

Tips on working from home when you are on the Autism Spectrum

Introduction

In the COVID19 world, we have additional need and expectation to be able to work remotely. For many on the Autism Spectrum (AS) who have been adjusting to work environments this change can be a big disruption. Below are some tips for those of you on the spectrum working from home, to assist you in remaining calmer and being more productive. These tips may also prove helpful for those support AS people.

General tips

Many of the methods you use at work to stay on task are applicable in the home. Avoiding distractions and staying on task are key challenges for anyone working at home, but perhaps more so for AS people. Tips for everyone working from home can be found from a quick search. [Here](#) are some you may find affective. Some key highlights include:

- Set formal work hours and regular routine
- Plan your work
- Show your availability
- Reward yourself for your work efforts
- Take regular breaks
- Stay off social media

Mindfulness in your workday

It is hard to avoid all distractions, but as conscious, mindful humans we have the ability to control our own minds to achieve what we want to. Below are two key phrases that may resonate for you, from advocates and specialists in the field of mindfulness are these:

“Choose your distractions mindfully”

[Rasmus Hougaard](#), Author, Founder and Managing Director of [Potential Project](#)

You don't have to make every minute of your workday 100% productive, but you could aim to make every minute of your *work time* productive. We all need down time, so be kind to yourself, and consciously plan and decide on the times and things which you will *allow* to distract you: a hug with a dog, preparing a cup of tea, a couple of minutes of meditation, even just closing your eyes for ten seconds while you take three deep breaths.

“Don't guard your time and squander your attention.”

[Sam Harris](#), Author, philosopher, neuroscientist, [meditation and mindfulness](#) teacher.

We all get distracted, but you can train yourself to be aware of when your mind is wandering off. And through practice you can get better at stopping it earlier. Sam's [Waking up app](#) is a great way to try out mindfulness meditation, which can help train us to be more aware of and in control of our minds and our emotions.

For some on the spectrum, some report mindfulness is less effective than for neurotypicals. We encourage you to look at strategies that have worked for you in the past and try those.

Work hygiene

Some specific suggestions for those on the Autism Spectrum (though again they can apply to many people) are below:

- Try to create a regular place for work at home which is free from distractions
- Create a regular work schedule, just like you would at work.
- Plan and schedule your day and your activities into your calendar, with reminders to start tasks.
- Schedule time for breaks, which could include meditation, walks, or some other sort of exercise.
- Make contact with your work colleagues or supervisors via remote means (Skype, Teams, Zoom, [Life Sherpa](#))
- Make sure people know you are online
- Get involved in online “morning teas” and other social events
- Get involved in seminars offered by your support staff or organisation
 - These can help you to stay in touch with others, and to continue your training and personal development, including your understanding of yourself, your preferred learning methods, and your own brand of autism, which shares qualities with many other’s but is unique to you.

Workload management

If you run out of work to do, *Don’t Panic*. People understand that working remotely can cause ebbs and flows in workload management and distribution sometimes.

- Plan your work out and tell your manager or supervisor ahead of time (where you can) if you think you will run out of work.
- If you run out of work, find yourself some training to do online. It’s best to plan this out in advance as part of your development plan, then you can go to it any time you run out of work.
- If you are struggling to choose something, ask your supervisor or a colleague for some suggestions.

Distractions

Some distractions and suggestions for resolution may include:

- Using the same PC you game on or socialise on.
 - Shut down the apps you don’t need during your workday to avoid unnecessary popups and notifications.
- Being in a place with others’ movements attract your eyes.
 - Try to find yourself a space where you don’t see these movements or put up screens to minimize impact on your visual field.
- Worries about data usage.
 - If you have significant data limitations or costs, talk with your supervisor about this. There may be some other options for you.
- Noise around the house.
 - Try using noise cancelling headphones or music to mask other noises
 - Try planning with your house mates when certain activities will occur, so as to reduce noise in core work times, for everyone’s benefit.
- Looking after family members.

- If this is part of what you have to do, try to schedule these things so you can get chunks of work done in between.
- Conflicts in instructions
 - If you've been told to do something, but you need to be in the work office to do it...
 - Contact your supervisor and discuss the matter
 - Do not go to work unless your supervisor authorises you to
- Worries about COVID19 or anything else
 - Worries are normal for everyone in these times.
 - Discuss your worry or anxiety strategies with your support people and care team.
 - Exercise the strategies.

Other Resources for AS people and their support workers

Neurodiversity Hub

<https://www.neurodiversityhub.org/>

<https://www.neurodiversityhub.org/resources-for-employers>

4D. STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING REMOTE AUTISTIC EMPLOYEES.

An extremely useful, and very topical, [webinar](#) by Integrate Advisors - Tracy Powell-Rudy, VP Corporate Engagement, and Marcia Scheiner, President. Also a downloadable tip sheet resource. [Tips for managing autistic employees](#)

<https://www.neurodiversityhub.org/resources-for-students>

Section 8. ANXIETY

A. NEURODIVERSE SELF-CARE: MANAGING ANXIETY THROUGH CONNECTION

Webinar and tip sheet from Integrate Advisors - "Strategies for managing remote autistic employees"

https://www.neurodiversityhub.org/s/Managing_Anxiety_Through_Connection_02b_Final.pdf

B. NEURODIVERSITY WELLNESS: LINKS TO SOME GREAT COVID-19 RESOURCES

Links to some resources on the Stanford ND project website - including a webinar from Dr Janie Hong: "Life Interrupted - Managing Stress and Anxiety during a Global Pandemic".

<https://med.stanford.edu/neurodiversity/wellness.html>

The Black Dog Institute

<https://blackdoginstitute.org.au/>

The Black Dog Institute is dedicated to understanding, preventing and treating mental illness. The institute has recently launched a new 'Steeling the Mind' webinar series.

<https://blackdoginstitute.org.au/education-training/community-and-schools/covid-19-webinars>

Autistica / University College London

<https://www.autistica.org.uk>

<https://www.autistica.org.uk/what-is-autism/coronavirus>

Beyond Blue

<https://beyondblue.org.au/>

Beyond Blue also has many valuable resources, including some specifically about working during the COVID19 epidemic.

<https://coronavirus.beyondblue.org.au/>