

Kate Cook

The Business of Wellness

Working at The Home Office



3 top tips

for a little self-care when optimising working from home



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"Kate Cook engages the team with practical, easy-to-dos that could potentially make a huge difference to how we work. She inspires by being fun, vibrant and convincing. Kate creates a dynamic foundation for health and wellness."

Holly Riches, Queen Mary College of Business and Management, University of London

"Kate delivered well-informed, high-energy talks throughout the day - overall, the participating employees rated her "excellent" on the feedback forms - it was a really inspiring and engaging day."

Delia McMeekin, HealthAhead Team, GE Healthcare

[View my website to find out more](#)

Do you miss the daily commute? I thought not, the hours snarled up in pointless traffic amounts to enough cumulative time to learn a second language but somehow never getting round to that, creating another regret and frustration. Do we regret the temporary (?) passing of the endless meeting, which has now morphed into snappy, timed Zoomed squares? But there are losses to. The gathering round the kettle, a shared knowing look as the bosses have one of their 'moments' – the laughs after work. The casual word to a colleague who helps you out when you are bit stuck on a knotty problem, but it's easily unravelled by just showing you where to look.



Photo by Aleks Marinkovic on Unsplash

It turns out that Working at The Home Office has its **lurking perils** which it would be **good to be aware of**, and a few tweaks could **solve**:

3 + 3 Top tips + bonus

1. Perfect posture

Many of us are sitting at make-shift desks, the kitchen table, the antique partner's desk (too high), our knees (too low). Getting posture just right is tricky, and should be caught before it causes back and neck problems. I am no expert on this but observing my husband's struggles with this, made me realise that whilst ergonomics is carefully thought of at the office at the home office it isn't. Our solution? Propping up the laptop on a pile of books. Well it works, but doesn't look good!

2. Environment

Again, another issue that is very well sorted in an office but not generally at home – ventilation. Many homes are not adequately ventilated – perhaps we are working in the kitchen or the attic, or somewhere where we can't open the windows. Again, I am no expert but through this period I have become very aware that airflow might be very poor or light might not be adequate. Being human, we sometimes put up with less than ideal situations and only pay attention when something, like ourselves break! Think of investing in some **plants**, **open the windows**. Also **watch the use of chemicals** around the house (cleaning fluids) and **off-gassing from carpets/ flame retardants on chairs** – natural fibres and cloth is best (as long as it meets safety requirements of course!)

3. Think of your eyes

and especially the blue screen-light that emits from computer screens (glasses that filter the blue light from the screen are one solution). **Computer Programmes like F.lux are good** as it adapts the light to the time of day, dimming in the evening to mimic sunset. Light from your screens will impact the quality of your sleep by interfering with a key sleep hormone, melatonin.

4. Your food

Working from the Home Office has given us all a bit more time to think about our food; not least as early on in March where there were shortages and empty shelves

in the shops, making us think for perhaps the first time, about our supply chain and what a miracle it is that under normal conditions our shops are stocked! Under conditions of boredom and stress it is easy to reach for the cookie jar...resist by having nuts or seeds on hand or try this recipe* for **banana nut bread**, which is so filling and satisfying you will not be reaching out for that top up bag of crisps. It will keep your energy levels (blood sugar) very stable and give you brilliant energy for your day. You can try it at breakfast too!

5. Take a break

Do try and make time to get outside and mop up that **luscious Vitamin D from the sun!** Take calls outside if you can, walk and talk. Take a break from your desk by creating a routine (an alarm on your phone prompting you, if you don't ignore it) – it is easy without the distraction of social interaction (office style) just to put your head down and not look up until someone (or your stomach) calls you for dinner. The fear by management was that people just wouldn't have the focus for working from home which has by and large been unfounded. It drives people harder, despite the various challenges of working with children and animals - a giant 14 year old pink unicorn (well, my daughter in a onesie) has taken to photo-bombing Zoom meetings. Ho-hum.

6. Your community matters

Re-integrating back into the office is important if you can, and it is practical – even for a few days of the week. We are all social animals, we thrive by interaction with colleagues and friends. Virtual is useful, but nothing like having a real, genuine chin-wag. Food is a great way to bring people together; what can you invent before the summer is over and we are forced back inside? In mid-July our five neighbour households came together under a borrowed gazebo in the car park for a shared outside supper. It was such a success we will repeat it next month. Now who would think that that blessed virus would have an actual positive effect?



Photo by Jeff Siepman on Unsplash

*Banana Nut Bread Recipe

(with thanks to Jennette Hyde, author of *The Gut Makeover*)

2 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
2 cups of walnuts
1 cup ground almonds
2 tsp baking powder
1 ripe banana
3 large eggs
2 tbsp honey

Grease a loaf tin with a little of the olive oil.

Preheat the oven to 180 °C.

Grind the walnuts in a blender. Add the walnuts to the ground almonds and baking powder in a mixing bowl.

Put the banana, eggs, remaining olive oil and honey in the blender and mix until all broken down. Add the wet mixture to the dry mixture and stir with a wooden spoon. Pour the batter into the loaf tin and bake for 30 mins, or until a skewer comes out the mixture clean.

Remove from the oven, turn out and allow to cool.

Bonus

• Boring but watch the alcohol intake!

Over lock-down some wine outlets were saying it was like Christmas every day! Good for them, but what about you? How about low alcohol beer? Probably not perfect - but who said we have to be perfect?

• Watch coffee intake

It impacts your sleep. Drink coffee before 12 noon.

• Get outside

Light influences hormones for restful sleep.

• Move

A little trampette (tiny trampoline shakes things up, and moves the lymph, important for getting rid of waste).

• Routine

Get up at the same time.

• Hydrate!

Water, water everywhere! (well, a refuelled water glass is the trick).