unhelpful in the long run. Managing life's challenges using more positive strategies helps us build resilience and model healthy behaviours to our children.

- Commit to daily relaxation practises like yoga, mindfulness or meditation.
 - Avoid making assumptions, catastrophising, judging or blaming others.
 - Working and schooling from home, plus governmental restrictions around travelling, may mean we spend much more of our lives at home than usual. This could provoke 'cabin fever' or even trigger depression. Combat this by getting outside, preferably into nature, as much as possible. Maybe even work in your garden!
 - Prioritise what brings you joy: music, dancing, family games, massage, nature, bubble baths...
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- Each day, tick off the 5 Ways to Wellbeing: Give, Connect, Take Notice, Keep Learning, Be Active: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/improve-mental-wellbeing/>
 - Us humans have a range of needs - physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual. If we neglect any of these four domains, we can fall out of balance. Every morning, take 5-10 minutes to close your eyes and get in touch with what each of your four domains need that day.
 - Tune in to your body...what does it need today: rest, exercise, healthy food?
 - Tune into your intellect...does it need stimulation, organisation, or a break?
 - What about your emotions: are you feeling like you need to cry, play, hug, scream, laugh?
 - Finally, connect to the pure, loving, beautiful, radiant, authentic soul that you are. If you have spiritual practises, do you need to focus on them more today - meditating, yoga, breathwork, prayers, getting in touch with the awe and wonder of the natural world?

- Notice, name and accept emotions. Anxiety is a normal response to an abnormal situation.
- Journaling can be a great way to acknowledge and express your thoughts and emotions. Before going to sleep each night, make a habit of writing about your day, focusing on your thoughts and feelings rather than a detailed recount of events. Expressing in this safe way can help you to let go of concerns and promote improved sleep and wellbeing. It also helps us to get in touch with our emotions and build resilience to challenges.
- Also practise gratitude - write down 3 things that you are grateful for each day: your health, your family, your friends, NHS staff and other key workers, or that sunny afternoon walk. All of this promotes peace, sleep and wellbeing.

Managing anxiety



Anxiety is something everyone experiences - it is a normal reaction to certain situations. It can sometimes be helpful - boosting productivity as deadlines approach or keeping us safe from real dangers, for example.

However, if feelings of anxiety become constant, overwhelming or out of proportion to the situation, this can be detrimental to your daily life and mental health.

Below are suggestions of various ways of coping with and reducing anxiety.

- Are you feeling anxious? Smile! Scientific studies have shown that even a forced smile sends positive, calming messages to your brain, reducing anxiety. Also try the self-soothing practise of putting your hand on your heart and repeating a positive affirmation such as 'I am strong and I will get through this' or 'It's okay sweetheart, I'm here.'
- If you or a family member are struggling to get to sleep, maybe due to overthinking or anxiety, practise positive sleep hygiene: www.nhs.uk/live-well/sleep-and-tiredness/how-to-get-to-sleep/
- If you have friends, colleagues or family members who are worrying or experiencing a mental health issue, offer empathy and active listening skills. Validate their experience - it is normal to be feeling this way - and ask them how they would like you to support them.
- If you or a family member feel **panic** setting in, try 'square breathing' to restore calm. Find a square or rectangular object to look at. Breathe in slowly and deeply for a count of four whilst moving your eyes across the top side of the square object. Then slowly breathe out fully for a count of four whilst moving your eyes down the right hand side of the object. Repeat for the bottom and left hand side. There are various forms of breathwork, which can calm our sympathetic nervous system and reduce anxiety: <https://www.nwbh.nhs.uk/healthandwellbeing/Pages/Breathing-Techniques-.aspx>
- More than 99.9% of the things happening in the world are out of our control. When external events show us how little control we actually have over our lives, we may become very fearful. Focus on the things that you can control and let go of everything you cannot; 'equanimity' guided meditations can help here.
- We may feel much uncertainty and fear when significant changes occur in our lives. However, we can choose how to respond to every situation. Happiness is a state of mind and there are many benefits to remaining 'realistically positive'. Every change brings opportunities for growth. Maybe you could view current challenges as a chance to try something new and exciting...a time to re-evaluate your priorities, focus on what you feel is truly important in your life and take positive steps towards your soul-based goals and what you may feel your purpose is.

- Support yourself and those around you by learning more about mental health and wellbeing.
- You could upskill yourself by accessing Pathlight's mental health resources, much of which is available FREE by joining the 'Pathlight Thrive Hive' Facebook group: www.facebook.com/groups/PathlightThriveHive.
- Alternatively, you could book onto one of our quality assured mental health courses or workplace wellbeing programmes, some of which can be delivered by **videoconference**.



Our half-day, one-day and two-day Mental Health First Aid programmes, fully-accredited by MHFA E anyone aged 16+ to:

- 👤 Spot the signs of mental ill health in colleagues
- 🧠 Boost your knowledge of many mental health issues
- 💡 Develop non-judgmental communication skills.
- 🎯 Signpost to professional support and build your MHFA toolbox.
- 🗣️ Fight the stigma around mental health issues in society.
- 📱 Learn self-care techniques to promote positive mental health.

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Click the image to the right or search **@PathlightThriveHive** on Facebook.

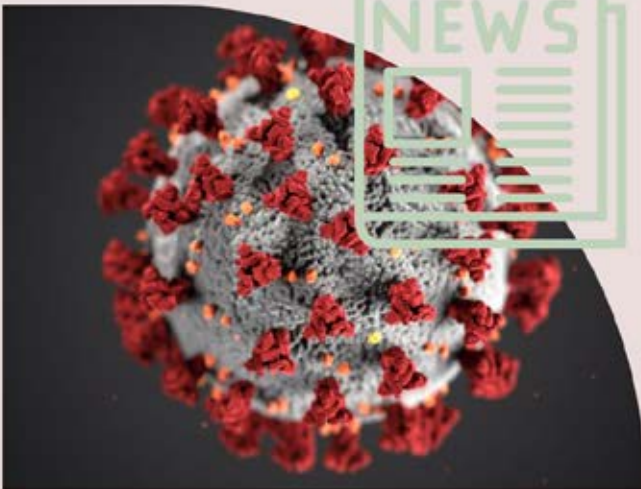


For more information on how Pathlight can support the mental health and wellbeing of you, your family and your workplace, please email us or visit our website, Facebook page or join the Pathlight Thrive Hive group on Facebook:

info@pathlight.org.uk
www.pathlight.org.uk
www.facebook.com/PathlightLtd
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8 Media rationing

Whilst working from home, we may feel the urge to constantly stay up to date with the news and what is happening on social media. However, this can negatively impact our productivity and mental health.



- Stay connected with your social network but use social and other media mindfully.
 - Stick to trusted sources of information.
 - Do not sensationalise, spread gossip or speculate - this only serves to increase panic and anxiety.
 - When communicating in any way, be sensitive to the needs and fears of others.
 - Notice how news makes you feel. If, after consuming news, you realise that it is making you feel stressed, depressed or anxious, take defensive measures for your mental health.
 - Restrict your news and social media consumption to around twice per day at set times. Set a timer for 10 minutes and stop consuming when the timer ends.
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- Avoid endless scrolling through media feeds - this can be detrimental to productivity & your mood.
 - Curate your media consumption carefully. Consider unfollowing social media accounts and news outlets that negatively impact your wellbeing.
 - Maybe try avoiding news altogether! Witnessing what is going on in the world can make us feel powerless & anxious; choosing to ignore the 99.9% of events we cannot control can be empowering.

9 Hygiene



To minimise the chances of illness, ensure your whole household follows the latest advice from the government, NHS, World Health Organisation and Public Health England.

- Stay up to date with the latest guidance from the government, NHS, World Health Organisation and Public Health England.
- Talk openly with your family about the importance of social distancing, self-isolation and any other guidance from the above sources.
- Stick to the facts and deliver them in a mindful, age-appropriate manner.
- Be prepared to carefully and truthfully answer any questions your children may have about the evolving situation. Done compassionately and skilfully, this will help to raise awareness, reduce fear of the unknown and keep your family and the wider community safe.
- Lead by example - make sure you walk the walk as well as talking the talk!
- Encourage everyone to wash their hands frequently with soap and water or alcohol hand sanitiser.
 - This is especially important before eating/handling food, after being outside, after blowing your nose, sneezing or coughing.
 - If age appropriate, find fun ways to encourage this with your children, such as reward charts, singing songs whilst washing their hands, etc.
- Take extra precautions if a family member has symptoms of an infectious disease or has come into contact with somebody who has symptoms. Stay at home and isolate as per current guidance.
- If you are not sure whether a family member has contracted Coronavirus, use the NHS 111 service: <https://111.nhs.uk/covid-19>





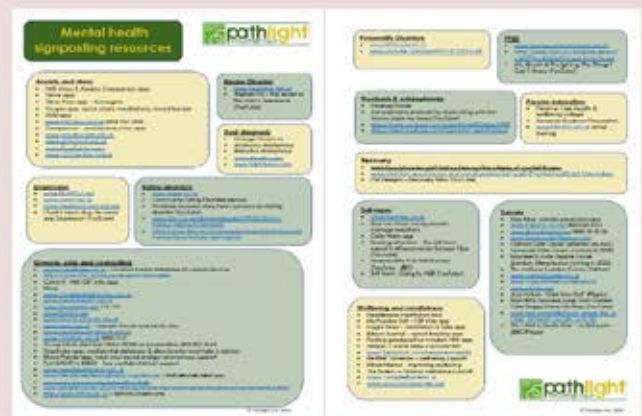
10 Seek support

If you are feeling isolated, experiencing anxiety, depression or any other mental health and wellbeing issues, you do not need to suffer alone. Reach out for the wealth of support that is out there: friends, family, colleagues, mental health professionals and more.



- Talk to friends and family members who you can trust to listen with empathy.
- If your workplace has them, approach your Mental Health First Aider(s), HR department or Employee Assistance Programme.
- School children can contact their pastoral workers or approach a trusted teacher.
- Access mental health helplines such as Samaritans on 116 123.
- If you are feeling alone and scared, access free, 20-minute counselling sessions via www.thehelpub.co.uk
- Find more support online via reputable charities and mental health organisations like Mind.
- Download our FREE mental health signposting resource by joining the **Pathlight Thrive Hive**. Click on the image below or search for **@PathlightThriveHive** on Facebook.

- Join the **Pathlight Thrive Hive** - the Facebook group for mental health and wellbeing support, courses and resources. Click the image below or search **@PathlightThriveHive** on Facebook.



If you would like others to benefit from this resource and much more **support, resources & courses**, please ask them to join our FREE Facebook group:

@PathlightThriveHive

...to get their personal copy.

Alternatively, please ask them to email us:

info@pathlight.org.uk

Creating this resource has been a labour of love, involving much time, energy, experience & passion. If it has been useful to you, I would very gratefully accept your **kind donation**.

Please click on the PayPal icon or type the link below into your web browser.

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Suggested donation: £5
...but I would welcome whatever you can afford or deem appropriate.

Thank you. Stay well. Paul ;)

Pathlight work passionately to support, train and raise awareness around positive mental health and wellbeing.

Mindfulness and compassion underpin all that we do.

Please contact us for more information on how Pathlight can support the mental health and wellbeing of you, your family and your workplace:

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- All the friends, mentors, teachers (by profession and by interaction), spiritual figures, authors, speakers, thinkers and other professionals being that facilitate my ongoing learning, opening and growth. Many of those learnings are built into this resource; I'm grateful to those whose wisdom is shared within it.
- YOU. Thank you for reading. Thank you for encouraging others to read. Thank you for doing whatever you do to foster positive mental health, wellbeing, mindfulness and compassion in the world.

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