



As we step further into the Coronavirus Era, it's no secret that the world has become a pretty strange and surreal place where we're all doing "normal" things that would have seemed totally bonkers a few days ago. Stockpiling loo roll. Talking about people stockpiling loo roll. Chatting with your neighbours like normal, but with a 12ft gap between you. Clapping from your doorstep even though you live 2 miles away from the nearest human. Buying a chest freezer online and then filling it with fruit, veg and maybe a whole pig. Learning how to homeschool your children, working out in front of Joe Wicks, wearing a mask to leave the house and a bunch of other new era norms that were once out of the question.

Working from home is one of those new norms.

Now, if you're not accustomed to this new way of life (to the extent you actually Google'd: *what does WFH stand for*), working from home is an art form -- and one that never got enough credit because, if you're anything like us, you see your home as your relaxing sanctuary. That safe space where you get to stroll around in your pants, watch rubbish Netflix shows without judgement and dance to Bewitched and Abba with a towel wrapped around your head (other guilty pleasure music is available), and now you're being asked to work from here, develop a level of discipline you're sure you don't possess, put in self-motivated hours and learn how to cope.

Luckily, we can help you cope. So quickly make yourself a cuppa, slump bac in your favourite chair, pop your feet on the coffee table and enjoy the [Barefoot Retreats](#) work-from-home survival guide (according to our resident work-from-homer):



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If you already have a home office, we applaud you. If you don't, however, there's no need to freak out. You just need to set one up. Now it may be tempting to slouch on the couch, stack 7 or 8 books to create a makeshift stand and pop on some "lofi hip hop beats" on YouTube, but try to resist because that setup won't work when your children start playing with their Playdoh or your housemate comes into watch a movie. That's why we recommend you find somewhere you can close the door, create a barrier and not worry about any interruptions as you get on with your work.

Barefoot Retreat top tip: That could be the dresser in your bedroom, that desk underneath your kid's bunk bed or a table in your garden shed.



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Before you start making groany noises and calling us boring (which is what we did), we have some good news: you don't have to do the whole 9-to-5 thing, which is because not everyone is suited to that life. Some people are early-risers, others are go-to-bed-after-midnighters, and a lot of people will be trying to juggle their WFH life with homeschooling their children. Translation: if you don't want to work from 9am until 5pm, then don't. The important thing isn't when you work, it's making sure you do your work, so set some office hours that suit you and then crack on with your work during those hours.

Barefoot Retreat top tip: make a list of the other must-do activities in your life and build your working day around them. They could be household chores, indulging in a little light reading, playing teacher, being a community hero or babysitting your kids (aka parenting) while your spouse/partner gets their work done too.

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When you look at your priority list, just below 'having your own space', you should make space for comfort. Now we're not talking about a nice pair of cashmere sweats and labrador that likes to rest their warm head on your lap, but rather anything that will get you in the zone and make work feel good. Shower, brew a pot of Earl Grey, change the lighting, water your houseplants,

turn on the noise cancelling function on your headphones, switch the radio station to whatever your colleagues listened to in the office -- anything that will signal it's work time.

Barefoot Retreat top tip: Wear proper clothes as if you were going into an office. You don't have to dress fifty shades of formal, but get out of your pyjamas. It makes a huge difference in your mental state.



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Without anyone else there to motivate you, push you, remind you of what needs doing or what tasks are still ongoing, there will be days where you find it tough to find your groove. But making a to-do list each morning will help you prioritise your schedule and make sure you get things done. A [bullet journal](#) can be helpful, or sticking post-it notes to the wall above your desk. Whatever helps you work through the day and keep procrastination at bay.

Barefoot Retreats top tip: We're living in an uncertain world right now, and there may be days when you can't focus at all, so give yourself some grace by setting weekly goals instead.



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Back when you were at work-work, you know, with other humans and not just your pet hamster, you'd get up from your desk to enjoy a bit of communal kitchen time or have a chat in the bathroom queue or indulge in some watercooler conversations - and you need to keep these up at home too, otherwise you're staring at a screen non-stop, which is bad. It's a hard habit to get into, but adopting the [Pomodoro technique](#) is super-helpful. It's all about maintaining your focus by giving yourself a five minute break every 25 minutes. Stretch your legs, pour yourself a coffee, digest a quick chapter of your book, start planning [your next North Norfolk trip](#), anything. It will help you recharge your batteries and become more productive. Yay.

Barefoot Retreats top tip: Use your phone to time your breaks, giving yourself no longer than seven minutes to enjoy non-work life: stand up, breathe, stretch and do anything but check social media. That's a rabbit hole.



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Another survival-must when working from home is exercise because nothing will help you shake off the niggly thoughts like a big dollop of dopamine, especially before work. Enjoy some living room yoga, do thirty laps of your garden, dust down the exercise bike you “borrowed” from your dad’s loft, anything to clear the cobwebs from your brain before you head to your dedicated work space. And if sweating isn’t your thing, that’s cool. You could do something else instead, like practising mindfulness or meditation to make sure you’re staying mentally healthy too.

Barefoot Retreats top tip: If you go for a half-mile walk-slash-run before you start working, try coming in through the backdoor so that it feels like you're going to work and not your house.

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Even before this pandemic, it was extremely easy to become isolated when working from home. This is on a whole different level though. That’s why you need to “get out” and meet people, by which we mean join a Facebook forum, sign up to online seminars, schedule some social calls with your colleagues, host a business breakfast over FaceTime, and make the effort to catch-up with your friends, family, clubs and other organisations.

Barefoot Retreats top tip: whatever it is you do, or want to get better at, find a way to have outside communication in that field, whether it's a closed Facebook group for freelancers or a Masterclass with Gordon Ramsay.



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We all love an email as much as we loathe an email, if you know what we mean. But wherever you stand on the matter, they're not the most personal way of keeping up with your coworkers, and that's super-important right now. Our advice: get a headset for your phone so you can talk hands-free, use online meeting tools for conference calls, share screens, use instant messaging for quick conversations and, at the top of the priority pile, pick up the phone. Not only will you get a better understanding of what needs to be done, but you'll also get to indulge in human engagement, allowing you to maintain relationships from the confines of your home.

Barefoot Retreats top tip: Make phone calls your new default setting. You won't regret it and your colleagues, clients, teammates and bosses won't forget it. Trust us.

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We all kinda want and need distractions right now, but the last thing you want is blurred lines -- not with everything else that's going on. So while it's uber-crucial to set your work hours and create a distinct work space, it's also uber-crucial to leave all that behind when you're done working for the day. Once the clock strikes 5, turn off your computer, leave your office and do what's needed to turn your home back into that relaxing palace where you can cook, watch Netflix without judgement and walk around in your pants. You might be working from home, but it's still home.

Barefoot Retreats top tip: When you leave your office space, leave your computer there too, and try not to check your emails after hours, (and definitely don't respond until the morning unless it's urgent).

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