



## Working from home with kids - keeping them entertained and managing your mental health

by RG Wellbeing Team

Those of us with kids can be forgiven for wondering what working from home without children is like. We picture naps, quiet lunch times and hours where snacks are not in demand. Let's be honest, it is a fun daydream, but far from reality. So how are we to manage our time, ensuring the work is done, the children are kept entertained and we are not all climbing the walls at the end of the day?

### **Expel some energy**

That work call will never happen if the children are hyperactive and have excess energy to burn. After breakfast, before the emails are even looked at, get the kids outside for some all-important running around. Take them on a long walk, bike ride, or, if parks are open, climb over some equipment. Allowing them the opportunity to burn off some steam before the day has properly begun. This will, hopefully, allow you to tend to work matters when you return, without them running riot through your study space.

### **Create a timetable**

Children generally thrive on routine so work together to create a timetable that they will understand. Highlight the times that you will need to work, ensuring they understand the importance of giving you your own space to do so. At the same time create obvious chunks of the day that will be dedicated to them. If they are reassured that they will have allocated times of your attention they will feel more comfortable in giving you the space that you need. During their time ensure mobile phones are switched off and you do not cut their time short. Should there be a change to the routine make sure you give your kids plenty of notice.

### **Busy Bags**

Spend a weekend putting together 'busy bags'. These bags should contain a variety of quiet activities that will entertain your children when you are on an important call or Zoom meeting. Activities can include crafts, Hama beads, Lego, colouring in, dot to dot, puzzles, drawing and painting equipment to name a few. If you are worried about mess, opt for mess free colouring sets. For younger children reach for sensory bags instead, full of shiny paper, pinecones, hairbrushes, socks or mirrors. Ensure the bags are not overused and the contents switched regularly, and the children will enjoy revealing their wares.

### **Long term projects**

Just like many adults, children will benefit from a long-term project during periods of uncertainty. These projects will help distract them from what is going on in the outside world and reduce their anxiety. Sit down and discuss their interests and create a project together, from go kart building to fashion designing from play writing to band forming, make sure that there are elements they can do independently when you are working and dedicate time to work on it together. They will flourish seeing their creations come together.

### **Make time for you**

It is only natural to feel overwhelmed, so it is vital you take time out to focus on you. Ask your partner, or someone in your support bubble, to watch the children for half an hour while you go for a walk or run or take part in some yoga or meditation. It doesn't matter what your chosen activity is, so long as you are making time to relax on a regular basis.

### **And remember...**

You are not alone in this. At the end of a long day, particularly when you are drained by it all, reach out to another person in a similar situation. Many of us are trying to juggle the demands of parenthood, work and lockdown constraints and sometimes you need to vent that frustration. Call a friend, find an online group or a local charity that can help talk it through when it all becomes a bit too much.