

Reduce Squabbles to Increase Productivity While Working from Home



Working remotely is the new normal for many employees. This change is requiring millions of workers to adapt. However, when family time increases, so can domestic stress. Add social isolation mandates, and you have a recipe for increased bickering and family squabbles. Have you experienced this “quarantine quarreling”? Has it affected your work productivity?

We’re all familiar with bickering. It’s about the small stuff: “Whose

turn is it to walk the dog?” and “How come no one put the wet laundry in the dryer?”

Reducing bickering begins with understanding it is normal. Feeling less guilty about it can help you focus on intervention strategies. The inevitable is fewer incidents of its occurrence, fewer interruptions of your job, and more instances of members of your family communicating healthily. Even children can learn conflict resolution skills, and all can build the resilience necessary to cope with twists and turns in how the world responds to the pandemic. To these ends: 1) Have regular family meetings to discuss the need for a private, quiet workspace. Refresh and reinforce agreements about the rules to keep your remote workspace a productive one. 2) Take planned breaks to attend to family needs, which don’t vanish while you are working. Even 30 minutes spent attending to chores will reduce frustrations or resentments attributed to your being “always unavailable.” 3) Decide on definite work hours, if possible. Inertia often makes it easier to keep working after hours than to switch gears in favor of work-life balance. 4) Plan events on a family calendar so that everyone can look forward to and anchor themselves on them. This increases resilience and the ability to be more patient in the present. 5) Exercise with family members. The positive effects of exercising together are well documented in research. There is perhaps no more efficient way to accomplish three important goals at once—improving health, managing stress, and building bonds with those you love.

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UR Medicine EAP

315 Science Pkwy
Entrance C
Rochester, NY 14620

(585) 276-9110
1-888-764-3456

Email:

EAP@urmc.rochester.edu

Website:

urmc.rochester.edu/EAP

Kid Solutions to Coping with COVID

“Back-to-school” means something dramatically different this fall, but coping well with changes requires discussing them together as a family. After school, ask the kids how things are going, but expect the usual “hmm ... fine.” To identify hidden worries, like bullying or social skills gaps that are causing distress, use open-ended questions that can’t be answered with yes, no, or fine. Work on solutions together. Try brainstorming as a family or a group, or one on one with your child. You’ll be surprised at the solutions kids imagine for solving their problems, ones that fit perfectly with their circumstances.

When Tragedy Strikes at Work

There are best practices for coping with tragedy in the workplace, and communication is crucial for all of them. 1) Share all appropriate information. It facilitates healing discussions among workers. 2) Don’t judge others’ reactions. There is no “correct” way of reacting to tragedy. Each person is unique, and the reasons why are complex. 3) Use counseling resources and self-help groups. They can speed your way to a healthful return to your pre-tragedy emotional state. 4) Even if you feel no support is needed, consider a “check-in” that can help keep you from overlooking a reaction that later interferes with social or job functioning. 5) Because tragic events can adversely affect focus and performance, give it time, and be patient with people.

Use “Distancing” to Think Calmly Under Pressure

There is another kind of distancing worth knowing about: “distancing” as a job skill, and a means of functioning well under pressure. Distancing is the mental task of separating oneself emotionally from severe interactional stress (e.g., a verbally irate customer) so you maintain focus on a task. (Navy Seals learn this skill.) To develop the distancing skill, take a deep breath when under pressure; acknowledge the situation (“Okay, the pressure’s on. I can do this.”); challenge yourself to be calm and visualize calmness; and focus on positives and the temporary nature of the event. Employers value workers who can perform well under pressure. Now you know how to do it.

Tips for Making Better Impressions at Work

Embrace these overlooked work habits to impress company leadership: 1) Put away the smartphone before the meeting begins. You might be producing good work as you’re tapping away, but phones are also fun, leisurely browsing devices. Many managers who have to compete with your phone might assume you’re indifferent, but they may not remark on it. 2) Bring more solutions to the table along with problems you identify. This solution-oriented mindset will elevate your reputation. 3) Focus on quality in your work, rather than quantity. Make it a part of who you are, but resist the temptation to direct others in noticing it. They do. 4) Show excitement for the job, focus on the positive, be willing to tackle tough assignments, and see opportunities in disappointment.