

Making Space

Separating Work from Home

Suddenly working from home can mean losing the practices and transitions that are protective factors for vicarious trauma and general work stress. Here are some strategies to separate work from home when they are all in the same place.

1

PHYSICAL WORKSPACE

Do you have a quiet corner? An unused table? Designate a spot in your home where work - and ideally only work - takes place. When you sit there, you are working, when you leave, you are home. Lighting or scent can also be used to set the scene for work.

2

EMOTIONAL WORKSPACE

No physical spot? Put your work things in a bag and create a ritual of intentionally pulling them out to start your day, putting them away to end your day. Use "going to work" and "home from work" language to emotionally separate the two.

3

KEEP YOUR ROUTINE

The commute is far shorter, but you can still set your alarm, take a shower, get fully dressed (including shoes), drink that coffee on workdays to signal to yourself that work is about to begin. Take those shoes off and do other "I'm home" tasks to end the day.

4

SET A SCHEDULE

Particularly in crisis, it can be easy to allow work and home to blend. Identify specific designated work times or, at the very least, some designated not-work times. Let clients and colleagues know your schedule to the extent it is appropriate to do so.

5

TAKE A WALK

End your day by shutting down your computer, leaving your home, and taking a walk around the block to give yourself the necessary time to process and compartmentalize your work.



6

TAKE DEEP BREATHS

Deep breathing has a real physiological effect of creating calm. Take a deep breath between tasks and also as you transition from home to work and back again. This is especially helpful when working and also attending to others in your home.

7

MAINTAIN TIME OFF

Whether it falls on your usual days off or not plan and protect time off and completely away from work. The temptation is strong to "just check" but it will all be there when you get back.

8

USE YOUR SUPERVISOR

Your supervisor can be an accountability partner in ensuring work/home separation and addressing vicarious trauma. Talk to them about strategies (and struggles) and get their input and support.