****

**Kim Taylor, Psychotherapist**

**Spirited Life Counselling & Therapy**

**Mental Health Tips While Working**

**From Home During Covid-19**

**Setting the scene**

During Covid-19 we have been asked to work from home. It feels like Groundhog day and it is hard to stay motivated given the current conditions. What can we do help our mental health and also stay motivated for work?

***handy tips to look after your mental health when working from home.***

**ONE:** Set your routine and structure.

* Set your routine and build structure into your day.
* Dress for work, start early, end on time.
* Have a set time for work and then switch off at the end of the day.
* Stay well groomed - do your hair / have a shave / keep good hygiene.

Why: We naturally feel fear and anxiety around contracting COVID 19 OR concerns of our family contracting the virus and the fear of death. Also fear of the unknown as we aren’t certain when life will return to normal. Having a routine and structure give you back some safety as you have some way of planning and controlling your life and time.

**TWO:** Have a daily emotional check-in.

* During this stressful time of Covid-19 there are many loses and worries.
* It is normal to feel sadness at the loss of work, employment, business closures and anger and frustration toward being forced to quarantine.
* If you are finding you can’t get on with your work, you are likely to be worried about something.
* Check in with yourself;
  + *How are you feeling?*
  + *What is the feeling about?*
  + *What is the reason it is worrying you?*
* It helps to know and accept your feelings and validate them.
* It’s OK to feel and express your feelings.
* Once you validate how you are feeling, your brain will not be hijacked by the fear and your *‘thinking brain’* will come back online.
* Express sadness by watching a sad movie and having a good cry and /or journal.
* Express anger by going for a fats work, stomping the dirt in the garden or punching a punching bag.
* When we express our emotion it dissipates and we can then feel joy again.

**THREE:** Stay connected to your tribe.

* Connection helps with motivation.
* Stay linked in with work colleagues and team.
* Use Zoom / Skype / House Party/ so you are seen and you can see them.
* This motivates you to dress for work rather than stay in PJ’s or gym gear.
* We are made for connection as social beings.
* Feeling like we belong helps us to feel safer when we feel we are in our tribe.

**FOUR:** Create and curate yourspace.

* Create a work space dedicated for work.
* Keep your work space away from relaxation or calm spaces like loungeroom or bedroom so there is a mental cue of *‘now it’s time to relax’.*

Include some soothing items – comfortable chair, aromatherapy oil diffuser, favourite photo / painting.

**FIVE:** Have an *‘ON’* and *‘OFF’* switch.

* Stop work in the evenings or a set period in the day.
* Our nervous systems are wired for being *‘ON’* and working under stress which is a level we need to function well at.
* In turn we need an *‘OFF’* switch, so we can calm, turn off, relax and give our brain and body a rest
* Down tools; Computer and Smart Phone and switch off.
* Keep up with Covid-19 updates but then switch them off for the evening.
* Try a fun activity – playing cards with the family, ‘Zoom’ a friend, do a yoga class, cook a favourite meal, start a project or walk the dog.

***Remember, there is always someone you can talk to if you need support.***