



Change is hard! This includes necessary or required change experienced when you move from working in the office to working remotely. Of all the changes you'll make as you move from the traditional office to the remote office, the psychological adjustments may be the most surprising. Most people understand the need for a comfortable workspace, but **much of your success or failure as a remote employee happens inside your head space**. Use these three tips to set yourself up for success in your new remote role.

1. Choose a Work Schedule — and Stick to It

Many remote jobs have flexible work schedules, which are both a blessing and a curse. On the one hand, you can get your hair cut on a Tuesday afternoon when the salon isn't busy. On the other, you might find yourself working late into the night because there's no one around to tell you to stop. In Buffer's 2019 "State of Remote Work" survey, while 10% of respondents admitted that they wrestle with distractions at home, 22% identified unplugging from work as their biggest struggle.

Aristotle once said, "Through discipline comes freedom." Before you can fend off distractions or unplug at the end of the day, you must have a defined business day. Even if your new role comes with a high degree of flexibility, create a schedule — and stick to it. It doesn't have to be a traditional 9-5 schedule. Early risers may like to start work early so they can finish early, while others may decide that a mid-day start works best for them. Keep in mind that you may find it easier to work at certain times. For example, you wouldn't expect to receive a quick answer from the accounting team in the middle of the night.

Once you craft your work schedule, build in accountability. Include your hours in your email signature, in your voicemail and on the company instant messaging platform. At the beginning of your remote career, you may need extra structure to help you stick to your schedule. Consider signing up for a class or making dinner plans with friends. The activity itself doesn't matter so long as it motivates you to leave your desk.

Successful remote workers have mastered self-discipline in their home office. Until you reach that point, rely on your self-imposed constraints. Your ability to "show up" to work on time — and leave on time — will help your boss trust that they made the right hiring decision when they brought you on board.

2. Establish Firm Boundaries with Friends and Family

Remote work predates the internet — traveling salespeople have been around since the invention of money — but the percentage of the employed population who work from home is still low. Remote workers often find that

when they say, “I work from home,” their friends and relatives hear, “I am unemployed and looking for something to do.”

People who never called when you worked in a traditional office may ask you to pick up groceries or attend school functions in the middle of your workday. Your spouse may interrupt a meeting to ask where you keep the salt. A steady stream of interruptions can destroy your ability to focus at a time when you’re trying to learn your new job.

To be happy and productive in your remote role, set boundaries with family and friends. First, make sure they know your work hours. Then, explain what you can and can’t do during those hours.

Keep in mind that you and your loved ones will need time to adjust to your new situation. You may need to work at an alternate location for a few hours every week until everyone becomes accustomed to your new status as “visible but unavailable.” You may need to be strategic about picking up your phone and, if your office door has a lock, use it. Retraining your family can feel like an uphill battle at times, but your effort will pay off in improved concentration and productivity.

3. Set up Your Support Structure

Even the most seasoned remote workers can occasionally feel as if the walls are closing in on them, but remote workers can feel this way especially when they’re first starting out. You may spend the first few weeks reveling in the quiet of your home office, only to discover a few months down the line that you’re lonely. The good news is that you can set up a social support structure from day 1 to help when you feel isolated.

Savvy remote workers build a support structure inside and outside of work. Sometimes, you need to talk to a trusted colleague who understands the particular pressures you face at your company. If your employer sets aside time to socialize, attend those events. If you have a shared instant messaging platform, be sure to join discussions. In this way, you will build strong relationships when things are going well and know who to turn to when they aren’t.

It’s helpful to stay connected to the physical world outside of work. Join a book club, a professional organization or a game night at your local pub or library. Volunteer. If you have a pet, a child or a hobby, there’s probably a group that meets to discuss the topic. Attend different events until you find your tribe.

Remote work provides an unparalleled opportunity to build an independent life, but it does come with challenges. Set yourself up for success by creating a reasonable schedule, establishing boundaries with your loved ones and building a support structure for the tough times. You may soon find that you couldn’t imagine working any other way.