



THE EMPLOYEE ENHANCEMENT NEWSLETTER



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EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

April
2020

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Effective Communication With Children

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COVID-19 Resources

Entertaining Kids During Coronavirus

How Parents Can Keep Kids Busy (and Learning) in Quarantine

<https://www.theatlantic.com/family/archive/2020/03/activities-kids-coronavirus-quarantine/608110>

13 things to keep kids entertained if quarantined for coronavirus

<https://eu.usatoday.com/story/tech/reviewedcom/2020/03/12/how-keep-kids-entertained-duringcoronavirus-quarantine/5012810002>

How to keep kids busy during coronavirus quarantine

<https://abcnews.go.com/GMA/Family/kids-busy-coronavirus-quarantine/story?id=69531272>

The Secret to Keeping Your Kids Happy, Busy and Learning if Their School Closes Due to Coronavirus

<https://time.com/5803373/coronavirus-kids-at-home-activities>

Coping with Home and Lone Working During Coronavirus

Coronavirus: How to protect your mental health

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-51873799>

How to cope with financial stress and anxiety during the coronavirus pandemic

<https://www.cnn.com/2020/03/16/how-to-cope-with-coronavirus-related-financial-stress-and-anxiety.html>

Wellbeing considerations for home working and self-isolation

<https://www.shponline.co.uk/lone-working/home-working>

Business Insider

<https://www.businessinsider.com/work-from-home-tips-health-2019-4>

<https://www.businessinsider.com/how-to-work-from-home-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak-2020-3>

Mental Health Tips

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/managing-stress-anxiety.html>

- World Health Organization

https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/coping-with-stress.pdf?sfvrsn=9845bc3a_2

Partners in Health

<https://www.pih.org/article/10-mental-health-tips-coronavirus-social-distancing>

Psychology Today

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/talking-about-health/202003/mental-health-in-time-pandemic>

Wired

<https://www.wired.com/story/how-to-stop-coronavirus-anxiety-spiral>

Homeworking for Beginners

Because of the spread of the novel coronavirus, COVID-19, many individuals are now telecommuting or homeworking for the first time. This disruption to your normal routine can be very stressful. Unanticipated distractions can make productivity while homeworking difficult.

Below are some tips that may help you adjust to working from home:

- Stick as closely as possible to your normal routine. You may not be leaving the house, but waking up at your usual time and completing your normal morning routine can help put you in the right mindset for work. This is especially important for families with children, as routines are important to the wellbeing of your kids.
 - Set time boundaries for your work, and stick to your normal working hours if possible. Don't work over your scheduled hours.
 - Have a designated space to complete your work in. Keep this space separate from where you spend your non-work time:
 - A clean, organized workspace can promote productivity. For some, setting up a home workspace in a similar manner to their regular workspace can be helpful. This way, when the workday is done, you can leave work behind by moving to a different area.
 - Set boundaries to discourage interruptions. Let family or housemates know when your work hours are and what your workspace will be. Noise-cancelling headphones can be helpful for tuning out distracting sounds.
 - Set realistic work goals for how much work you can complete while working from home and possibly caring for children who are also home from school.
- Technology is key. Make sure that you have the bandwidth to handle working from home. You may want to set up a schedule for internet time for the kids to avoid disrupting any video-conference meetings you need to attend.
 - Keep in constant communication! In this time of social distancing, people are connecting virtually. Use video conferencing or chat to stay in touch with your coworkers. A webcam is a great tool to keep you in contact with coworkers and make meetings easier.
 - Talk with your manager about their expectations and any limitations to your work while working from home.
 - Combat cabin fever with breaks. Taking breaks like you would in the workplace is important for both your sanity and your vision. Eyes need a break from screen time. Go outside for a short walk or spend time gardening.

Sources

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Robinson, B. (2020, March 14). 9 tips to be productive when working at home during COVID-19. Retrieved March 20, 2020, from <https://www.forbes.com>

Tirado, B. (2020, March 17). 5 tips working at home amid COVID-19. Retrieved March 20, 2020, from <https://www.psychologytoday.com>

Gaddis, A. (2020, March 23). Homeworking for beginners. Workplace Options: Raleigh, NC.

How to Talk to Children About COVID-19

Currently, reports of COVID-19, a coronavirus that originated in Wuhan, China, have been constant in the media. From social media to news sources on websites and television, the coverage of the pandemic is widely seen. The impacts of the current situation have led to some school and child care provider closures, quarantines, and bare shelves in grocery stores. For children, this can be overwhelming and difficult to understand.

Below are some suggestions on how to support and talk to your children about this coronavirus.

- Be reassuring, patient, and relaxed. Young children and adolescents may not understand the gravity of the current situation, which may cause them to feel anxiety, fear, confusion, or frustration. Providing comfort and assurance, as well as being available to your children during this tumultuous time is vital.
- Children may have questions regarding COVID-19. Allow them to ask these questions, which may relate to school closures, symptoms of the virus, changes in their daily routine, or things they see or hear from their friends or the media. Having an open discussion about this ever-changing situation may ease your children's concerns; however, it is also important to allow them to set their own pace in these discussions and not feel any pressure to talk if they do not want to.
- Your actions and words about COVID-19 can also have a major effect on your children. So, it's essential to be a positive model for them, and give them honest information despite what they may see or hear from other sources. Create an open forum for them to address how they may be feeling.
- What your children see in the news and on social media can also be a factor in how they handle the pandemic. Limiting your children's exposure to some news sources and social media outlets might be helpful in alleviating any stress your children may be feeling.

Establish and Maintain a Routine.

During this pandemic, many children around the world are home due to the closures of child care providers and schools. This disruption can throw a normal routine into disarray, but this does not have to be the case. Establishing and maintaining a schedule while at home can help keep your children occupied during this stressful event.

One way to help children establish a routine and develop an understanding of the risks involved with COVID-19 would be to put a focus on cleanliness and hygiene around your home with activities or chores. Putting focus on washing their hands thoroughly, cleaning commonly touched areas or surfaces (like doorknobs or appliances), and covering their coughs and sneezes may help them understand more of the effects of COVID-19 and how it relates to themselves, their family, and people across the world.

Sources

National Association of School Psychologists. (2020). *Talking to children about COVID-19 (coronavirus): A parent resource*. Retrieved March 20, 2020, from <https://www.nasponline.org>

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Everyday Exercise at Home

The easiest part of exercising is coming up with excuses not to do it. Sure, the goal is to exercise every day, but only 30 minutes of exercise three times a week can make an enormous difference in your physical and mental health. So for those of you who put all of your effort into "I don't have enough time," or "It'll be too hard," or "I'm just not the exercise type!" here are some ways to get started and pointers for making fitness a part of your everyday life at home. Check with your doctor before starting any new exercise program. It will all add up to a healthier you.

AT HOME EXERCISE

- **Pick an activity and start.** The first step really is the hardest. It's OK to start slowly.
- **Establish a routine** and make it part of a daily pattern.
- **Walk when you get home or after dinner.** Even a leisurely, 15-minute walk will be beneficial. A brisk 30-minute walk will give you a good cardiovascular workout. If you're more ambitious, try speed walking or head for the hills.
- **Use the stairs but "up the ante."** Running up and down stairs inside or outside your home for 10 to 20 minutes will lead to terrific results.
- **Leave the car at home.** For nearby errands, walk or ride a bike. Your destination is probably closer than you think.
- **After shopping, lift those grocery bags.** Take the handles with both hands and lift the full bag directly in front of you up to your chin 10 times.
- **Garden to your heart's content.** Mowing with a push mower, weeding, pruning, transplanting, and raking can make for a real workout.

- **Run around with the kids,** and see what happens to your heart rate after a half hour of active playtime.
- **Make the most of housework.** Put some music on, and move it. Do stretches while vacuuming, leg lifts while folding laundry, and rise onto the balls of your feet and then lower them while doing dishes.
- **When out with the stroller, stretch, and tone.** There are many exercises specifically geared for pushing a stroller.
- **Buy a jump rope,** and keep it where you can grab it while waiting for the kids to finish their homework or for a meal in the oven.
- **Go dancing instead of out to dinner.** Cardio Salsa for a date night, anyone?
- **Use a treadmill while watching TV.** Let your favorite programs improve your ratings. Fill those commercial breaks with stomach crunches and push-ups.
- **Lose the remotes.** Get up to change the TV channel or music on the stereo.
- **Work out with videos or DVDs.** Exercising this way is a great option for early morning or before bed. Keep a good supply so you won't get bored.
- **Get moving with a stationary bike.** Listening to your favorite music while you work out adds another stress-release layer to exercising.
- **Buy an exercise ball.** It's a simple piece of at-home gym equipment that can give you enormous workout flexibility.
- **Make a smart investment in a set of dumbbells.** Strength training combined with a cardiovascular workout equals total fitness. Increasing muscle allows the body to burn calories faster, and weight-bearing exercises help fight against osteoporosis.
- **Find a regular activity** you can commit to, and set a schedule but don't throw in the towel if something unexpected happens and temporarily puts you off course.
- **Make yourself try it once.** Whether it's swimming, biking, aerobics class, or a visit to a gym, try to expand your fitness horizons.
- **Exercise with friends,** and keep each other accountable.
- **Write down what you do.** A fitness log that includes your goals will validate, encourage, and inspire you.

Source: *Workplace Options. (Reviewed 2017). Everyday exercise. Raleigh, NC: Author.*

How to Choose a Tax Return Preparer

If you choose to have someone prepare your tax return, choose that preparer wisely. A paid tax return preparer is primarily responsible for the overall substantive accuracy of your return and, by law, is required to sign the return and include their preparer tax identification number (PTIN) on it. Although the tax return preparer always signs the return, you're ultimately responsible for the accuracy of every item reported on your return. Anyone paid to prepare tax returns for others should have a thorough understanding of tax matters and is required to have a PTIN. You may want to ask friends, coworkers, or your employer for help in selecting a competent tax return preparer.

Choose a tax return preparer you'll be able to contact in case the IRS examines your return and has questions regarding how your return was prepared. You can designate your paid tax return preparer or another third party to speak to the IRS concerning the preparation of your return, payment or refund issues, and mathematical errors. The third party authorization checkbox on IRS tax forms gives the designated party the authority to receive and inspect returns and return information for 1 year from the original due date of your return (without regard to extensions).

Steps You Should Take to Find a Tax Return Preparer

Most tax return preparers are professional, honest, and provide excellent service to their clients. However, dishonest and unscrupulous tax return preparers who file false income tax returns do exist. See *How to Make a Complaint* (<https://www.irs.gov/tax-professionals/make-a-complaint-about-a-tax-return-preparer>) if you have been financially impacted by a tax return preparer's misconduct or improper tax preparation practices. You should always check your return for errors to avoid potential financial and legal problems.

The following points will assist you when selecting a tax return preparer:

- Be wary of tax return preparers who claim they can obtain larger refunds than others can.
- Avoid tax return preparers who base their fees on a percentage of the refund or who offer to deposit all or part of your refund into their financial accounts.
- Ensure you use a preparer with a PTIN. Paid tax return preparers must have a PTIN to prepare all or substantially all of a tax return.
- Use a reputable tax professional who enters their PTIN on the tax return, signs the tax return, and provides you a copy of the return (as required).
- Consider whether the individual or firm will be around for months or years after filing the return to answer questions about the preparation of the tax return.
- Never sign a blank tax form.
- Check the person's credentials. Only attorneys, certified public accountants (CPAs), and enrolled agents can represent taxpayers before the IRS in all matters, including audits, collections, and appeals. Other tax return preparers who participate in the IRS Annual Filing Season Program have limited practice rights to represent taxpayers for audits of returns they prepared and signed.

Source: U.S. Internal Revenue Service (IRS). (Reviewed 2019, January 28). Tax topic number 254: How to choose a tax return preparer. Retrieved February 7, 2019, from <https://www.irs.gov/>