

## Tip sheet

# Family tips for working at home

Working at home for extended periods during COVID-19, alongside partners and, in many cases while juggling full time parenting and home schooling, brings both its challenges and rewards. The same can be extended to housemates too.

It helps to stay focussed on the positives and be kind to yourself and others, as you manage through the tough days – recognising things will not always work out as planned.

To get the best from this situation, bring all the people living in the home together to find the best ways of working. If helpful, share this document with them as a way of getting the conversation going.

Deciding together the best ways of working is a great way of managing issues. It also teaches important social and life skills for children, and the benefits gained can be applied well beyond COVID-19.

### Work together as a unit

- The most important success factor is to work together. Include all the members of your household in making decisions on all of the ways you will manage this new way of working.
- Coming up with a plan, contributing ideas, sharing the load (and the housework!), being accountable to other members of your household unit and assessing how you are going are all strategies that need to be worked out together. Leaving the work or responsibility unfairly to one member of the household is unlikely to bring the best outcome.
- If possible, include children in making the plan. Assessing how things are going and determining how the household will work together helps them feel involved, teaches them useful life skills and models positive behaviour for them. Involving them will also mean they are more likely to go along with the plan.
- There are health reasons why it is good to work together. Inclusion brings a powerful boost to our brains, resulting in increased creativity, enthusiasm for tasks, tenacity and also helps our IQ! Inclusion is also good for our physical health, as feeling included boosts the release of a hormone called oxytocin, which lowers blood pressure and is good for our heart health. Inclusion also feels good, so working together brings many benefits.

### Make a plan

- What space in your home will be used for working, schooling, and play and relaxation?  
If you can't keep a space exclusively for working, then have some way of showing when it is used for work, for example have a sign up, or a different cushion to show when it is being used for what purpose.
- What will your schedule be?  
Make time for work, play, breaks, school, eating, exercise. Establish a clear quitting time. It helps to have a schedule so people know what is happening each day. There also needs to be some flexibility about the plan to deal with unexpected events, or days when things are just not going so well.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Take time at the end of each day to assess together how things are going. Include everyone in the daily review, and ask everyone for ideas on what went well, what can be improved, and how to improve. This gives everyone a chance to reflect on the day, and work together to come up with solutions. This also gives you a chance to quickly change things that are not working, and strengthen what is working. Involving children in this teaches them valuable life skills. It also gives you a chance to celebrate together what went well and the things you achieved in the day – big and small!</li></ul>
<b>Be kind to yourself (and others)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• This new way of working is an experiment for everyone. We are all learning how to manage the impacts of COVID-19.</li><li>• Be kind to yourself. Take time to relax, even if just for a few minutes now and then. Realise that this situation is different and extraordinary, and be gentle with the expectations on yourself, and on others.</li><li>• If you feel others are expecting too much of you, talk with them about what you feel, and discuss what you can do and let go of for now. This includes your partner, children, extended family, friends, workmates, and leader. Above all, you may need to manage your self-expectations as you may be expecting too much of yourself.</li><li>• Make time to sleep. Sleep is the most important thing you can do to help you manage – it affects your thinking, your mood, your health (and also your immune system). Getting enough sleep is a critical factor in helping you manage through this. Supporting others in your household to get enough sleep is also important.</li></ul>
<b>Look to the positives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• One of the common factors that people in this situation talk about is finding the positive aspects of the situation and putting some focus on these. This does not underplay the difficulties, but enables balance between the positive and negative aspects of the new way of working.</li><li>• The following are common positives people are sharing:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Spending more time with their families is strengthening the connection they feel.</li><li>Learning together how to manage through COVID-19 is bringing insights into how to manage better generally (the daily assessments on how things are going really support this).</li><li>Learning more about themselves during this time and experiencing personal growth.</li><li>Time with growing children is precious and many people feel grateful they have the opportunity to spend more time with their children.</li><li>Engaging with children in schoolwork is informing parents more about what their children are learning, how they think and enabling stronger bonds.</li><li>No commuting for work means more time for other activities.</li><li>More equitable sharing of household tasks.</li></ul></li><li>• Recognising the positive aspects means you can also think about how you might be able to take these positives into the future as something you continue to do in your family or household.</li></ul>

<b>Seek support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reaching out to those you trust in your family and friends, and other groups you are part of can also be useful.</li><li>• There are also support services available, such as childcare or nannies, home cleaning, online shopping and delivery, home delivered meals and other services that can assist with household duties. Decisions on whether to use these services will be made in view of the family concerns regarding risk of infection, cost and value add, but a range of options are available to provide practical support for families.</li><li>• Asking for help is a powerful way to connect with other people. We are all human, we all need help from time to time, and for many people, being asked to provide help makes people feel included and needed, and brings benefits to both the asker and receiver.</li><li>• Contact the <a href="#">Employee Assistance Program</a> for free, confidential counselling services. This service is also available for your immediate family.</li></ul>
<b>Useful resources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The wellbeing page on bhp.com (<a href="#">English</a>   <a href="#">Spanish</a>) provides support on a range of valuable mental health and wellbeing information for work and life, including a range of tools, tips and coping mechanisms for common conditions.</li><li>• These materials also include a COVID-19 personal action plan to help you acknowledge how you feel, and get you thinking about your own wellbeing.</li></ul>
<b>Other resources</b>	<p>Working from home with children:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <a href="#">Unicef</a></li><li>• <a href="#">ABC</a></li><li>• <a href="#">Link to Yammer conversation</a></li><li>• <a href="#">School and childcare centre closures.</a></li></ul> <p>Sleep:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <a href="https://www.sleephealthfoundation.org.au/fact-sheets.html">https://www.sleephealthfoundation.org.au/fact-sheets.html</a></li><li>• <a href="#">Beyond Blue COVID-19 resources</a></li></ul>