



Don't Survive, Thrive

A Remote Worker's Guide to Wellbeing

Part 1: Survive



Introduction

The last 3 years have seen the biggest global transformation in the way we do and think about work since the industrial revolution began roughly 250 years ago. But whereas that change took place over a century, our modern day revolution unfolded within a few months.

Where does that leave 'work'?

How do we think about work now?

This guide is here to break down the proven consequences of remote working and provide actionable tips and resources to help you, your team and your organisation unlock the true power of remote working for optimum mental, emotional and organisational health.

Why Should You Read This Guide?

This guide is here to provide you with the tools you need to harness those tangible benefits and avoid the common pitfalls which cause many to shun remote working altogether.

This is not a guide designed to persuade you or your organisation to introduce, or get rid of remote working. There is a plethora of research out there to show the benefits remote working can bring to both individuals and organisations, including improving wellbeing, job satisfaction and overall performance.

As with everything we do, we will be looking at remote working through the lens of emotions, by exploring the emotional effects of remote working in both the short and long term, and how these varying emotions impact our overall wellbeing and work ability.

Who Are We?



Data Driven



Emotion Centred



**Work Place &
People Focused**

What does the research say?

To understand the most common impacts working remotely has on us, our emotions and our wellbeing we drilled down into data from various European, American and international research papers which delve into the many facets of home-based working.



Looking at questions such as: **‘How do the emotional states of remote vs in-office workers compare?’** and **‘What factors affect remote workers’ ability to be productive?’** the resources listed in the Research Index (p.12) provided us with an excellent base to evaluate the two most common negative emotions remote workers seem to experience: **loneliness** and **stress**.

LONELINESS & STRESS



Figure 1: Percentage of on-site and remote workers who reported feeling lonely 'a lot of the day yesterday'.

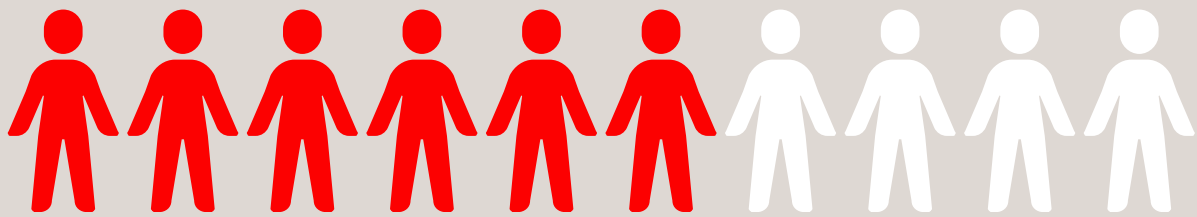


Figure 2: Out of 2,500 UK workers, 63% said it was more challenging to form colleague friendships when working remotely.

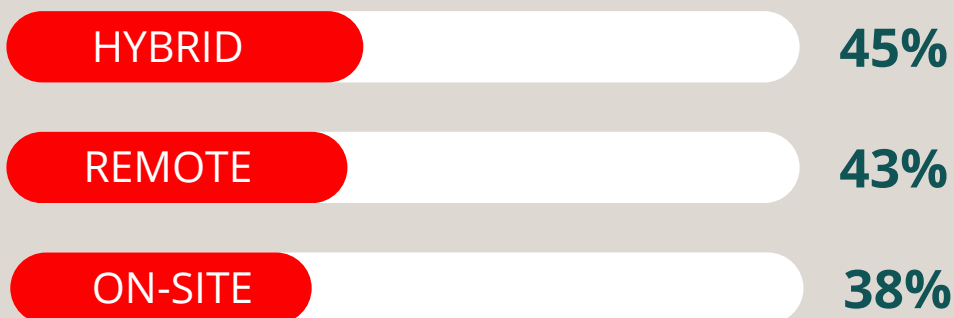


Figure 3: Global percentage of on-site vs remote workers who reported experiencing stress 'a lot of the day yesterday'.

Loneliness

Loneliness can be detrimental to both our physical and mental wellbeing; it puts us at greater risk of poor sleep and has been linked to elevated blood pressure levels and depression.

Spotting It:

The first step to tackling loneliness at work is noticing it. Start keeping a note or making a quick diary entry on a weekly basis of how often you experience the following (a):

- **Lacking in companionship when working.**
- **'Left out' at work (in meetings, projects, decisions).**
- **Isolated from your colleagues.**

If you begin to notice that you feel instances of loneliness regularly, it's time to reflect on how and what you can do to manage this emotion, which can be detrimental to both your mental and physical wellbeing.

Loneliness increases the risk of early mortality by 26% (b) .

ACT NOW



Managing & Preventing Loneliness

TIPS FOR YOU

- **Talk:** Confide in someone who you trust and feel safe and comfortable with. Express what the loneliness feels like and how long you suspect you've been experiencing it for.
- **Connect Consciously:** Start scheduling meetings that are *just* for catching up! Even if we speak to colleagues regularly, talking only about work prevents real connection; though it can seem trivial, those '*how was your weekend?*' chats allow us to forge deeper connections.
- **Branch Out:** Find people to chat with outside of your existing work network - explore Eventbrite, relevant Linked In groups etc. to find industry-relevant spaces; attending webinars and events with new people can revitalize us.
- **Explore new ways to connect:** With the advent of remote working, there are now lots of local initiatives that give you a connected space to work, often very cheaply, or for free e.g. Santander co-working spaces, local libraries and co-working adapted coffee shops.

Step Into Creativity

Street Wisdom is a great practice for boosting mindfulness, creative thinking & connection. Explore more on their website: www.streetwisdom.org

Managing & Preventing Loneliness

TIPS FOR EMPLOYERS

- **Get Set Up Correctly:** Invest in and utilise internal comms systems (Slack, Teams etc.) to help employees connect in meaningful ways on a daily or weekly basis. Consider introducing 'weekly round-up' style voice notes, messages, or even meetings on a regular basis, to encourage employees to connect at the start or end of the week by sharing snippets such as 'quotes of the week', '#3thingsthatmademesmile etc.
- **Prioritise Connection:** Encourage managers to schedule individual catch-ups without a results or task-driven agenda. Encourage employees to have informal 'water-cooler' style virtual chats, and make it clear that you support and recognise the importance of genuine non-work related conversations between colleagues.

Connection = Engagement & Productivity!

Did you know that engaged employees are up to 28% more likely to perform higher than their non-engaged counterparts ?^(b) .

Stress

Stress is a part of life, and in recent years there has been increasing awareness of the long term effects of chronic stress. Stress puts our bodies into a fight-or-flight state, to ensure our survival in danger-ridden scenarios. Unfortunately, our innate biological mechanisms cannot differentiate between a deadly tiger and a nerve-wracking upcoming meeting with our boss. Both situations can turn on our stress response, and when we continue to exist in that state for a prolonged period, our body begins to suffer

Causes of Stress in Remote Work

Some studies show that remote workers can be at risk of experiencing high levels of stress, due to a few key factors which occur when we aren't physically present with our colleagues.

These are:

- **Unclear Expectations**
- **Inconsistent Communication**
- **Lack of Work Boundaries**
- **Inadequate Working Conditions**

Managing & Preventing Stress

TIPS FOR YOU

- **Seek Clarity:** So much of stress arises from the unknown; when we're not clear on what's happening or expected of us. Remote working can exacerbate this issue - you can't just pop by someone's desk to clarify something. Instead, it's important that we...
 - Make a conscious effort to clarify (in some cases over-clarify) details and deadlines.
 - Before each meeting, make a quick checklist of what information you need to get from others, and ensure you have this before the meeting closes.
 - Don't hesitate to message people (even colleagues you're not as close with) to clarify small details; it shows dedication and may even get you chatting with someone new.
- **Improve Your Digital Body Language:** Gaining clarity when working remotely is made easier by good digital body language. You can start by...
 - Asking your colleagues and managers how they prefer to be contacted (via direct message, email, phone call, or text).
 - Avoid using jargon or acronyms that haven't been widely agreed upon and make an extra effort to be clear and direct in the messages and emails you send.
- **Set Boundaries:** It's very easy for work and home time to blur into one when working remotely. You may also feel pressure to 'be accessible' to colleagues 24/7 because you don't have as much in-person interaction. Outline and make clear your working hours - and then stick to them!

DID YOU KNOW?

The work hours of UK remote workers have increased by almost 25% since the pandemic (d).

Managing & Preventing Stress

TIPS FOR EMPLOYERS

- **Invest in Tech:** Various studies referenced in this guide show that having a technologically sound home working set-up is essential for employee output and wellbeing - there's nothing more stressful or unhelpful than a laptop or monitor that doesn't work properly!
 - Invest in the equipment and resources that your team needs, and make sure that individual circumstances are accommodated; for example, if you've got employees who live in Wi-Fi dead zones, you may need to invest in routers to help them stay connected.
- **Articulate a set of digital best practices:** Confusion and miscommunication (both key drivers of stress) can easily occur when working remotely; styles of communicating via email, direct message, phone calls etc. can vary widely between individuals. Emojis that seem fun and engaging to one person may be viewed as rude or unprofessional by another. Taking 24 hours to reply to an email may be acceptable for some, but will feel like a slight to others.
 - Eliminate confusion by creating a **company-wide set of digital best practices**, clearly outlining when and how digital communication should occur. This could include...
 - Setting out specific pieces of shorthand or acronyms to make messaging and emails more concise.
 - Putting time limits on message or email sending (e.g. no emails should be sent or replied to outside of XX - XX working hours).



THANK YOU

For reading this guide.

We hope it helps you, and others to harness the true power of remote working by providing clear ways to tackle the emotional impact working from home can have on all of us.



Tell us what you think of this guide.



Contact us at hello@emotionatwork.co.uk



Join our community!



Visit our website: emotionatwork.co.uk

Reference Index

Statistics

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Background Resources

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