

## COPE - Tips for Hilda for looking after your mental health when working from home:

- Have a start and stop time and regular breaks, a challenge for working from home is you keep working and stop also seeing your home as your home
- To avoid the first point, have an area which is the 'work area' and if possible restrict that area to work. I use a laptop, so have a chair, cushion for the laptop to sit on and a footstool. Plus some drawers for work things. I only sit on that chair when I am working, I don't use it for anything else (the cats use it to sleep on, when I am not working!!). So there is a wee corner of the room is where I work and if I need to make a confidential phone call, there is another area of the house I go to, to ensure not overheard. Some people may have space for a home office, super, it is the ideal as if you go in then you are at work, when you come out, the working day is over. This tip is more if you don't have room for a home office.
- Try and get dressed and not stay in nightclothes or dressing gowns! Now!! I would be a fibber if I said, I have never done this, as sometimes you get up, do your teeth think oh, I will do that before I run the bath and before you know it.....7 hours have passed!! But getting ready for work in the same way you would going out the door, also gives you time to prepare for the day ahead and makes sure you eat breakfast! So get into a healthy routine from the start is easier than trying to change a habit which maybe isn't as good for you
- If you have children working from home can be a new distraction and it's a good idea to talk over with your manager/supervisor/whoever you report to, any challenges you may have around balancing working from home and keeping the kids who also are 'studying from home' amused! Fine if more than one adult in the house, not so easy if you are on your own. Again having a routine can help. It may also be and again discuss with your manager you flex your hours so sometime during day you are doing things with the kids and at night you do the things for work you had planned for during the day. We have different roles so this is something better discussed with your employer (who you may find is also working from home and has kids so may understand)
- Even though working from home, you should think about still using a diary so you know pieces of work which need done by when/phone or zoom calls/online groups etc. having a diary which includes the things you need to do is a good way of reporting back on work being done while at home as well as planning how this can be done around other commitments like the kids being at home
- When you do get down to work, seek to remove distractions so TV off, social media/personal email alerts off, think the same rules as at work, when we are being paid to work, we work, when it's our time, we unwind. Having boundaries means we can switch off from work when we need to, and also switch on to doing our jobs when that is needed also
- Working remotely can be isolating, especially if you are used to working directly with a team. There are loads of ways to use technology to stay in touch, including that chat over coffee, the same as you would do in the office, so find something works for you.
- Boundaries are good for everyone just now especially in lockdown as everyone is home more than usual and if your house allows everyone their own room super, however, if its smaller and space needs to be shared, its working out how, even in this, everyone can have some me space. This isn't just important for work, but also for creating some me time to unwind and look after your mental health so e.g. if others in the house want to watch TV/play a game then this probably isn't the area you will be able to work in, however, you can reasonably ask that the TV isn't too loud so if you are working in another area of the house you aren't disturbed by it. Lockdown can also be about compromise and negotiation, recognising it's unlikely everyone will get what they want, but maybe a solution can be reached which is good enough for now.
- I mentioned already the risk of not taking breaks, factor breaks into your day as they are really important this includes getting up, moving about, observing health and safety around caring for your eyes if using a screen a lot.
- Have something to do which marks this is the end of the working day, could be you change clothes into something which suggests now is the time to relax, or, have something planned to do with the rest of the family who live in the same house e.g. the daily exercise we are allowed. Or maybe doing the 3minute relaxer which is on our website. Something which tells your mind, I have stopped working for the day.
- Working from home can be stressful and bring new challenges, COVID 19 in itself can be stressful and bring new challenges, so it's important we do look after ourselves and make time to look after our wellbeing. We have created a new wee tips sheet for coping when life is strange which may be helpful