

# be resilient

A publication of the Employee Assistance Centre

## Making It Work When Working from Home

Following Manitoba's first cases of COVID-19 and during an ever-evolving response to the arrival of the coronavirus here at home, most of us have experienced changes in our daily lives. The challenges of a sudden and unexpected shift to working from home, particularly for families with young children, have been jarring. Here are some practical suggestions on how to manage working from home with or without kids.

For everybody:

- Familiarize yourself with your company's work-from-home policies and be especially mindful of confidentiality and security considerations.
- Online video calls allow us to continue business in much the way we're accustomed to, but remember that you're essentially inviting someone into your home when using this platform. Both users should be mindful of privacy and what's being shown when on those calls. Dress professionally, use an appropriate room and be sure to put that pile of laundry out of view.

- Take the time to create a comfortable and functional workspace. Be creative, work with what you have and remember that perfection is the enemy of progress.
- We tend to move about a lot less when we work at home, so be intentional about getting up and moving often. Dust off that step counter to help keep you on track and take walking breaks as often as possible. A treadmill, a set of stairs, your yard, or the sidewalk in front of your home are all great places to move around while upholding social distancing practices. A wireless headset and a makeshift standing workstation using books or blocks of wood can make a huge difference for your body.
- Keep strict working and non-working hours and take regular breaks. Use a timer or audible calendar reminders to keep you on track. Simulate your usual day as best you can.
- Make time to recharge in meaningful ways during your

### Did you know?

COVID-19 has created barriers to our usual ways of seeking mental health support and has left many of us feeling isolated. That's why we launched **Connect Now**, a support line that members can call to instantly connect with a mental health professional from our Employee Assistance Program.

**Connect Now** provides brief, real-time support for employees and their families.

To access **Connect Now**, call us directly:

- 204.786.8880
- 1.800.590.5553 (toll free)

Calls to **Connect Now** do not count as EAP sessions under your benefit plan – you can still utilize the sessions available through your plan.

downtime. TV is a great way to “shut off” but it doesn't refill the batteries. Take a walk, chat with a friend or family member, spend time on a hobby, or cook a nice meal. You'll do better tomorrow for it.

- Finally, be flexible with expectations of yourself and others. Now is not the time to expect typical productivity. Aim to shift your goals to being fully present to the task at hand and giving your best to what's immediately in front of you – quality over quantity.

**Be flexible with expectations of yourself and others.  
Now is not the time to expect typical productivity.**

Parents are facing some unique challenges as school closures continue. Parents may feel challenged to find some semblance of routine amidst the disruption and to manage their children's responses to these changes, all while maintaining some degree of work productivity. Here are some considerations for families where one or both parents have switched to a work-from-home arrangement:

- Companies and those in leadership positions have a strong role to play in creating a culture that supports parents who are working from home. Accept that the new environment we're working within will have interruptions and adjust productivity expectations of yourself and others accordingly.
- Acknowledge the lack of choice you and your children had in the recent changes. There are things to grieve here – the precious final weeks a grade 12 student was to spend with friends, sports tournaments and school trips that were anticipated, lifestyle changes, the easy and consistent opportunities for connection with friends, peers, coworkers. When we experience change that we didn't choose, the impact is different and grieving or simply acknowledging that loss is necessary to moving through it effectively.
- Take a softer approach. The parenting style that you typically find highly effective might need tweaking. If bedtime is difficult, try to connect with your kids by spending a bit more time cuddling, reading an extra story, or lying in bed and talking about how they're doing. If it's important that they get to bed at the usual time, try starting your routine a little earlier to accommodate.
- Help kids to understand the reasons for the changes. You can make your kid feel like a superhero by explaining that time away from friends and other adjustments to their daily lives are steps that will protect grandmas and grandpas, tiny babies, and others for whom this virus poses a serious threat. Make up a superhero name together that highlights a positive behaviour – Captain Coversthecough, protector of grannies! Explain that their sacrifices are amazing and important right now, and worthy of superhero status (cape optional).

- You can be a superhero in your kid's eyes, too. By explaining the importance of your role, your work, and your own efforts to flatten the curve, kids have some context and may feel greater respect for your need to work when you're at home.
- If you're parenting with someone else, collaborate with your partner. If you're both working from home, try to make a plan for the day that establishes who is going to look after the children and when. Remind one another (gently!) about the need to maintain healthy boundaries around work hours and offer moral support when you can. Remember that if there's an enemy here, it isn't your partner or co-parent.
- Involve kids in daily tasks around home and work – it occupies them and makes them feel like important contributors to the family system. Make healthy habits, like working out, a family affair. Many fitness and yoga instructors are offering free and paid classes online; Instagram and Facebook Live are a great resource.
- Create a daily routine and adjust as necessary. Kids do best when they have structure, clear boundaries and know the plan. Even in times of change, we can provide this by maintaining regular sleep and meal schedules (this goes for grownups too), having a predictable rhythm to the day, and outlining clear expectations.

In these trying times, we're all being called upon in different ways to step quickly and confidently into situations and roles that challenge us. It's natural to feel as though we're floundering at times; asking for help from others can mean the difference between thriving and surviving. Manitoba Blue Cross is committed to supporting our community through this difficult time. Telephonic and video-based counselling are available to you and your family by contacting our intake line.

– Jodie Voth, RMFT, EAP Counsellor

**For more information call the Employee Assistance Centre at 204.786.8880, TTY 204.775.0586, toll-free 1.800.590.5553 or visit [mb.bluecross.ca](https://mb.bluecross.ca).**

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Consult a professional (counsellor, physician, etc.) before taking action with respect to any topics discussed.

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