Hybrid Work

Six Dimensions of Wellbeing: A Work From Home Checklist

A healthy, engaged and productive work environment starts with conversations about people's needs.

Read 7 mins

This article is part of our Steelcase 360 series Making Distance Work about working remotely.

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Whether you have always been on a co-located team or are a veteran of remote work, these are new circumstances and the old rulebook doesn't quite help.

The change has been sudden, in a sustained moment of uncertainty, and has disrupted employee routines and support structures. People who are used to working from home are not necessarily used to their homes being a coworking facility for the whole family. People who are used to living alone are not necessarily used to being alone all week, around the clock. Teams who are used to connecting virtually are not used to doing so while worrying about the future and their loved ones that they cannot reach.

Team leaders have critical roles to play in helping their team stay engaged and focused. People's ability to work well together as a team requires them being physically, cognitively and emotionally well. In our day-to-day routines, we have learned to fine-tune our surroundings, processes and habits to find our productive balance. This has been thrown into disarray, and you can help people by having conversations about their needs and how to adjust their individual and teamwork practices to create a new balance.

To that end, here is a checklist based on the six dimensions of wellbeing that Steelcase WorkSpace Futures researchers identified for establishing a healthy, engaged and productive workplace. Whether you lead a team or are a member of a team, these are good topics of conversation to make sure everyone is thinking holistically about their wellbeing.

VITALITY

As we know, staying healthy requires sleep, a balanced diet, exercise and an adequate, safe environment. Being contained at home reduces our options. Ask people to think about the following:

Do you have a space at home where you can work comfortably, in terms of posture and noise levels? If it's not ideal, are there small creative adjustments you could make to improve it?

Tips

- Build in time to move, stretch or do some chair yoga. Changing postures is even more important when your workstation is not as ergonomic as you would like.
- Try to walk or pace during calls if possible. Team leaders should share that they are doing this to create permission for others. Not only is it good for our bodies, movement stimulates our attention, stabilizes mood and helps us retain information over the long term.
- Make sure to take time to look out the window, get fresh air, look at your plants or pictures of nature. We know natural elements re-energize us and increase our wellbeing.
- Establish clear time boundaries for work so that you are not connected and thinking about work around the clock.
- If you find yourself compulsively snacking, you might just be subconsciously trying to avoid the task you just thought about. It’s a mechanism our brains use to save energy by not thinking about the hard stuff. Take note of each time you feel like getting up, what you were working on and what your last thought was. Think about how to overcome that barrier so that it’s off your figurative plate.

MINDFULNESS

Mindfulness has become synonymous with meditation, but it's much more than that. It's about being attentive in the present moment, whether it's listening closely to what someone is saying, or listening closely to your own body's needs and your emotions. Practicing mindfulness helps us become more aware of what helps us feel better and can actually boost our moods and immune system.

Are you able to be present with what you are doing or who you are speaking to?

Tips

- When you feel yourself getting anxious and worried, focus on observing the details of what you are seeing, smelling, hearing and touching. Or try breathing slowly and taking the time to exhale. This will activate your parasympathetic nervous system, which triggers the healing mechanisms of our body.
- Try to get into the flow of work. Losing the sense of time while engaged in an activity is a natural high that drives us all to practice and master new skills.

AUTHENTICITY

Increasingly, people want to be able to be themselves at work and not hide behind a mask. However, for many, this new working arrangement might expose them more than they would like — video conferencing can feel suddenly too intimate, as colleagues can see into our homes and relationships more than they can when we work in the office. People might feel like they are letting team members down if they have to take care of young children instead of being in the meeting or can't deliver the originally agreed-upon deadline. Consider discussing:

How do I feel about having virtual meetings from my home?

How is my work schedule disrupted, and how does it need to be adjusted to fit this new reality?

Tips

- Team leaders should share their own struggles with their team, so people know they have room to be fallible as well. Emphasize these are unusual times, and it's okay to figure out together how to be productive.
- Think about what you could adjust to make it more comfortable to do remote video and calls, such as not using the camera for some discussions, setting up a camera-friendly zone, defining specific hours in which you know you won't be disturbed.

BELONGING

Feeling connected to and cared for by other people is a fundamental human need. Social distancing and isolation over time will impact wellbeing, and for many will eliminate the daily informal interactions that they were used to.

What are the interactions you used to look forward to and are now missing?

Tips

- Build in buffer-time in meetings to chat and check in before getting down to work.
- Schedule virtual informal chats and coffees with colleagues, and not just official meetings.
- Connect virtually with loved ones in the evening.
- Set up team chats for updates so people feel connected to the greater community.
- Find ways to connect people to the larger organization so they see we are all in this together.

MEANING

One of the most important elements to feel well on a day-to-day basis at work is to know that your work is building toward something and helping others. This can be difficult to see when working remotely and solely on devices. Explore ways to make your work more tangible.

What gives you the most satisfaction from your work on a daily basis? How has this new situation changed your ability to get that satisfaction? How might you find new creative ways to obtain that satisfaction?

Tips

- Create a virtual board for monitoring tasks and progress for your projects.
- Have regular check-ins to share where you are, what challenges you are facing and celebrate what you've accomplished.
- Write down your project title at the top of a sheet of paper, and each day, write the date and what you've accomplished underneath, even if it's only a small step forward.
- Think about what really motivates you to get to work each day, write it on a sheet of paper and pin it up next to your computer.

OPTIMISM

In these highly uncertain and constraining times, we can feel anxious and helpless. It's important not to give in to that sentiment, and remember we still have opportunities to make the most of the situation.

Is there anything in particular you are struggling with? How could you, your family or we as a team make it better?

Tips

- Every day, note three things you are grateful for.
- Make a practice of helping out someone else in need. Research shows that helping others actually causes us to feel better and reduces our heart rate.

There is no right or wrong. These are suggestions individuals can explore to find what they respond to best. Leaders can encourage their teams to share their ideas with each other. And above all, remember to be kind and forgiving to yourself and everyone else — we'll get through this together.

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