Recently all of us have had to make adjustments that we were really not prepared to make, including:

- Making arrangements to now home school our children
- Not being able to visit elderly parents…. To eat out….or gather together for things that are important to us….like going to the gym, or the movies, or to places of worship

And, on top of all that… many of you have been asked to transition your work from the office to working from home

There is no way to predict with how long we will have to maintain this work from home situation.

ASPHN is a virtual organization and all of the ASPHN consultants telework from their home offices.

This training discusses some ideas and suggestions from the ASPHN consultants and others that will, hopefully, arm you with ways to overcome some of the hurdles you face while working from home.
Be mindful that working from home requires another layer of awareness that has to be “worked at” for it to be successful.....

do your best to be C – A – L – M...We will get through this.

C - Celebrate what is going right.

A - Ask for help when you need it. Be willing to help others when they ask, especially your co-workers and ASPHN leaders. We are a team. Helping those who help others is paramount to what we do and who we are. We will get through this.

L - Let it go. There are certain things that we have no control over. Take control where you can. Limit your news consumption. Many experts are telling us that tuning in to the 24-hour news cycle is not helpful and can be sometimes harmful. Make a plan to check in on what is happening a couple of times per day. Set alerts on news apps so that if something of significance occurs, you will be notified. We will get through this.

M - Maintain a routine. I know that many of you have probably lost your old routine. It is time to make a new one for what is happening now. Notice I said routine, not a rigid schedule. There are certain actions that need to take place each day, even when you are working in an atypical situation. List out what those are and work the list daily. We will get through this.

Being CALM during this time will not only improve our work life, it will also have a positive impact on your personal life.
I want to start off with a very important acknowledgement.....many of you are not working in a traditional telework environment

In “normal” telework situations the teleworker is not faced with:

Children who at home during the day and need help with their homework.....and they need lunch....and they are fighting over the remote control.....and they are bored....and they want to invite their friends over.....

Spouses/partners who are also at home trying to do their job

Spouses/partners who are the stay at home parent ....and they are trying to fix lunch....and they are trying to home school the children or fighting with them over the remote control.....and they are worried ....and they their normal routine back....

you are simply working from home.

**LET’S ALL JUST SAY....IT CAN GET TO BE TOO MUCH!!**

So, let’s talk about some things that might make the transition to working from home easier.....some of these suggestions may not apply to you, but all of this will apply to someone. Maybe your coworker....or your supervisor...or just a colleague.

The most important thing to keep in mind is that EVERYONE is going through their own version of things being wacky and out of sorts.....

So, let’s be gentle with each other ..... do your best to communicate your needs

So what could you do to make this situation easier.....
One of the most common statements I hear when I tell someone that I work from home is “Oh, how fun…you get to work in your PJ’s every day.”

Now, while that may be technically true….I could….and in the early mornings when I get up and read my email I typically am …..but on work-days I purposefully do not stay in my PJ’s!

For me, getting dressed for work every day….including showering and washing my hair and wearing jewelry is part of my mental preparation to go to work.

Working from home requires thought about how you will maintain the same level of professionalism that you would apply if you were working from the office: Just because you can work in your sweats and slippers at home, doesn’t mean your work can be less than professional, particularly when dealing with others.

If working in sweats and slippers prevents you from really being in a “work-mode” then get dressed….

Plus if you don’t put on your real clothes and only wear sweats or yoga pants, it is harder to tell if “things” are changing. Those real pants might not fit when you go back to work.

Phone...
In a traditional telework situation, teleworkers are trained that when talking with clients or coworkers on the telephone, they should not be able to tell if you are working from home or the office; i.e. no barking dogs, screaming kids, or televisions in the background.

This is going to be very difficult right now situation because most likely there are others in the house with you.

We are all familiar with working around the noises of coworkers, office equipment, traffic etc… but now we will have EVERYONE’s household noises to deal with.

Some tips on how to manage this includes:

Use your Mute button when you are on conference calls; un-mute only when it’s your turn to talk
Be honest with your caller….let them know you have others in the house

Let your household know when you have a conference call – ask for their help in keeping things to a low roar… Maybe set up a signal, “if there is a tie hanging from the doorknob”

A few other “Keep Things Professional” reminders include:

Answer your phone as if you are in the office! “Sandy Perkins speaking” .....just answering the phone “Hello” like you might do when you are at home will cause the caller to wonder who they called.

**Turn off Notifications** when using GoTo Meeting, Zoom or using any other Share Screen app.
Working from home will be more successful for you and your manager if you have a system for informing each other of your schedule, what you are working on, and what progress you are making.

With everyone working from home the “normal way” of working together has abruptly changed.

Managers checking in with staff on a “walk-about” the office can’t happen.

With all of us working from home having those brief check ins at the office with each other at the coffee pot, in the hallway, or walking to a conference room won’t be happening.

Some staff can quickly feel isolated or left out of the loop.

Communication, even casual conversation is an important part of being in a business family…..it’s OK to take time during the day to check in with each other.

Teleworking requires some creative and active attention to communication. Some suggestions include:
- A daily email, phone call, or IM check-in just to say good morning, how are things going, do you need anything?
- If you are experiencing problems at home, especially if they may delay your work, be sure to let people know.
- Practice active listening skills! If anyone says something or writes something in an email that you don’t understand ASK THEM.
- Don’t try to “read between the lines”…. you are not sitting beside them….you don’t have the opportunity to see their body language….don’t assume they are being snarky because they start an email with “Whatever…..”
- Often what was SAID….and What was MEANT…..and What was HEARD are three different things....

  During this time it’s especially important to “Assume Good Intentions”
  Read emails with a “neutral voice”.....don’t apply filters or a voice tone that really may not be there.....
  ASK...Confirm....Verify.....
When working from home it takes a special effort to stay connected to what is going on with your team—especially when the WHOLE world is at home!

When working at home the feeling of being "on your own" is more amplified than when you are working in the office.

You are not able to see what’s happening two cubes away… it’s just you in your home office.

You may experience feelings like "out of sight" means "out of mind."

You have to work at overcoming these feelings by staying in touch with your coworkers and with your supervisor:

Let coworkers know that you are available to work with them, just like when you are all in the office.

Let them know they can call and email you at home (some people feel like they are intruding when calling you at home), and don’t hesitate to call them.

Hearing your voice will help them understand that you really are working at home.

ASPHN consultants use text messaging to see if others are free for a quick call or let them know you have sent an email that needs review.

Introduce your coworkers to the new communication and collaboration tools you are learning.

Do video-chats if you have the equipment – although video calls do use a lot of bandwidth that is in short supply these days!

Have weekly team meetings (use GoTo Meeting, Zoom, Jabber ChatRoom) just to check in with your team… have a “virtual coffee break” together ….

**Being a Team Player** – you still need to be a member of the team if you are working at home. Working at home doesn’t have to mean you are "off the team."

You need to maintain communication with your manager and colleagues back at the office, or wherever they are working.

If you are the type of person who can work well without a lot of social contact, you may have to force yourself to pick up the phone and call coworkers, but you need to do it.

They need to hear your voice and know you are still on the team.
One of the best tips I can give you is to **plan your day and time for what you are working on at home.**

If your house is becoming your work place, the tools we use at work - to work with our own colleagues - would be helpful to implement in some form with our spouse. It will also probably head off some potentially volatile situations when one might start feeling that the other isn't respecting the importance of the other's work/time with kids, etc...

Depending on your home situation you may need to schedule breaks from work to attend to your children.

If you can, schedule work that takes a lot of concentration when you know that you will have fewer distractions: maybe early in the morning or after the kids have had dinner and are settling in with a movie. This is a time for us to be creative and flexible....but still be responsible for getting our work done.

For parents that are both teleworking - and have small children:
- Work together to make your "work at home" schedule.
  - One consultant’s family holds a morning meeting with the kids to get everyone a bit more coordinated on schedules and expectations. That way everyone had space when they needed it, bandwidth when they needed it (literal and figurative) and the youngest had help and fun when he needed it.
  - Place all of your meetings, calls, etc. (both spouses) in ONE online calendar (or even a paper calendar).
- Plan out times when you CAN'T be away from the desk/phone/computer and agree.
- Plan when you CAN be away, then you can do activities with the kids, take a walk with them, play games, fix lunch/snacks, etc.
- If the kids have a regular "nap" time, this might be the best time for you to plan meetings.
- Tag team with partners, as well as older children.
- Have a Plan B for when both of you HAVE to work at the same time. Not that I’m promoting more "screen time" but desperate times might call for a few more minutes to distract kiddos! Also try to have games, toys, etc. that the kids could use to occupy themselves - if possible - for a bit.
The Meeting is ... When?
When working from home you don’t have the luxury of seeing coworkers heading to the conference room for a meeting at 10:00 am that you are also supposed to attend.

Set an alarm for 5 – 10 minutes before the meeting start time so you have time to run to the restroom and be on the webinar or conference call on time.

People work in many time zones. So, if you have a teleconference or online meeting scheduled, be sure you really know what time your meetings are in your location.

Be on time and be as prepared for a meeting as you would if the meeting were held in the office.

Plan for Emergencies
Telecommuting requires different planning for minor emergencies, like a sick child or bad weather.

Plan ahead and think about what you will do if you are not able to do your work on a specific day. TELL YOUR SUPERVISOR and your co-workers.......remember, Communicate!!

Manage Up and Manage Down
This is all about communication.....but managing up and managing down is especially important when all of us are teleworking.

Supervisors – this means you may need to spend MORE time checking in with your staff to let them know what’s going on and on the team, to assess their adjustment to teleworking, and to keep the work moving

Staff – this means you need to check in with your Supervisor in a different way than you are used to doing.

Don’t assume they know what you are working on!

Don’t assume they should know that you are getting things done!

Send your Supervisor a quick status report.....today I did this....tomorrow I plan to work on....

And, let your supervisor know ASAP if you are having difficulties getting work done.....
Some teleworkers like to replicate normal office hours, while others may work best very early in the morning or very late at night. You should adopt the schedule that allows you to be most productive, but stay within your manager’s requirements for being available during your Core work hours and around household distractions. If you need to be in frequent contact with clients or coworkers, then you may be required to work normal office hours, or at least be available during core hours.

Regardless of the schedule you choose, most teleworkers are more productive if they establish a “regular” schedule. If you can, set ground rules with family so they know when they can or cannot interrupt you. Agree on ways to communicate when you can or cannot be interrupted (door closed, sticky note on door, daily schedule discussion)

Use your phone to set alarms for everything...meetings....to remind yourself to go on a break....to go sit outside on the porch for a few minutes....to do 30 jumping jacks....

Plan healthy meals and snacks for you and your kids in advance. Even prepping them to save time and reduce distraction.

If you have a tendency to overwork, being on a regular schedule may help you control how long you work.....especially if you don’t have others in the house to drag you away from work....

Working Too Many Hours: If you are a workaholic who has trouble quitting at the end of the workday, telework may be difficult for you. Do your best to pattern your work day just like you would do when you are in the office: take breaks, eat lunch, and quit work at the end of the day.

Working Alone: Different people respond differently to different environments. Some people love being able to work alone and not have to interact with others. Other people can’t stand being alone even for a day and may have difficulty working without being surrounded by the activity of the workplace. If you worry about feeling isolated or if you worry that you will miss socializing with coworkers even for a day, talk to your supervisor.
Another challenge when you telework is making the transition from “working” to home life. When you are working from the office you have the drive time from the office to home to make that transition. You may stop at the gym or the grocery store before you go home….that helps you transition. But now that you are teleworking you don’t have that time to mentally switch to home life.

You will need to be creative!!
Maybe this is the time for everyone in the family to take a walk around the block or to work out to the “Go You Chicken Fat Go” video

Maybe you implement “Happy Hour” (with appropriate beverages for everyone) where you sit outside at the picnic table and talk about your day

Maybe you take ½ hour after you stop working to work on a puzzle, or check your children’s homework, or play a round of Spider Solitaire
This is an important one!
Your home is full of distractions!!
• Chores
• TV
• Family
• Friends
• Neighbors
• The Cookie Jar!

If you aren't careful, your home life can use up your work day.

This might take some creative scheduling if you have family in the house....

**Stress Triggers**
Be aware of your stress triggers and come up with healthy ways to manage them. During this time your stress triggers may be firing all over the place causing you to turn to:

- Food
- Social Media
- Alcohol
- Exercise

Be aware of this and try to find ways to manage your stress that are healthy and productive for you.
Although the current telework situation is temporary, some consideration to your workspace should be given:

- Do you have room at home where you can set up a home office?
  - If you have a family, the home office may need to be in a separate room. Is the space suitable for an office?
  - Keep your work space from your personal space...if you can.
  - Does the work space have an atmosphere that you can be comfortable working in?
  - Some people are comfortable working all day in a basement office, but others need lots of light.
  - Creating a home office means giving up some living space. Are you and your family able to negotiate this?

The Right Equipment
Do you have the equipment you need to work from home?
Working at home all day usually requires a more complete home office setup than what is required by the person who works from home occasionally.

- Computer
- Monitors
- Phone – please use a headset if you have one...don’t use a speaker phone

Electrical Concerns
Count up all the equipment, devices, lights, and small appliances you may have in your office.
Are there sufficient electrical outlets? Are you using surge protectors?
Fire can occur when too many devices are running on the same circuit.
Don’t take chances with electricity. If you are in any doubt about what to do or what is safe, consult a qualified electrician.
Furniture
Again….our telework situation is temporary but the furniture you are using as a work space should be give some consideration.
Look at your space and work out where everything will fit, taking into consideration windows and light and the location of outlets and heating registers.
Usually the desk or table is the item that takes up the most space. What can you use for a work station?
Think about how much work surface you need on both sides of the keyboard, and make sure the surface is deep enough to accommodate your keyboard and monitor.

Of all the home-office furniture and equipment you may need to consider, the one decision requiring the most care is the office chair.

Most workers spend more time sitting in their office chair than they do in their bed.

So, be sure you are using the best chair possible. For many of you that may mean a dining room chair or kitchen chair.

If that’s the case, you will need to be sure to get up and move around more often than you would typically do at the office.
Ergonomic stretch breaks every 30 minutes or so.

Organization & Storage
Home offices are often small and require some attention to keep things organized.
If multiple people use your office, you may need separate baskets, bins, in-boxes, or other storage devices for each user.

Lighting
The right type of lighting helps with eye strain.
There are two types of lighting:
"Ambient" - is the light around you, including both natural light and overhead light
"Task Lighting" - is usually from desk lamps or floor lamps. Both sources need to be sufficient and appropriate.

If the overhead light in your office is insufficient or produces glare, you may need to replace the bulb or the fixture.
Avoid fixtures that cast shadows on your monitor. For task lighting, look for lamps that can be directed, so you can illuminate your desk surface without producing glare on your computer monitor.
Be aware that halogen lights produce a lot of light, but they also produce a lot of heat, which can be a problem in the summer months if you don’t have air conditioning in your office.
Every day we spend many hours at a desk in front of a computer. Our bodies are not designed to hold these kinds of positions for long periods of time. Therefore, it is suggested that you change position often, and simple stretching exercises, which can be performed at the desk, are beneficial.

This is even more important when working in a less than ideal situation for a “home office”, such as at a table, not a desk. Sitting in a kitchen chair.

Stretch Breaks help reduce tension.
Tension from sitting
Tension from stress

Physical Activity Breaks for the Workplace Resource Guide is a great resource for ideas.
Take Care of Yourself!!

Practice safe Social Distancing!!

Wash Your Hands!

Do something every day to help maintain your Isolation Well Being

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- [Image]"
While this publication is tips for working from home, I want to end with a recognition that you are working from home due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

As the COVID-19 crisis continues to unfold, it is the nation’s public health nutritionists who are on the front lines of this public health emergency, ensuring that our most vulnerable receive vital nutritional assistance.

To help you with this critical work, ASPHN has created a resource page of categorized links. These websites are ones which we know are offering accurate and timely information and guidance. We hope you will bookmark this page and use it often during the coming months.

ASPHN wishes to acknowledge and thank all public health nutritionists for your incredible work and leadership. The value of your work is all around us. And we are seeing it... minute by minute... hour by hour... day by day.
Send questions to Sandy@ASPHN.org.