A person is shown from the side, sitting at a desk and working on a laptop. The laptop screen displays a dashboard with various charts and graphs. On the desk, there is a white cup of coffee, a notebook with a pen, and a small potted plant. A large blue curved graphic element is overlaid on the left side of the image.

# COLLECTED TIPS FOR WORKING REMOTELY



**WE EMPOWER**  
**LEADERS LLC**  
Mastermind Leader, Coach and Public Speaker





There are so many different articles on working remotely, especially as more and more businesses are allowing their employees to socially distance themselves and work remotely. I have taken tips and tricks from a variety of sources and have distilled them into two categories: general good ideas for anyone and helpful tips for those who run teams.

Overall, I saw frequent recommendations for allowing time to adjust to the situation, and for compassion. These are stressful times and everyone has different ways of handling that stress. In addition, for many, working from home is completely new - they will need time to adapt and get comfortable in their new environment. It takes time to adjust to new places.

The reasons for the stress are varied. For some people, the isolation is very hard. Others are now in a house full of people and distractions.

People have had to postpone or forgo important events. Many are separated from loved ones. And almost everyone feels the overall stress of the virus and the daily reports of the latest consequences. This stress has the potential to have an impact on everyone's productivity, including yours! Understanding and addressing that up front will be helpful, especially if you set up support and systems to help with motivation and productivity, both for your team and for yourself.

Thank you to Raj Kapur, a 10 year veteran of working remotely and also managing director of the all remote **&Marketing team**, for adding many of these valuable tips.

The best overall site that I found comes from **Gitlab**, which has always worked globally and remotely. They have many links to articles they have written over the years on every remote topic imaginable.



# OVERALL TIPS



## Create a Personal Workspace conducive to your productivity and your work/life balance

---

- If possible, work in a room with a closed door. If you are working with others, make it clear when you are working to cut down on distractions. Headphones can be very helpful in blocking out noise and for being on video calls.
- Make the space as comfortable as possible. If you are a company owner and you have the capacity, consider a budget for a good chair, laptop, etc. for employees who are suddenly working at home.

## Structure Your Day to create some sort of routine

---

- Although it may not be the same when you went into the office every day, getting into a rhythm for most people provides beneficial structure and predictability.
- **Time blocking** is very helpful. Make sure to add breaks to those time blocks. If possible, get outside. At the least, stand up and move around to get your blood flowing. Sitting is the new smoking, so allow yourself time to get up and move.
- Create your to do lists and goals proactively to increase your productivity. Many recommend setting up your tasks **the night before** or in the morning to stay focused and efficient.
- Dress for work. While some may be able to be efficient in their pajamas, the overwhelming advice was to dress professional yet comfortably. It's too easy to end of working all day and wind up in your pajamas at 5pm. This is particularly helpful when following the next suggestion.
- Make sure that you set a clear line between when you are working and when you are not. Suggestions included changing your clothes, hanging a sign on your door, and having regular hours. Setting clear boundaries between your working and non-working hours will allow you to recharge guilt free. When you are done working, be done – sign out, leave your workspace and turn off.



## Avoid Distractions

- While we don't have the water cooler chat to distract us, there are many other things that can take our attention off our work. I always advise people turn off their notifications when working. That includes email and text notifications, along with family or roommate interruptions.
- If your home has distractions – laundry, dusty corners, kids, pets – do your best to ignore them or get them out of the way. A closed door is particularly useful for this. Here is a [short article](#) on creating a clutter free workplace for those of us who work better in an organized space.

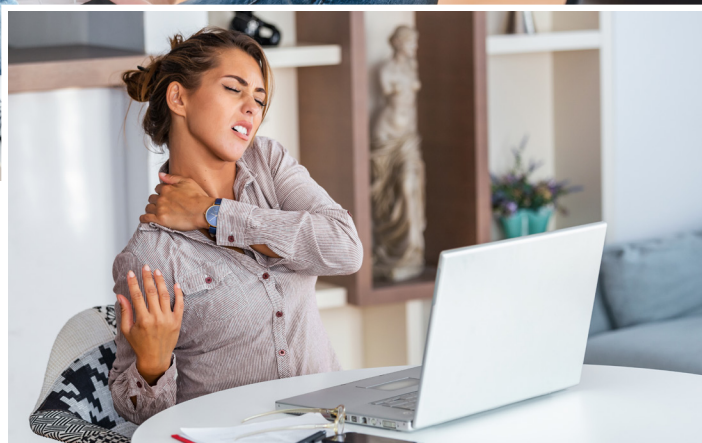
## Video Conferencing Tools are essential

Of course, we all wish we had bought stock in **Zoom**! While there are other video conferencing systems out there, it seems that almost everyone has embraced Zoom as the best alternative to face to face meetings of all kinds. This is the easiest way I have found to feel connected to others.

- **Go To Meeting** is another widely used option.
- **Slack** now has video conferencing.
- **Facebook Messenger** is particularly useful for family and friends. We taught my elderly mother how to use Messenger and it's been invaluable through her isolation!

When using any video tool, it's helpful for others to make sure that you are clearly lit and visible. Check the lighting and adjust if needed. Be aware of the message and impact of the background as that will affect the impression you make on the call. Have headphones and be ready to mute yourself in case you have background noise.

I want to mention the telephone here as well. There are times when just picking up the phone and calling someone is the simplest way to connect with someone, even if it's just to say hi, how are you. Also, sometimes intent gets lost in translation and a phone call is the easiest way to get to the point.



## Maintain and Attend to Your Health

While this seems obvious, I think it bears mentioning. This includes regular exercise and sleeping at least 7 hours a night if possible. For many people, being at home with food handy and available is an ongoing temptation, so limiting snack food in the house and snack times might be helpful. One suggestion that I saw was to use food as a reward for getting work done, which could work for some people.

Gitlab dedicated [an entire page](#) filled with helpful suggestions about combating isolation and stress while working remotely. There are too many to mention here – it's an impressive list.

Make sure to do something that is fun! **Laughter** is a proven stress reduction tool.

## Have Consistent Support – a buddy or someone you touch base with regularly

This applies to both individuals and to those who work with others. It's particularly important for people who work independently. Even extreme introverts benefit from knowing someone cares about them. Social distancing has left us without the regular touch points with others. As **social creatures** we need human contact. Pay special attention to those who suffer from anxiety and depression as the **experts are predicting** that these symptoms will increase for many. If you are one of those people, please ask for help when you need it! There are so many people willing to help. And remember, you're not alone.





# FOR MANAGING TEAMS

## Communication is key

Meetings are essential to keeping people connected and informed. When possible, do video meetings with people on screen. Body language is an important communication tool. However, be careful of scheduling too many meetings or of running meetings that meander. Set up a shared agenda if possible. Respect the scheduled start and end times.

Set communication rules. There will be times when communication can spiral out of control in email, text, slack or other non-verbal channel. Have triggers for when those situations need to move over to the phone or video to minimize tension and miscommunication. Pick up the phone to cut to the chase.

One **suggestion from Gitlab** was to keep a video channel open at all times to allow informal connections. You may not want to do this all the time but you could set up a couple of hours a day for this, allowing people to drop in and out as needed, or to meet people there. If your team is on Slack, perhaps you create a "random" channel for asking "What podcasts are people listening to" or "anyone have any go-to, simple pantry meals?" Remember, everyone is human and folks like to connect.

Make sure that the introverts don't get overlooked. Especially in larger meetings where people become a small picture on the screen, it may be harder for some people to speak up. Creating some sort of round robin for certain meetings will help everyone have a say. Sometimes the &Marketing Team will cold call people and let each person who speaks call on the next person. It's a good way to make sure that everyone gets a chance to be heard.

Brainstorming virtually is a bit more challenging but it can be done. **This article** had some really good tips for how to do that effectively. (See the idea for the "random" Slack Channel above. Maybe you create a "brainstorming" channel, too!)

Set up informal meetings for non-work communication. It can be a happy hour, coffee chat or just a general meeting but allowing some personal connection between your employees is especially important under these remote circumstances. If possible allow them to talk about non-work related items to break the ice.



## Documentation is more important than ever

Because you don't have the casual meeting environment having easy access to important documents is critical. This includes employee handbooks, shared documents, processes and procedures. Whether you use a **Google Drive, Microsoft OneDrive, DropBox** or other shared drive, having a central location where people can access information and resource guides will increase efficiency.

This might be an ideal time to improve process documentation. Setting up a small committee to evaluate, document and publish previously undocumented procedures is a great use of time.

If you don't have an employee handbook and policies, and you have time, this is also an excellent time to put those in place. I am happy to help you with this.





## Create systems for assessing performance

One of the reasons companies have not wanted people to work from home is the inability to track their work remotely. If you don't have them already, this is the time to create systems that allow people to document their progress easily and visibly. Using the shared drives mentioned above will help facilitate access to their records for both the employees and their supervisors.

Be careful to balance supervision between micromanaging and being too distant. You'll have to figure this out as you go but having the ability to objectively measure performance will help with this. Be more relaxed if people don't respond immediately. Conversely, reach out if someone misses a scheduled check-in. This is the time to give people the benefit of the doubt.

Review your employees' performance regularly. Because of the lack of casual contact, checking in more frequently is one of the best ways to keep people on track.

**Asana** and **Trello** are two of the best free apps for task management. Both allow project management and group collaboration. One of my clients is evaluating **Smartsheets**, which does come with a cost but might be more robust. Here are **11 options** for managing remote teams.

## CONTACT DETAILS

**CLAIRE BROWN KOHLER**

215-868-1283

Claire@WeEmpowerLeaders.com

[www.weempowerleaders.com](http://www.weempowerleaders.com)

