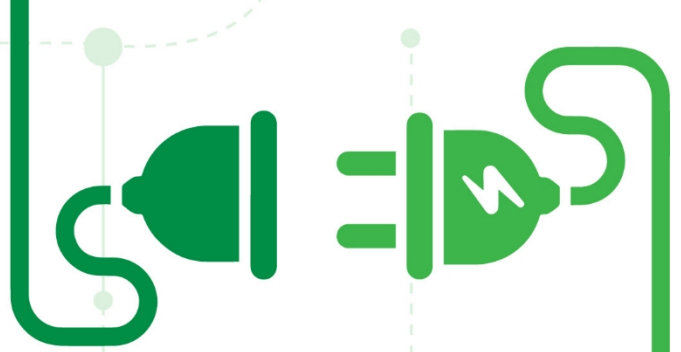# Work-from-Home Connection

MAY/JUNE 2022

Maintaining Mental Health While Working Remotely

Remote work isn't inherently bad for mental health. On the contrary, most employees (78%) say that remote work has improved their overall well-being. But eroding work and personal life boundaries can negatively impact mental health, increasing feelings of isolation, loneliness, stress and burnout. It's crucial for all hybrid and remote employees to protect and support their mental health.

Mental health is as important as physical health. Poor mental health can impact the way employees think, feel and act. Workers with poor mental health are more likely to experience the following:

- **Burnout**

- **Decreased productivity**

- **Increased errors**

- **Stress**

- **Relationship problems**

- **Family problems**

Organizational leadership plays a role in creating and upholding work-life boundaries, but there are many ways for remote employees to promote positive mental health while working from home. Consider these strategies:

- **Take physical and mental breaks.** Taking a 10-minute break every hour can improve productivity, reduce mistakes and prevent burnout. At least half of these breaks should involve some form of physical activity (e.g., walking or yoga) to counteract the negative effect of sitting for long periods.

- **Create personal and work routines.** Set aside time for self-care activities that energize you, like reading or journaling, before beginning personal or work responsibilities for the day.

- **Separate your workspace.** Establish a workspace that's physically separate from other areas of your home to prevent the boundaries of work and home life from blurring after hours.

- **Set professional boundaries.** Designate a concrete end-time for your work day. Turn off work email notifications after hours to further separate personal and work time.

- **Discuss expectations with housemates or partners.** Communicate with the people in your home, whether roommates, partners or children, about times when you can't be distracted. If you have children, create a regular care schedule with your partner to ensure you can focus during important parts of your day.

Although it can be challenging to keep your professional and personal life separate when working from home, maintaining clear boundaries between the two aspects of your life can improve your mental health and work performance. Talk to your manager if you have questions or concerns about mental health in a remote work environment.

Benefits Consulting
LEADERSHIP. SUPPORT. SOLUTIONS.

Boosting Your Health During Summer

Summer is a great time to prioritize your well-being with healthy new habits. With extended daylight hours and warm weather, it's easier to enjoy the outdoors, access fresh produce and get more exercise. All of these summer benefits correspond to healthy living habits. As a remote or hybrid worker, you likely have more flexibility in your workday to focus on healthy movement and other positive lifestyle choices.

Staying active and eating well can improve your mood and lower your risk of chronic diseases, such as stroke, heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes and even some cancers.

Take advantage of the warm weather this season to kickstart positive lifestyle habits with the following suggestions:

- **Eat healthy foods.** Many fresh-grown fruits and vegetables are more readily available in the warmer months of the year. Fill at least half your plate with fruits and vegetables this summer. Other foods to incorporate into your diet include lean meats, low-fat dairy products and whole grains.

- **Prioritize exercise.** Get at least 30 minutes of physical activity every day. Sunny days are the perfect excuse to try new activities like hiking, biking or paddleboarding.

- **Stay hydrated.** Dehydration can cause low energy, fatigue and headaches. Keep a water bottle with you throughout the day, especially in warm weather when you're more likely to lose water as sweat during your daily activities.

- **Spend time outdoors.** Spending time in the sunlight can prompt your body to release serotonin, improving your mood. It also helps your body produce vitamin D, which promotes good bone health.

- **Practice sun safety.** The ultraviolet index increases in summer, so you have a greater chance of getting sunburned or damaging your skin. This makes it especially important to practice sun safety on warm days, such as wearing sunglasses and sunscreen.

Warmer weather provides an opportunity for developing healthy living habits that can boost your mood and physical well-being this summer. Take advantage of your flexible work hours to spend time outdoors, exercise and eat well this summer.