How to stay on track when you’re working from home

Whether it’s an occasional event or your routine, working from home can be tricky. Lines blur, and it’s easy to feel as if you’re on both clocks 24/7. Austin, Texas–based career expert Holly Reisem Hanna offers strategies.

1. **Go Toward the Light.** Work where you feel most energized. Typically this will be in the room with the most natural light and the nearest view, says Hanna, who tends to work in her kitchen for those reasons. Some spots feel stagnant, and “you want to be in a space that gives you positive energy and flow,” she says. Pinpoint your peak productivity times, then schedule high-energy periods for the bigger challenges.

2. **Remind People You Exist.** If you work at home all the time, once a week, schedule in-person meetings, grab lunch with a colleague, or initiate group videocalls. (Try Google Hangouts or Skype.) “It’s the cure for feeling disconnected from office life,” says Hanna. Also consider co-office spaces. Many can be rented by the hour. Visit ShareDesk.net for locations. It’s a great change of scenery, and it allows you to meet other people who work from home,” says Hanna. Many offer free coffee, printers, Wi-Fi—all those office goodies.

3. **Think Like an I.T. Person.** There’s no summoning John from the 14th floor, but your computer goes on the fritz, so bookmark troubleshooting pages and post numbers to call for complicated issues. While you’re at it, set up your own space—close a shelf for chargers, paper tones—so you’re not rummaging around the house like a madwoman every time you need a Post-it. If you can, swap your desktop for a laptop, which you can tuck in a drawer when you’re off duty. This helps you say tech-bye to the workplace.

4. **Walk Off the Job.** A daily stroll gets you out of your bunny slippers and in a better state of mind. Designate a set time as you’ll be more likely to stick to the routine. Consider a Fitbit bracelet (fitbit.com), which can be programmed to vibrate and remind you to get moving. It will track your steps, so you’ll be inspired to walk a little more each day. And the boss will need you, right? Move files to cloud-based storage, like Google Drive, Dropbox, or Box, and you can access info on the go via your smartphone.

5. **Step Away from the Swiffer.** If you’re tempted to throw in a load of laundry when you should be filling out TPS reports, work for 25 minutes, then allow for five-minute housework breaks. This way, you can set a timer to tackle some chores, then get back to work. Along the same lines, treat doctor visits and other appointments as if you were in the office. Go first thing in the morning or at the end of the day.

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