Volume 10, Issue 19: Navigating COVID-19

It dawned on me the other day that I wasn't the only one struggling with work-life balance these last couple of weeks of COVID-19 constraints. For most of us, the switch from working from the office to working at home was very sudden. There wasn't much of a warning or time to prepare for the adjustment and learn the rules of the game.

As a result, we found ourselves almost always being on duty, always being available for work as we hadn't set clear boundaries for work life and home life. If you read the article I posted before this one, you know that I found myself working long hours and barely enjoyed my beloved lunch breaks. What helped me get my balance back was when the Easter break came along and I knew I couldn't go on in that fashion.

I have learnt a few tips that have worked for me in this regard that you could consider for yourself to help you stay balanced and happy in this season. We have to set boundaries for ourselves, otherwise we run the risk of spreading ourselves too thin and burning out.

Start by implementing a punch in and punch out system for yourself and keeping your working hours regular. Establish working hours, preferably similar to the ones you had before when you worked from the office. Try not to do any work outside those hours. Turn off your computer and don't send or read work emails, and don't make or answer work calls either. I felt harassed when colleagues called after working hours. Some of the phone calls lasted more than an hour, and I even had to restart my laptop for some phone calls.

As much as is possible, make your workspace a designated work space. When I started working from home I sat all over the place - worked from different spots in the house. That didn't help with transitioning from work life to home life. I felt that the spots I enjoyed for relaxation were tainted with heavy work energy.

If you don't have an office, set up an office spot at one specific place in your house. When I embarked on a mission to get a designated office space for myself, I tried the dinning table but figured out in a few hours that my back would not forgive me for seating on a dining chair for 8

hours! I finally settled for my kitchen island, and had an adjustable workstation for my laptop brought in so I can alternate seating and standing while I work.

Once your punch out time reaches, turn off your laptop and work phone and get all your work tools and papers out of sight so that you can switch on to your home life. This makes a big difference for relaxation. When we worked from the office, when we left for home, we didn't have to see our work tools and papers until we went back to the office the next work day.

It helps to not have to see work stuff on your kitchen table after working hours. Keep it out of sight so you can fully relax. Having your laptop lying around after and before working hours might just tempt you to sneak in an email, and while at it, respond to new emails. We don't want to do that if we want to maintain a healthy work-life balance.

Establish a daily routine. I have heard people talk of how their routines have gone out the window with this pandemic. Try to atleast stick to your bed time and morning routines. I am going to bed a little later than usual but I try to wake up at the same time as before each morning as hard as it is. This way, I can keep up with my morning routines of quite time and exercise. These activities help keep us steady and invigorated, which is especially crucial during this season, so don't put yours on hold.

Take care of your appearance if that boosts your morale. Getting out of your pajamas and grooming yourself for your work day at home may make you feel more productive. I border on the extreme on this as I typically dress for home stay just as I do when I am going somewhere, even when am doing nothing all day. But you should do what works for you.

Looking put together for my day regardless of whether I am spending the day at home or not makes me feel good about myself and prepared to tackle all that the day may require of me. So, don't feel out of place if you are anything like me. In the same breath, if you care nothing for dressing up for home stay, go ahead and rock your work in your dress code of choice.

Since we don't know how long this pandemic is going to last, we had better adjust ourselves and get comfortable in it. When the children of Israel were in captivity in Babylon, they couldn't wait to go back home. God knew they were going to be there for awhile and encouraged them through His prophet Jeremiah to settle down and prosper in the land of their captivity. He told

them to build houses and get married and continue with the business of living.

Just like the children of Israel's captivity, this COVID-19 pandemic is temporary. It's highly unlikely to last 70 years like the captivity lasted. We are probably looking at months, not years of lockdown. However long it's likely to last, there's no point holding our breath until it ends. Let's embrace healthy habits that will sustain us until life goes back to the normal we know and love. All it takes is a little creativity and determination to thrive in our current normal.

For His Glory,

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