

Gympass

WHEN A HOME BECOMES AN OFFICE: WHAT CAN LEADERS DO TO HELP EMPLOYEES STAY PRODUCTIVE WHILE WORKING REMOTELY?



Summary

1. Introduction

2. Remote work is no longer temporary

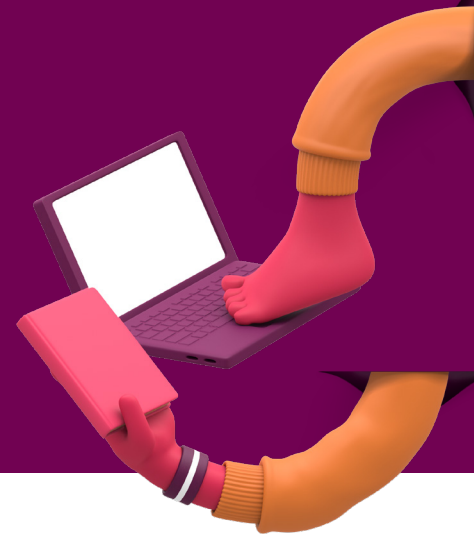
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1. Introduction

Not so long ago, the idea of working from home was a novel concept for the majority of the population and it was hard to imagine it would ever catch on. The common perception was that remote working was fraught with challenges, disadvantages, uncertainties and learning curves.



However, COVID-19 has forced dramatic and rapid changes to the way we all work, and remote working looks like it is here to stay. At first, people focused on making small adjustments to adapt their homes into impromptu work environments, confident that working from home would not become a permanent trend. Meanwhile, beyond the urgent needs of the pandemic, **many companies quickly began to rethink the benefits of on-site work**, discovering that sending their employees to work from home made more financial and business sense than first thought. The question on everybody's lips was the same: is it worth it to work 9 to 5, five days a week, spending time and money on commuting which could be invested in wellness instead?

Then came the next challenge, seen as one of the major sticking points to fully embracing remote work: with employees away from the office, how to help the workforce remain productive and promote a healthy work-life balance? This guide will help you keep your employees engaged, even at a distance.

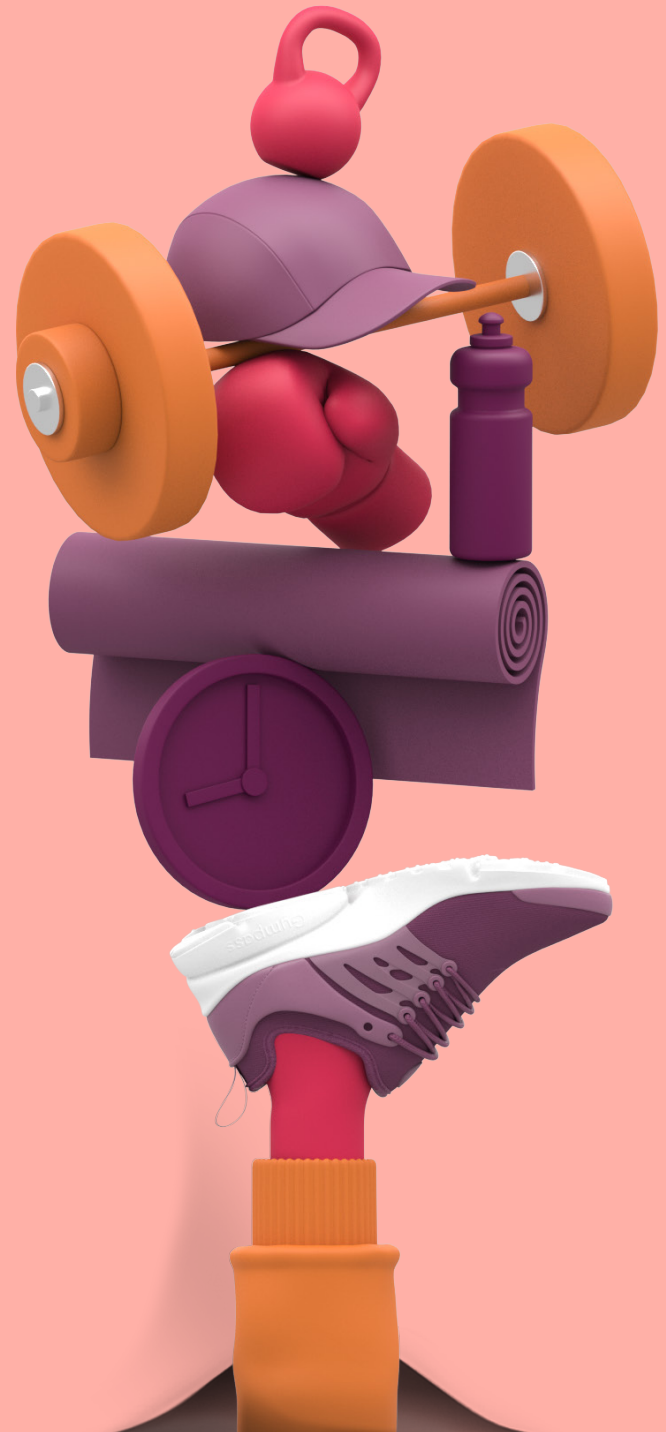
2. Remote work is no longer temporary

While spending hours stuck in traffic, queuing up to pay for lunch at a nearby restaurant or socializing when you just weren't in the mood, the idea of being able to work from home must have sounded like a dream.



Indeed, the advantages to remote work are clear for many: no time wasted on commuting, no interrupting co-workers and more time to spend with loved ones. But it soon became clear that working from home was **no bed of roses**. Initial complaints largely concerned a lack of physical tools and infrastructure, but several other challenges soon came to light:

- ▶ Maintaining focus can be difficult.
- ▶ It becomes harder to separate work and leisure
- ▶ Socializing becomes more challenging
- ▶ There are more distractions
- ▶ Having the adequate space to work is often a problem
- ▶ Inappropriate infrastructure and equipment can hinder productivity
- ▶ Technical problems take longer to solve
- ▶ A lack of interaction with coworkers hinders team bonding
- ▶ Communication may be flimsy
- ▶ Working from home can be lonely



Despite these new challenges, well-known companies and small businesses around the world made the decision to allow their employees to work from home on a permanent basis.

As a result, managers and employees are now going through a reconfiguration of traditional work dynamics. A transformation which demands a balance between professional and personal needs.



Jack Dorsey, CEO of **Twitter** and **Square**, told his employees they could continue working from home “forever.”

Global Workplace Analytics allowed **77% of its workforce** to continue to work from home once the pandemic is over.



Global Workplace Analytics



Shopify kept its offices closed throughout 2020, with most employees now working remotely on a permanent basis.



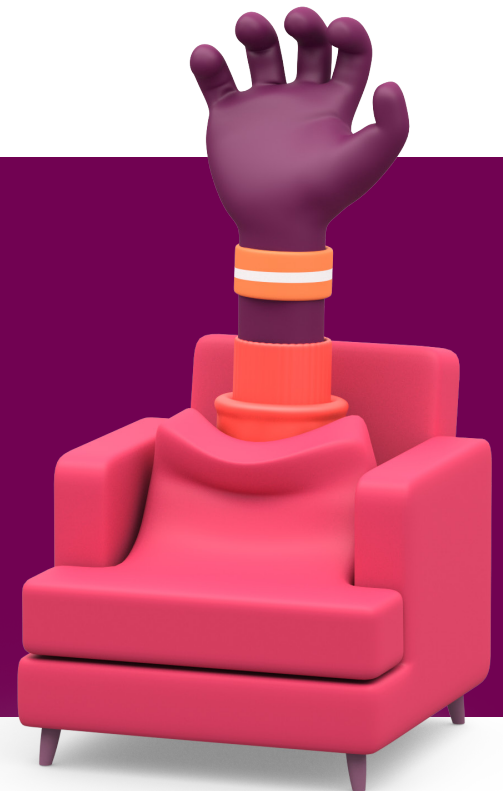
Microsoft



Google, Microsoft, Morgan Stanley, JPMorgan, Slack, Amazon, PayPal, Salesforce and other major companies **extended their work-from-home options.**

3. How to make the most of people's working hours

With their homes becoming offices, employees were forced to come up with new working routines. Some managed to identify their peak productive hours, as well as juggling the delicate balance between work, household tasks and leisure time.



But not everyone has had a successful transition, quickly becoming overwhelmed by what many perceive as a higher workload. The ability to make adequate time for household and work tasks has a direct influence on productivity and how we deal with people around us. In some cases, a lack of control and stability has led to increased stress **and mood swings**. To mitigate these problems, there are a few strategies and habits that can be adopted to improve productivity and safeguard employee's mental health.

Setting up for work

When a home becomes an office, separating work and leisure can be difficult. First and foremost, employees must be reminded that remote work is still work and strict discipline is crucial to success. Setting alarms to denote the start and end of the working day, wearing work clothes (which can still be comfortable!) and arranging a dedicated workspace can help employees remain focused and switched on.



Organizing the schedule

Just because we are physically distant from one another does not mean that scheduling is not important – in fact, it becomes even more crucial in a remote working environment. Maintaining an up-to-date calendar is a great idea to help the entire team keep track with meetings and calls, while blocking out time slots for particular tasks can also be beneficial. An organized day can increase productivity in an otherwise distracting home work environment and gives clarity on what is taking up your team's time.

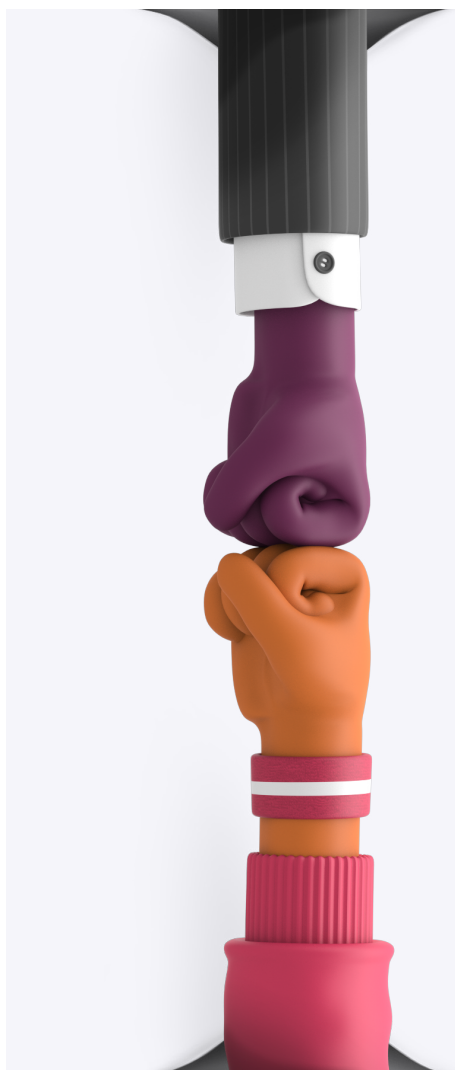
Participating in meetings

As face-to-face interactions become few and far between, we need to find ways to communicate more often. Meetings are not always the most stimulating activities, but they are ideal for maintaining relationships and solving urgent problems as quickly as possible. It is often a good idea to set up daily 15-minute catch-up meetings for small teams, giving the chance to debrief or simply have a chat.



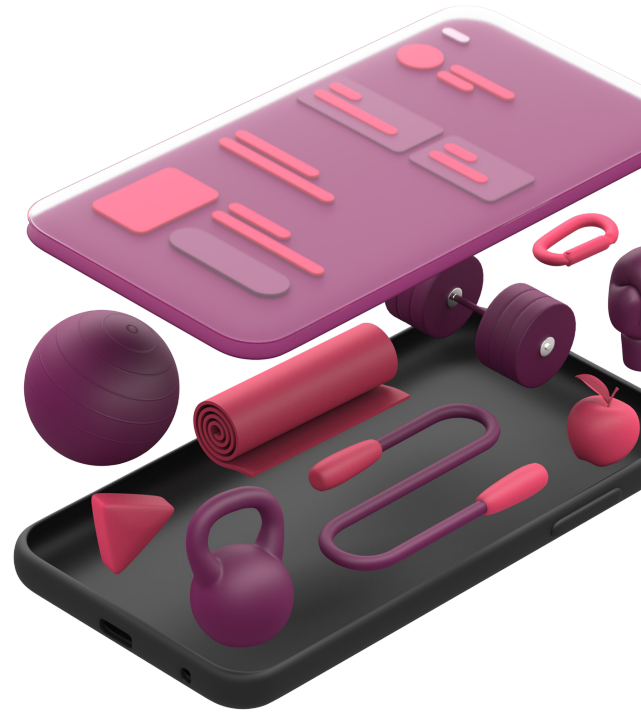
Clear and frequent communication

When finding it difficult to clarify something to a colleague simply and promptly, look to exercise practical communication skills. Prepare bullet points detailing exactly what requires action, get in touch with people that will help you solve the issue and give clear guidelines. **Adopting clear communication techniques will save a lot of time** and increase efficiency during the working day.



Streamline communication channels

Switching between emails, videoconferences, phone calls, Slack, WhatsApp, and myriad other communication tools can be exhausting and counterproductive. While there are a number of helpful channels available for interaction between co-workers, companies should establish guidelines on how and when to use them. Streamlining communication channels will help mitigate distraction and maintain focus.



Use apps and tools to help focus

When employees find it hard to concentrate, different productivity methods can help. Apps and timers can be beneficial and teach people how to break down their work into intervals, with short breaks in between. These techniques allow for more rest time, while also boosting productivity during intervals of work.

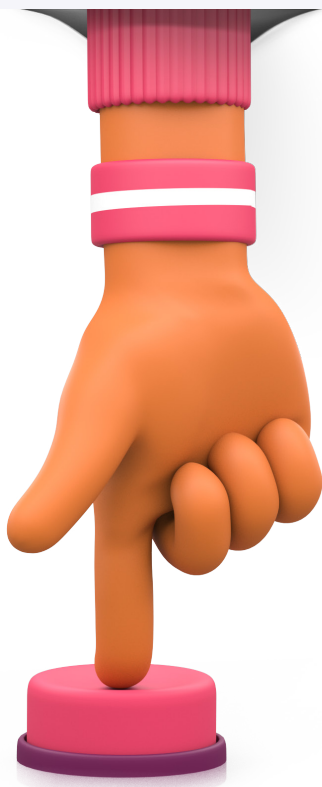


Create a to-do list and stick to it

Starting the day by listing the goals each team member wants to achieve is not only practical but helpful to increase productivity. It will teach employees how to prioritize tasks, delegate, share knowledge and save time, as well as reducing stress and the risks of burnout.

Respect breaks

Just because people are working from home, it doesn't mean that respecting break times becomes any less important. Regular fixed breaks for meals are crucial and employees must be sure to put down their work during their free time.

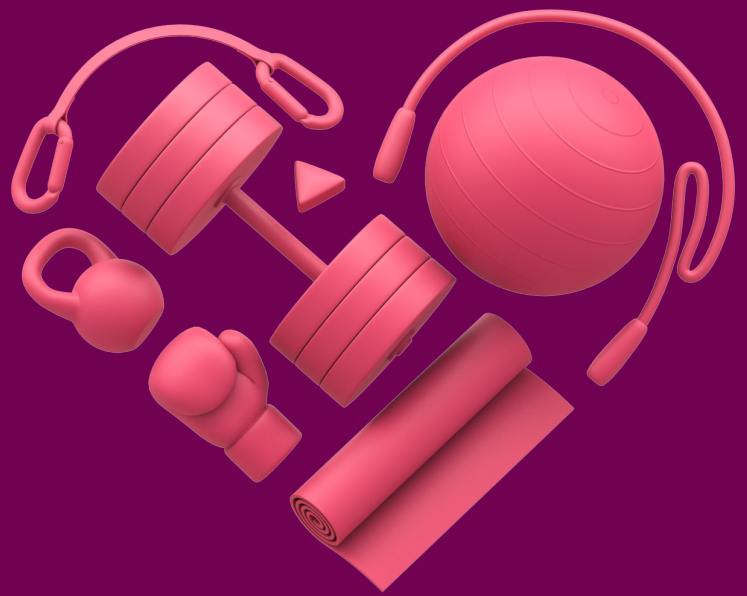


Knowing where to draw the line

Working from home can blur the lines between work and free time. Once the working day is done, it is crucial for employees to switch off and let their mind rest. Companies can play a helpful role in this regard, setting priorities, organizing tasks and encouraging people to make the most of their free time.

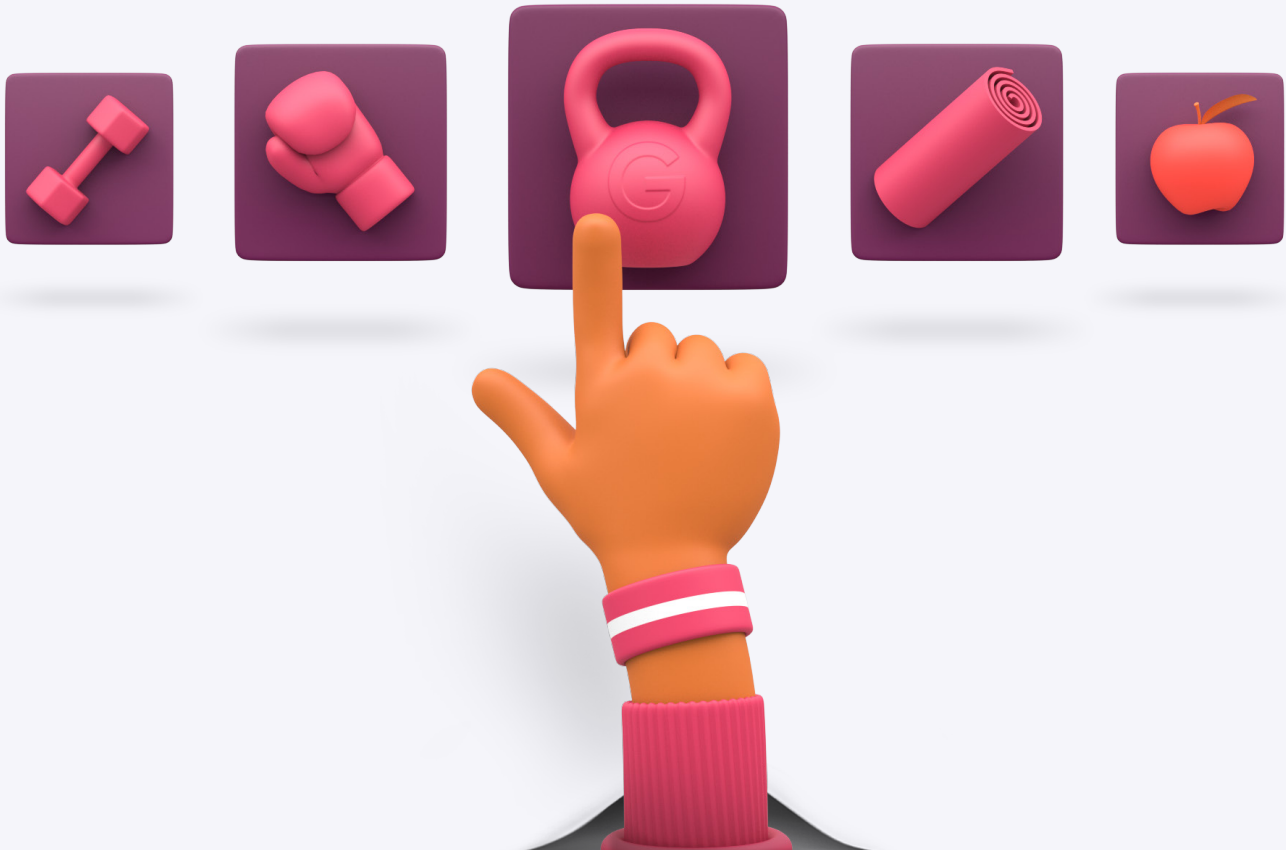
4. How to turn a home office into a welcoming environment

While working from home, it can be a challenge to find time to enjoy ourselves, stay healthy and pursue hobbies. Try to teach your employees some practical tips to fight boredom and enjoy quality time at home. For example:



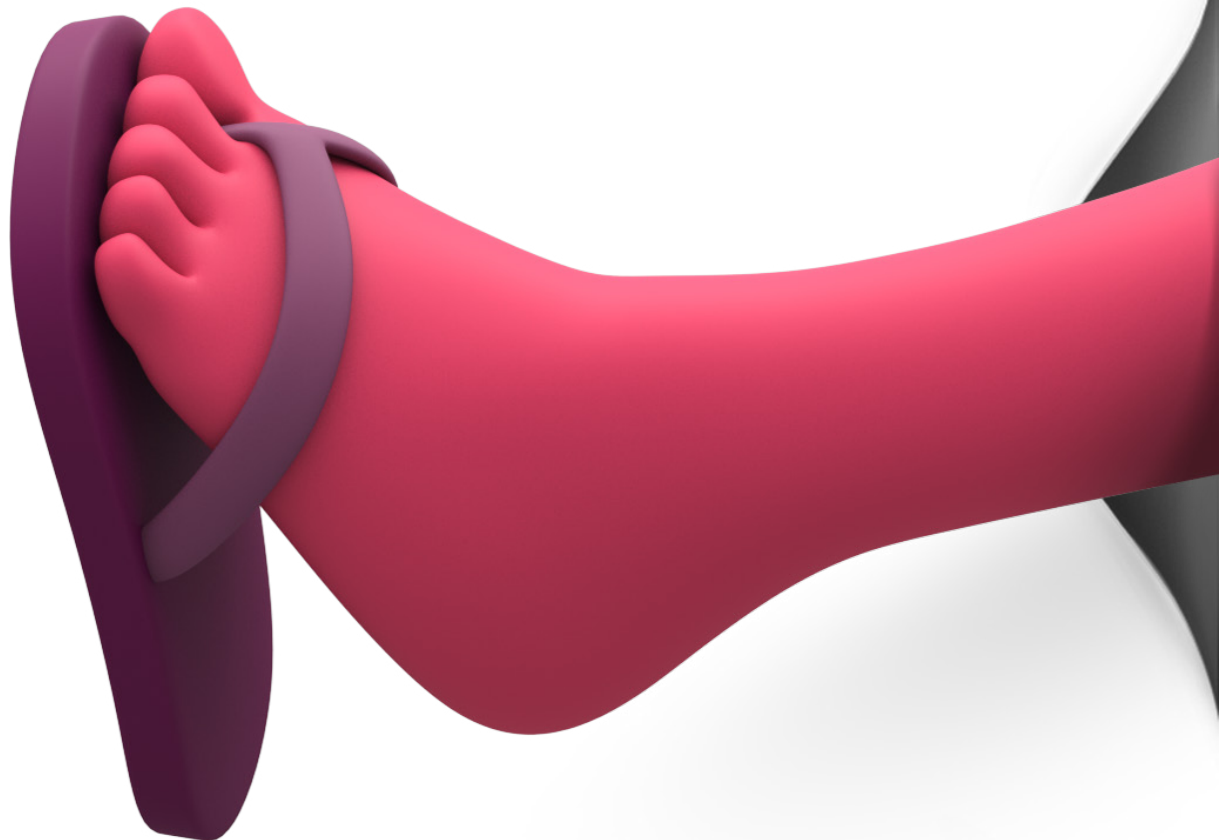
- ▶ **Follow a morning routine.** Set aside 30 minutes at the start of each day to make your bed, eat breakfast and do some light stretching. Give yourself enough time to wake up without having to rush.
- ▶ **Move your body.** Go for a walk or bike ride, or have a workout. Our bodies deserve the endorphins and vitamin D.
- ▶ **Read a book.** Dust off that pile of books on the shelf and dive into a good story.
- ▶ **Create a playlist.** Music changes any room. Design playlists with your favorite songs and hit play whenever you need a boost of happiness.
- ▶ **Host an online dinner party.** Decide on a menu and gather your friends online for a socially distanced dinner party. Just because you can't be in the same room, that doesn't mean you can't still have fun!





- ▶ **Pick up a new hobby.** Ever thought you had it in you to be an artist? A musician? A dressmaker? Listen to your inspiration and use your free time to pursue a new interest.
- ▶ **Work on your finances.** With everyone practicing social distancing, now is a great time to organize your finances and make plans for the future.
- ▶ **Start a journal.** Journaling is a proven way to ease anxiety, allowing you to let off steam by putting your thoughts to paper. You might learn something about yourself in the process!
- ▶ **Learn something new.** Is there a skill you've always wanted to have but never felt you had the time to pursue it? Now can be a great time to sign up for an online course and learn something new.
- ▶ **Make home improvements.** If you're spending all of your time at home, make your surroundings the best they can be! Look online for inspiration and awaken the interior designer in you.

- ▶ **Take up meditation.** From online yoga classes to mindfulness apps, there is a wealth of resources out there to introduce you to the world of meditation. Learning to focus on your breathing and clear your mind is a great skill to have in trying times.
- ▶ **Detox from your devices.** Today's technology allows us to stay connected 24-7 – but it can be difficult to switch off. Taking time away from your screens can help you disconnect from work and focus on yourself.
- ▶ **Take care of your mental health.** Your mental wellness should always be your top priority. Take the time during the week to check in on yourself, or book online sessions with a trained psychologist.
- ▶ **Go outside!** Try to get out of the house at least once a day. Tend to your garden, stretch your legs, take a bike ride, or just breathe in some fresh air.



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