

Create Boundaries Between Work and Homelife

Krishna K. Patel, BSW

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Abstract

Transitioning to working from home can be challenging and difficult to adjust, especially if it is continuous and constantly clashing with your personal life and your family life. If this is not your norm, then you may see some problems arise in your day-to-day work life such as loud noises in the background, interruptions while on an important phone call for work, boundary and space issues if you are sharing a workspace, and more. Some tips and suggestions mentioned are being proactive about your work situation, taking frequent breaks throughout the workday, a breathing exercise method, and reflecting on your complete workday experience. Allowing yourself to do the things mentioned in this article will ease up your day and provide an overall less stressful environment in your home.

Keywords: Boundaries, Decompress, Home Life, Schedule, and Work.

Create Boundaries Between Work and Homelife

The effects of not having enough time to decompress and having no separation between your work and family life can vary from person to person. On top of that, if you are not used to working from home, it can easily become challenging and difficult to adjust to. When this occurs, it can create a stressful environment for you and anyone else around you. It is important to create boundaries for yourself to avoid letting stress build up inside of you.

Here are some tips on how you can create a boundary between your work, family, and self-care to ease the transition of working at home.

- Designate one spot in your home as your work area. In this area, create an environment in which you can focus on your work and other priorities, and try to devote this place for work only. By creating a work-only space, this allows you to decompress in other areas of your home without thinking about work.
- You might have to share your workspace with someone else. If that is the case, create a schedule for the space or work out a plan for sharing and dividing the space. This will help keep everything a bit more organized.

- Create and set boundaries with your children or family. Let them know when you are in your workspace, you cannot have any interruptions unless it is an emergency.
- If you are working from home with other people around, have a conversation with them. Talk to them about what you need from them to make it work. If you prefer a quieter work environment, make sure to mention that.
- Be proactive. If you already know your schedule for the day, inform those around you or in your home. Make them aware of times you absolutely may not be disturbed. For example, if you have an important meeting that requires 100% of your focus and attention, let the people around you know what time the meeting starts and ends so you have no unnecessary distractions.
- Take frequent 5-10-minute breaks throughout the day. Whether it be from your work or from your family, give yourself time and space away to clear your mind.

According to research done by the [American Psychiatric Association](#), “regularly detaching from your work tasks—both during the workday and in your off-hours—can help restore energy in the short term and prevent burnout in the long term. Much like regular exercise and sleep, work breaks function both as prevention and intervention,” says Charlotte Fritz, PhD, associate professor, Industrial/Organizational Psychology, Portland State University. “Taking regular breaks helps us to be more resilient when stressors arise, and they function as an intervention to help us deal with the daily grind” (Weir 2019).

- After your workday is over, decompress for 10-15 minutes in your work area before you see your family and kids. One way to do so is to just sit and relax for a few moments and do breathing exercises or meditation. The University of Michigan Medicine suggests doing belly breathing as it “is easy to do and very relaxing” (2019). To do this exercise, follow these six simple steps:
 1. Sit or lie flat in a comfortable position.
 2. Put one hand on your belly just below your ribs and the other hand on your chest.
 3. Take a deep breath in through your nose, and let your belly push your hand out. Your chest should not move.
 4. Breathe out through pursed lips as if you were whistling. Feel the hand on your belly go in and use it to push all the air out.

5. Do this breathing three to 10 times. Take your time with each breath.
 6. Notice how you feel at the end of the exercise.
- Create a schedule for yourself to follow during the day. While doing so, make sure to allow yourself to have about 15-20 minutes in the morning to wake up before jumping right into work. When you are done with work, you should be done with work for the rest of the day. Going back to work after your workday has finished can take over any personal time you have.
 - Give yourself 2-3 reachable goals throughout the day, but don't beat yourself up over not accomplishing these goals. For example, if you have 10 client cases to work on throughout your five-day workweek, set a goal of working on two clients each day. This way, you will not overwork yourself or your brain. By setting goals, you are also setting boundaries for yourself because you are forcing yourself to stay focused on what you need to do to reach these goals.
 - Reflect on your workday before regrouping. For instance, Fred Coon, CEO of Stewart, Cooper & Coon, A Human Capital Strategies Firm, suggests "recognizing what went well for you, looking for areas where you can improve, and identifying the best part of your day." Studies done by Harvard Business School tested "whether taking 15 minutes at the end of a workday to reflect on that day's work improved their performance and found the participants tasked with daily written reflection did 22.8% better on an assessment than the control group" (Di Stefano, Gino, et. Al., 2016). This is a great way to prevent mixing your work life with your personal life, and it gives you the chance to enhance your mood.
 - If a busier workday is expected, set aside 1-3 main goals to achieve for the workday. If you achieve these goals, you are more likely to feel accomplished when you reflect on your day.
 - Find an activity that you are passionate about or have not done in a while. When you do this, you can escape into your own world and you will find that you are calmer and more relaxed and ready to do the next thing after your workday is over.

Journalist Diana Raab is an expert in helping others transform and become empowered through creativity. She believes that "[the desire to escape] can also be a temporary way to withdraw from life's stressors and challenges, whether it is looking after a family or navigating health challenges. The escape method you choose will depend on the reason you wish to escape, what you are escaping from, and the results you would like to achieve" (2018). Remember to give your mind time to withdraw from life's stressors and challenges. Your mental health matters.

References

- Di Stefano, Giada and Gino, Francesca and Pisano, Gary and Staats, Bradley R., Making Experience Count: The Role of Reflection in Individual Learning (June 14, 2016). <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2414478> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2414478>
- Healthwise (2019, December 15). Stress Management: Breathing Exercises for Relaxation. Retrieved August 10, 2020, from <https://www.uofmhealth.org/health-library/uz2255>
- Raab, D. (2018, October 25). Escaping Reality to Heal. Retrieved June 2020, from <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-empowerment-diary/201810/escaping-reality-heal>
- Weir, K. (2019). Give Me A Break. Retrieved June 2020, from <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2019/01/break>