



# Ways to Keep Your Mind Engaged While Working from Home

*by Natalie-Jean Schiavone, PhD*

Working from home or living at work? This is the challenge that many people are facing today. Due to the pandemic, so many of us have been forced to work remotely. While there are several benefits to working from home, such as sleeping in a little longer, no rush hour traffic jams, or getting to spend more quality time with loved ones, there are several factors that make it difficult as well. However, working from home doesn't have to be boring. There are activities you can do to help stay engaged and motivated during these crazy times.

## Keep a Schedule

One of the best ways to stay motivated and engaged while working from home is to keep a schedule. That means getting up early, dressing the part, and sticking to your “normal” routine as much as you possibly can. This simple act will make you feel a little more motivated, engaged and productive.



## Look the Part



Training yourself to wake up early, put on business-appropriate clothing – that can be jeans and a t-shirt or a pair of chinos and a button-down shirt – may help you feel more engaged and help you get in the mood to work. Not giving in to the temptation of lying in bed, sleeping in late or wearing your most comfortable pair of sweat pants to work has been shown to increase productivity.

## Take Breaks

While working from home, don't forget to give yourself “coffee breaks.” Get up from your computer, walk around, and chat with a friend, co-worker or loved one. Engaging in conversation with people may help you feel less isolated. Perhaps schedule a virtual coffee break to stay connected to co-workers.



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Maintaining this sense of community may help you feel engaged and a little more motivated. Also, getting up and stretching your legs may help you feel less chained to your desk. Taking this 15-minute break from the computer screen may:

- Renew your energy
- Refocus your mind
- Help you feel more productive

Additionally, short breaks can help you stick to a schedule that is similar to the schedule you had while working in your office. Taking small, but necessary, mental health breaks can make all the difference in how you operate. So, don't feel guilty for not giving yourself one. Your body and mind will thank you.

## Stay Physically Active

Staying physically active while working remotely is a great way to stay engaged and a healthy bi-product of being home. Being too sedentary isn't just harmful for your health, but it's also not good for your motivation and discipline. Exercising gives you a boost of energy that's incredibly helpful for productivity. The same way you would have scheduled your gym time while working outside of the home, it's important to continue that regimen while working inside the home.

If your gym or fitness center is still closed, try looking up at-home workouts on YouTube, Instagram or online. Even if it's just for 10-15 minutes, physical activity keeps your mind sharp and keeps you disciplined.

## Get Outdoors

With the warmer weather on the way, now is a good time to get back to nature and enjoy the great outdoors. One of the most challenging issues with the pandemic has been the lack of being able to go outside. Many of us have been longing for the days to get outside (safely) again and enjoy some of the normalcy we have had in the past. Taking a nature break is a great way to reconnect with yourself, others, and engage your senses. You can go for a jog, hike, bike ride, or simply take a walk to enjoy what Mother Nature has given us. Visit the local park, pack a lunch, grab your favorite book, or take your best four-legged friend for a day out in nature. Getting outside and feeling the sun on your face is not only good for your body, but good for your mental health as well. Taking advantage of what the nicer weather offers us is a great way to stay active, alert and engaged. Go ahead, get outside and soak up the sunshine. You can thank yourself later.



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# Get Creative

Have you ever wanted to learn a new language or play a musical instrument but have never had the time to do so? Well, now is your chance. It is the perfect time to pick up a new hobby or become an expert on one you already have. Here are some ways to keep your mind sharp and entertained:



## Learn a New Language

Using the computer to search for language applications has never been easier. You can take the classes in the privacy of your own home, at the speed you are comfortable with learning, and for little to no cost to you. Babbel and Duolingo are just two examples of these sites. You can download the mobile apps right to your smartphone or tablet for on-the-go learning. Additionally, you can take the online courses from the comfort of your home computer to learn the proper grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation skills to help you get ahead.



## Learn How to Play an Instrument

Creating keeps you active, present and engaged. Just like using online applications to learn a new language, you can apply the same techniques to learning how to play an instrument. Just simply Google online guitar, piano, violin or any other musical instrument you may be curious about taking lessons for and see what pops up. You may quickly find several sites to choose from. Some of these sites are free, while others may be at a cost. Either way, you will have the flexibility and freedom to choose what works best for you. And if you don't have an instrument, no problem! There are online sites that can help you with that as well. Just follow the guidelines for searching this type of opportunity and you will be playing new music in no time.



## Read or Write

Reading and writing can be very helpful during these challenging times. Books are a great way to lose yourself for an hour or two. A little way to escape the outside factors that may be causing you stress or concern. They create a space for you to stay engaged and interested in things that you like.

Additionally, writing can be a wonderful outlet for your creative senses. Keeping a journal is a fun way to look back on times and reflect on how you were/are doing and where you were/are going. Writing gets your creative juices flowing while forcing you to stay engaged not only with yourself, but with your surroundings. This may be a good method to keep your mind sharp, focused and on point.



## Pick up a Puzzle, Word Search or Game

Another fun and creative way to stay engaged while working from home is to make a puzzle, play a game or partake in a challenging word search. You can invite people in your home to play with you. If you happen to live alone, connect with people online and invite them to join you in a virtual game of Checkers, Scrabble or cards. Having a little "friendly" competition may be a good way to boost your mood and lift your spirit. Also, some of these pastimes will get you away from the computer and/or provide you with the mental stimulation you may need to get and stay motivated.

## Staying Engaged is Easy!

Working from home doesn't have to be boring. While challenging, you can still find lots of ways to stay connected, engaged and motivated. Now is the time to get creative and put your best foot forward in taking the steps to stay healthy. You have the freedom to make your own schedule, work at your own pace, and create the space you need to stay engaged. So, take the time to make yourself a priority. You'll be glad that you did.

### About the Author:

*Natalie-Jean Schiavone, PhD, has more than 20 years of experience in the healthcare industry. After receiving her Master's degree in General Psychology, Dr. Schiavone went on to complete her doctoral degree in Health Psychology with a specialization in obesity. Dr. Schiavone conducted her research and completed her dissertation on female adolescents with obesity and their social experiences. Using her education, experience and expertise, Dr. Schiavone works with patients to create a healthier lifestyle where knowledge is a key factor.*