



## Who Weekly Monday 25/10/2021

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## WELLNESS

# THE LONG HAUL WFH GUIDE

Tweaking your daily routine now could make all the difference to your wellbeing

**P**icture this: it's 8.50am and you've just rolled out of bed. Still clad in your pyjamas, you wander to your desk with a bowl of cereal in hand. By 9am you tell yourself that you'll be in the zone, ready to start the day afresh. So why doesn't it feel that way?

If that sounds familiar, you're not alone. What began as a brief flirtation with working from home last year has now turned into a long-term way of life for many. While there are some undeniable benefits, a growing number of employees

have also reported that they are feeling increasingly fatigued.

### WHY IT'S HAPPENING

"Working from home has caused employees to deviate from their old office habits and routines," Madelyn Geldenhuys, associate professor of organisational psychology at the Australian College of Applied Psychology, explains. "It creates the inevitable dilemma around when exactly work time begins and ends each day. This blurring of boundaries can create

considerable challenges for our work-life balance, especially when employees have so much else on their plate."

It could be a working mum who is juggling office time and family. Or it could be a single professional living in a share house who has to contend with Zoom calls in front of their housemates. For others, it might simply be the deafening silence of working alone.

"Our old office habits and routines also included commuting to work, getting a coffee at our favourite cafe, and chatting and laughing with our colleagues or meeting new people," Geldenhuys says.

"Working from home can have a huge effect on our mental health

and wellbeing as it can leave us feeling isolated, lonely, or disconnected from other people."

### WHAT YOU CAN DO

While letting go of our old routines may have felt liberating at first, now might be the time to reintroduce some structure.

"Recreating office habits and routines can help you to work from home more effectively," Geldenhuys says. "One of the easiest ways to do this is by reintroducing coffee and lunch breaks. Take [them] outside and away from your screen if you can."

It may also mean establishing new routines, especially if you have additional responsibilities like looking after kids.

"The goal should be to create a sustainable routine that can help you reach both home and organisational goals, which will cause the least stress and have a good balance between work and home demands," Geldenhuys says.

### DRESS THE PART

Encllothed cognition is the belief that the clothes we wear can affect our mindset – in other words, it helps to dress the part. That doesn't mean you have to ditch comfort altogether, but it could help to assemble a more relaxed version of your traditional working wardrobe.

"If we get up each morning, shower and get dressed in our work clothes, this can help to symbolise work time," explains Geldenhuys. "When it hits 5pm, we can change into our more comfortable clothes to symbolise that our working day has ended and it's time to relax."

One thing it definitely doesn't mean is working in your pyjamas. "When we work in clothes that are associated with sleep, relaxation and leisure, we can start to associate work in a similar way," adds



AMBER HEARD



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## HOME OFFICE ETIQUETTE

Goldenhuys. "It can result in us becoming less enthusiastic in completing tasks and meeting deadlines."

Everyone is different, so Goldenhuys says the key is to find out what works for you to tick all the boxes.

"Working from home is likely going to be an option for us all moving forward," she explains. "Therefore, planning good working habits can help people manage the demands from work with minimal negative effects on their wellbeing."

Get the most out of your WFH experience by setting yourself a few ground rules. "Working from home can be a really enriching experience if there are boundaries and systems, and our mental health is being taken care of," explains Jacqui Lewis, founder of The Broad Place. "In the Mental Fitness Bootcamps I launched with Toyota recently, I teach about bookmarking the work day so that it doesn't bleed into every moment of life." Once you've clocked off for the day, enjoy your free time – and try to avoid screens for at least an hour before bed.

### DON'T

- Check your emails the moment you wake up
- Eat at your computer
- Watch Netflix on your midday break

### DO

- Shower and get properly dressed before clocking on
- Set yourself a dedicated start and finish time
- Set aside time for exercise and meditation