

TIPS ON WORKING OR STUDYING FROM HOME FOR AUTISTIC YOUNG ADULTS

Introduction

In the COVID19 world, we have additional needs and expectations to be able to work remotely. For many autistic young adults, who have been adjusting to new work or study environments, this change has been a big disruption. This document curates some useful resources for those working or studying from home – to assist you in remaining calmer and being more productive. These tips may also prove helpful for those supporting autistic young adults.

General tips

Many of the methods you use at work or in study to stay on task are applicable in the home. Avoiding distractions and staying on task are key challenges for anyone working or studying at home – but perhaps more so for autistics. Materials can be found on-line through a quick search - but [here](#) are some you may find really effective. Some key highlights include:

- Set formal work hours and regular routine
- Plan your work
- Show your availability
- Reward yourself for your work efforts
- Take regular breaks
- Stay off social media

Mindfulness in your workday

It is hard to avoid all distractions; but as conscious, mindful humans we have the ability to control our own minds to achieve what we want to. Below are two key phrases that may resonate for you – from advocates and specialists in the field of mindfulness:

“Choose your distractions mindfully”

[Rasmus Hougaard](#), Author, Founder and Managing Director of [Potential Project](#)

You don't have to make every minute of your workday 100% productive, but you could aim to make every minute of your *work time* productive. We all need down-time, so be kind to yourself, and consciously plan and decide on the times and things which you will *allow* to distract you: a hug with a dog, preparing a cup of tea, a couple of minutes of meditation, even just closing your eyes for ten seconds while you take three deep breaths.

“Don't guard your time and squander your attention.”

[Sam Harris](#), Author, philosopher, neuroscientist, [meditation and mindfulness](#) teacher.

We all get distracted, but you can train yourself to be aware of when your mind is wandering off. And through practice you can get better at stopping it earlier. Sam's [Waking up app](#) is a great way to try out mindfulness meditation, which can help train us to be more aware of and in control of our minds and our emotions.

For some autistics, mindfulness may be less effective than for neurotypicals. We therefore encourage you to look at strategies that have worked for you in the past and try those.

Work hygiene

Some specific suggestions for those on the Autism Spectrum (though again they can apply to many people) are below:

- Try to create a regular place for work at home which is free from distractions
- Create a regular work schedule, just like you would at work.
- Plan and schedule your day and your activities into your calendar, with reminders to start tasks.
- Schedule time for breaks, which could include meditation, walks, or some other sort of exercise.
- Make contact with your work colleagues or supervisors via remote means (Skype, Teams, Zoom, [Life Sherpa](#))
- Make sure people know you are online
- Get involved in online “morning teas” and other social events
- Get involved in seminars offered by your support staff or organisation
 - These can help you to stay in touch with others, and to continue your training and personal development – including your understanding of yourself, your preferred learning methods and your own brand of autism – which shares qualities with many other’s but is unique to you.

Workload management

If you run out of work to do, *Don’t Panic*. People understand that working remotely can cause ebbs and flows in workload management.

- Plan your work out and tell your manager or supervisor ahead of time (where you can) if you think you will run out of work.
- If you run out of work, find yourself some training to do online. It’s best to plan this out in advance as part of your development plan, then you can go to it any time you run out of work.
- If you are struggling to choose something, ask your supervisor or a colleague or supporter for suggestions.

Distractions

Some distractions and suggestions for resolution may include:

- Using the same PC you game on or socialise on
 - Shut down the apps you don’t need during your workday to avoid unnecessary pop-ups and notifications
- Being in a place with others’ movements attract your eyes
 - Try to find yourself a space where you don’t see these movements or put up screens to minimize impact on your visual field
- Worries about data usage
 - If you have significant data limitations or costs, talk with your supervisor or supporter about this. There may be some other options for you.
- Noise around the house
 - Try noise cancelling headphones or music to mask other noises
 - Try planning with your house mates when certain activities will occur, so as to reduce noise in core work or class times, for everyone’s benefit.
- Looking after family members.
 - If this is part of what you have to do, try to schedule these things so you can get chunks of work / study done in between.

- Conflicts in instructions
If you've been told to do something, but you need to be in the work office to do it...
 - Contact your supervisor and discuss the matter
 - Do not go to work unless your supervisor authorises you to
- Worries about COVID19 or anything else – concern and anxiety are normal for everyone in these times
 - Discuss your worry or anxiety strategies with your support people and care team
 - Exercise the strategies

Six tips for working remotely – refer to a simple set of tips in the presentation attached at the end of this document.

OTHER RESOURCES FOR AUTISTIC YOUNG ADULTS AND THEIR SUPPORTERS



NEURODIVERSITYHUB

<https://www.neurodiversityhub.org/>

<https://www.neurodiversityhub.org/resources-for-employers>

4D. STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING REMOTE AUTISTIC EMPLOYEES.

An extremely useful, and very topical, [webinar](#) by Integrate Advisors - Tracy Powell-Rudy, VP Corporate Engagement, and Marcia Scheiner, President. Also a downloadable tip sheet resource. [Tips for managing autistic employees](#)

<https://www.neurodiversityhub.org/resources-for-students>

SECTION 8. ANXIETY

A. NEURODIVERSE SELF-CARE: MANAGING ANXIETY THROUGH CONNECTION

Strategies to enact self-care through 'connection' - written by neurodiverse individuals for neurodiverse individuals

https://www.neurodiversityhub.org/s/Managing_Anxiety_Through_Connection_02b_Final.pdf

B. NEURODIVERSITY WELLNESS: LINKS TO SOME GREAT COVID-19 RESOURCES

Links to some resources on the Stanford ND project website - including a webinar from Dr Janie Hong: "Life Interrupted - Managing Stress and Anxiety during a Global Pandemic".

<https://med.stanford.edu/neurodiversity/wellness.html>

BE YOUR BEST <https://www.beyourbest.academy>

We understand this is a trying time for everyone, so we have compiled some great resources, activities and thought-provoking text to help you navigate this crisis with greater ease. The "Lockdown survival pack" will suit both adults (18+) and parents with children aged 12-17. There is plenty of relevant activities and interesting texts in this mini course.

THE BLACK DOG INSTITUTE

<https://blackdoginstitute.org.au/>

The Black Dog Institute is dedicated to understanding, preventing and treating mental illness. The institute has recently launched a new 'Steeling the Mind' webinar series.

<https://blackdoginstitute.org.au/education-training/community-and-schools/covid-19-webinars>

AUTISTICA / UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON

<https://www.autistica.org.uk>

<https://www.autistica.org.uk/what-is-autism/coronavirus>

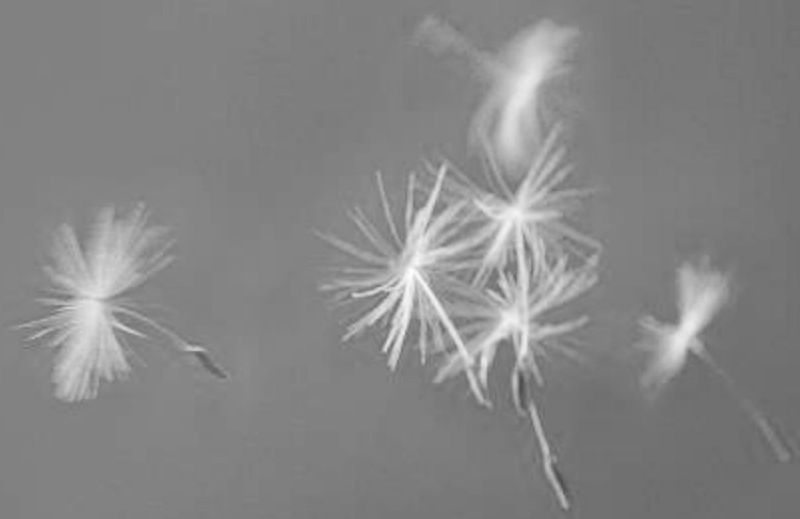
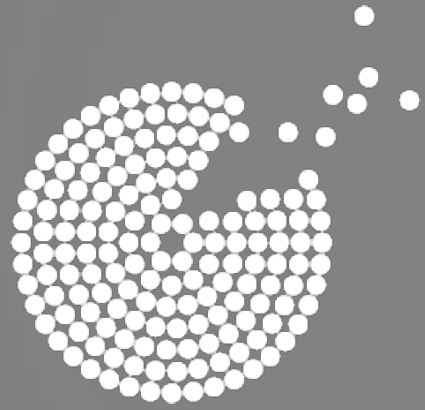
BEYOND BLUE

<https://beyondblue.org.au/>

Beyond Blue also has many valuable resources – including some specifically about working during the COVID19 epidemic.

<https://coronavirus.beyondblue.org.au/>

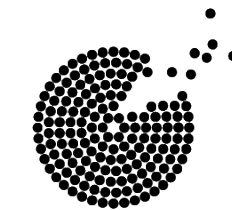
April 21, 2020



DXC Dandelion

6 Tips for Testers to Work Remotely during the COVID-19 outbreak

"Understand that this is a marathon. If you sprint at the beginning, you will run out of energy by the end of the month"



1. Emotionally prepare for this health crisis to continue for 6 to 12 months, followed by a slow recovery.
2. If the health crisis ends sooner, be pleasantly surprised.
3. Right now, work toward establishing serenity, productivity, and wellness under constant challenging conditions.



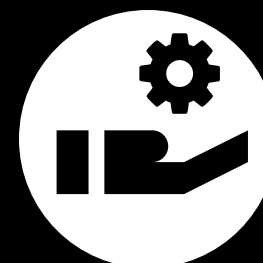
Tip 1: Dedicate a work space and make it your own

Tip 2: Pace yourself and Stay Positive



Tip 3: Dress as if you were going to the office

Tip 4: Secure Technology Access

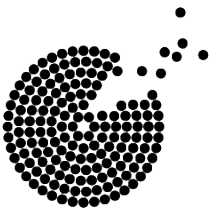


Tip 5: Stay connected with colleagues

Tip 6: Avoid Distractions and Keep Up Productivity

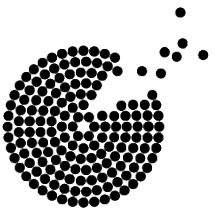
Additional Information

Tip 1: Dedicate a work space and make it your own



When working from an office, commuting to and from the office helps the brain shift into “work mode”.

- At home, you can create that same mental shift by dedicating a spot for working (Home-Office)
- Give the Home-Office some personality by adding framed photos, toys, plant whatever you like, be creative, make it your own.

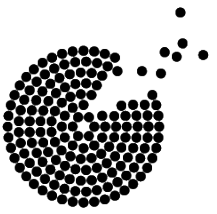


Tip 2: Pace yourself and Stay Positive

The work week is a marathon – not a sprint. If you sprint at the beginning, you will run out of energy by the end of the work week.

Here are some suggestions:

- Encourage gentle, regular body stretching of back, hands, shoulders, hips and neck
- Walk the dog before starting work, at lunch, early afternoon, and after work. It's a great mental break." Not to mention healthy.
- Do ten push-ups or hold yourself in plank pose. Pick up your guitar. Make your grocery list. Look after your stamina (and your team) will thank you.
- Alternatively, if possible use a Fitbit or equivalent to remind you to exercise.



Tip 3: Dress as if you were going to the office

(almost)

Full-blown business attire isn't necessary, but do make yourself presentable. You're going to end up on a lot of video calls. More importantly, getting dressed is another important part of the mental shift into work mode.

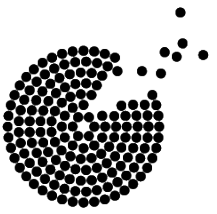
But don't stop there. Establish a morning routine that is as close as possible to your routine when you're going into an office. Here's mine:

- **6:30 am** - Wake up, brush teeth, exercise (Table Tennis Practice/Gym)
- **7:15 am** - Brew coffee, shower, get dressed (including hair), unload the dishwasher, help family members get ready.
- **8:00 am** - Catch up with news and have breakfast.
- **8:30/8:45 am** - Start work.

Rituals allow us to make transitions with minimal mental and emotional turbulence.



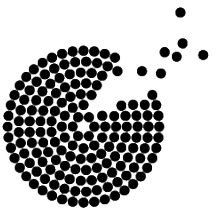
Tip 4: Ensure Secure Technology Access Wherever you work



The first and foremost part of the working-from-home plan is to make sure we all have a secure way for accessing the internal DHA Systems.

Fortunately DHA has given us Citrix Soft-tokens to access internal systems (Test Environment such as Online Account, ICSE, TRIPS).

We are expected to safeguard technology access to DHA Internal Systems at all times.



Tip 5: Stay connected with colleagues

Use communication tools to ensure connection between colleagues.

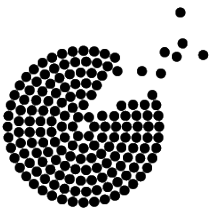
When team members are sitting apart from their peers, effective communication can be a problem.

To maintain stable outcomes, keeping communication flows in a team is highly important, as critical details can easily be overlooked through text messaging.

There is a wide variety of tools for communication that fit perfectly to the current situation.

- For online video conference meetings (Scrum Ceremonies) we'll use Skype Personal Edition
- For daily work-related activities (Test Scripting, Reviews, Execution and general questions) we'll use DHA Skype for business edition.

Tip 6: Avoid Distractions and Keep up Productivity



- Set goals for the day and break up the workload in smaller chunks.

For example: In **the morning** I want to achieve XX and in **the afternoon** I want to achieve XX.

- Keep track of what you're achieving by using a Kanban Board.

| My Kanban Board | | | | |
|-----------------|-------|-------------|------|----------|
| Backlog | To-Do | In-Progress | Done | Comments |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |

- Take regular breaks.