



# Adjusting to Work/School in a Pandemic

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Sponsored By:

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*The phrase of the day is no longer "work-life balance" ... it is "pandemic security."*

- HOW HAS THIS TRANSITION TO WORKING IN A PANDEMIC BEEN FOR YOU?
- WHAT NEW STRESSORS HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED?
- WHAT HAVE YOUR WORRIES & CONCERNS FOR HEALTH & SAFETY BEEN LIKE?
- LINK FOR A PERSPECTIVE ON THIS, [HERE](#).

# Mounting distractions and worries related to COVID-19 requires:

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## Increased clarity in work/life balance

- Remove uncertainties by clarifying roles & responsibilities during this time
- **Tip:** Have a conversation with your mentor/boss/supervisor/PI/Faculty advisor to ensure both parties are on the same page, regarding expectations. Set up ongoing meetings to revisit regularly.

## Focus on top priorities

- **Ask:** “What really needs to get done today?”
  - What do I need to accomplish in order to be and feel productive (within reason)? (*i.e.*, how many hours/tasks are required?)
- **Reflect:** “What are my goals for today vs the week?”
- Reality of our situation is that our personal lives are now enveloped in this process, which is outside of our control. Still, we do our best to limit loss of control in our work/life.

# Other suggestions...

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**Clarify and communicate.** Have regularly scheduled Zoom meetings (weekly/every 2-weeks/monthly) with someone you report to or someone from your School that you trust. This helps to relieve anxiety & stress associated with shifting roles and expectations. If these change, be sure to ask for clarity and how you can better improve.



**Peer support is crucial.** When you feel you are struggling with “productivity self esteem” or guilt for not being productive enough, reach out and schedule Zoom chats with peers and colleagues you trust to consult and support each other through this time.



**Navigating conflict or discrimination is difficult.** Consider reaching out to *Ombud’s Office*, *Office of Case Management* or *Student and Resident Mental Health* for extra support or to set-up a meeting with your Dean or Program Director to discuss your concerns. If you are a faculty, PRA, staff (including post docs) you can also call the [Wellbeing Line](#).

# General Support Groups to connect Offered by the Department of Psychiatry

\*For more info & to  
register, click [\*\*HERE\*\*](#)

*These are non-clinical groups (You do  
not need to be a patient to join!)*



Who: Students, Fellows, Residents & Post Docs

When: Tues & Thurs (12-1pm)

Led By: Noa Heiman (psychologist)



Who: Non-clinical Faculty and Staff

When: Mon (12pm) & Thurs (9am)

Led By: Dr. Dana Bell-Brown (M); Mandy Doria, LPC (T)



Who: Students, Residents, Fellows & Faculty on  
Clinical Rotation

When: Mon (7-8pm)

Led By: Dr. Rachel Davis

# Other updates on programs

A new student support group will be opening up, as current one is filled (time TBA, as waitlist is built)- Email [noa.Heiman@cuanschutz.edu](mailto:noa.Heiman@cuanschutz.edu) to register/inquire

## New Drop-In Grief Support Groups for anyone at CU Anschutz and their families:

Adult Group Wednesdays 5-6:30pm led by Mandy Doria, LPC and Julie Wolfe, MD

Adolescent Group Tuesdays 3:00-4:30pm, led by Erin Wertheimer, LCSW, RPT-S & Laurel Niep, LCSW.

Info. on Registration is [posted here.](#)

Alex Yannacone from the Depression Center presented tips and coping strategies with **Health Links** called [Promoting Mental Health & Resilience during COVID-19](#) viewable on YouTube

The **Wellness Center** updated their [website](#) to include virtual classes, workshops and resources.

Check out **CU Denver's** options for [virtual classes/programs](#) as well!



## WHAT TYPE OF MASK DO I NEED?

### HOMEMADE MASK OR PAPER MASK



**WHO SHOULD WEAR:**  
General public

**WHEN TO WEAR:**  
When a person can't perform social distancing; scarves and bandanas can be used if necessary.

**USE LIMITATIONS:**  
Cloth masks should be washed after each use; don't wear damp or when wet from spit or mucus.

### SURGICAL MASK



**WHO SHOULD WEAR:**  
Health care workers and patients in health care settings

**WHEN TO WEAR:**  
During single or multiple patient interactions or routine health procedures; recommended when N95s aren't available.

**USE LIMITATIONS:**  
Ideally should be discarded after each patient encounter. Extended use is preferable to reuse.

### N95 RESPIRATOR



**WHO SHOULD WEAR:**  
Health care workers

**WHEN TO WEAR:**  
Caring for patients with COVID-19 and performing procedures that put them most at risk of virus exposure.

**USE LIMITATIONS:**  
Ideally should be discarded after each patient encounter. Extended use is preferable to reuse.

## HOW TO MAKE A HOMEMADE MASK OUT OF FABRIC OR CLOTH



### MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Fabric (100% cotton is most effective)
- Fabric ties
- Scissors
- Sewing machine or a needle and thread



### INSTRUCTIONS:

- Measure and cut two pieces of fabric in a rectangle pattern to fit snugly around the face (size 12 inches by 6 inches is standard for adults)
- Tightly sew both layers together on all edges
- Cut fabric ties to fit around the ears
- Sew the ties to the insides of the mask on the smaller edge, repeat on both sides
- Resew the sides to ensure a tight seal between both pieces of fabric and the earpiece

# Structuring Your Day

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## 1. Sleep & wake times

Try to set regular hours of when you tuck-in for the night & when you start your day



## 2. Morning ritual

Identify what are the things you need to do to begin your day to ensure positivity & productivity



## 3. Set “working hours”

Determine how many hours are necessary to accomplish your daily work-life tasks



## 4. Make a leisure hour

Practice self-care, take time to reflect, and end your day with an enjoyable hobby



## 5. Time management considerations

Focus/Motivation strategies

Taking breaks

Be flexible (& compassionate) with yourself

# 1. Sleep and wake times

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## Put a window of time around your bedtime

- Sleep hygiene involves doing the same activities in the same order each night to prepare your mind for bed
  - E.g., Change into PJs, Brush teeth/wash face, read for 10-15 minutes with cup of tea, do belly breathing or square breathing while lying down
- If you had a stressful day, consider how you're going to "come down" from the day by practicing self care
  - E.g., do a relaxation exercise or a calming activity
- Give yourself about an hour to calm down before you try to go to sleep (don't switch directly from doing work or active task to going straight to bed). Then, give your body *permission to relax and let go of the day*.

## Set your alarm the same time everyday for sleep and wake

- Your body will eventually wake up on its own around or before that time if you keep your bedtime the same.

## Limit your intake of caffeine, especially in late afternoons/evening

- Caffeine and sugary beverages are stimulants that can interfere with your body's ability to relax.

If you are still having sleep problems, feel anxious or worried/have racing thoughts before bed, cannot fall asleep, or are waking up very early, consider reaching out for a [mental health appointment](#).

## 2. Morning ritual



Give your body time to transition from sleep to work mode (don't jump right into the 'work day')

- Think of this practice as that time you'd normally take to commute to school/work.
- Everyone is different. If you are a "morning person" you may only need ½ hour for this. If you take a while to get your brain warmed up, consider 1-1 ½ hours of a transition activity.

Use something you used to do and EXPAND on that, take longer to do it, enjoy it.

- (i.e. walking your dog, cup of coffee, watching/reading the news (be careful with this one!))

If you didn't have a morning ritual before, try creating one!

- Suggestions: light exercise, yoga or stretching; read a short story/chapter of a longer novel; take time to prepare a healthy breakfast & enjoy it; check in with social media (again, only if this is healthy- and only do that for designated time without distractions)



Ease into the day 😊

# Stay focused on the task at hand

Be intentional. Know what you're doing.

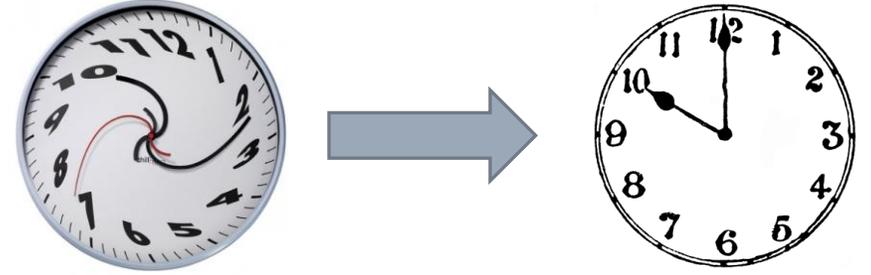
If you decide to do something, decide how long you're going to do it for, and commit to that task without switching and getting distracted.

This will prevent you from switching too often and not being focused enough on what you're doing.



# 3. Set working hours

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Consider how many hours you need to work in a day

- This may change depending on your tasks/goals at hand.

Split those hours into chunks of time to create a “work day”

- This may look like...

(1) work 9-11am, lunch and long walk 11am-12pm, work 12-4:30pm, dinner 5-6, relax 6-9, prepare for sleep 9-10

(2) work 8:30-11:30am, exercise 11:30am-12:30pm, lunch 12:30-1:30pm, work 1:30-5:30, dinner 5:30-7, finish up work/studying 7-8:30, relax and prepare for sleep 8:30-10pm

Setting a schedule not only helps you get into routines, but it forces you to stick to tasks based on designated working hours, and allows you to adjust accordingly **without guilt**.

- If you have class times or long scheduled meetings, consider setting work/study hours *outside of these times*.

DO what works for YOU.

- Try something for a week, then make changes with what’s working/what’s not.
- Allow for day-to-day flexibility depending on work tasks.

# 4. Build in a leisure hour

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Practice self care.

- *Anything* that gives you a mental break from your day to day work and routine.
- Taking breaks allows you to come back refreshed, stronger, and ready to work, whether that is in the short term or in the long term.
- Creativity is inspired during periods of breaks and rest.

Be creative.

- How can you adjust what you normally do for exercise or self care and adapt during Shelter in Place orders?
- Ex: going to the mountains for a hike → explore a new nearby city park while practicing social distancing
- If you liked going out to eat, find a new recipe to challenge yourself, cook, and have a dinner party with friends or even by yourself.

Balance: “You can’t pour from an empty cup.”

- Every time you give energy to work, friends, and family, you pour from your cup.
- What fills up your cup? What gives you energy, motivation, and meaning?

# WHAT IS YOUR *Self love* LANGUAGE?

## *Physical Touch*

**Things that make your body feel good or focus on your physical well being**

- Massage
- Warm bath
- Cozy blankets
- Physical Activity
- Skincare routine
- Swimming
- Stretching

## *Acts of Service*

**Doing or arranging things for yourself that make you feel good**

- Therapy
- Acts of Kindness
- Scheduling
- Cleaning
- Delegating
- Going Out

## *Receiving Gifts*

**Treating yourself by purchasing things that make you happy**

- Going away on a short trip
- Craft supplies
- Comfy clothes
- Chocolates
- New book
- Beautiful Journal
- Indulgence
- Invest in yourself

## *Quality Time*

**Spending time alone, hobbies & doing things that you love**

- Meditation
- Hobby/Creative time
- Taking yourself on a date
- Relaxing

## *Words of Affirmation*

**Giving yourself pep talks and encouraging yourself**

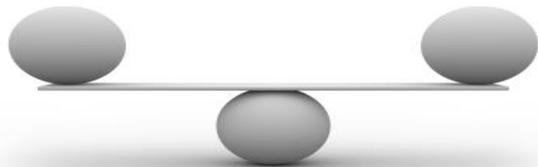
- Positive Self-talk
- Daily affirmations
- Journaling
- Mantras
- Leave yourself little post-its with positive reminders

# 5. Time management strategies

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Life is a marathon, not a sprint; pace yourself accordingly.  
–Amby Burfoot



## FOCUS / MOTIVATION

- Practice a mindfulness meditation before starting tasks
- Write down your top 3 goals for the day
- Be intentional with your tasks

Start day with tasks you procrastinated doing yesterday, or less preferred tasks

- Then reward yourself with things you like enjoying

## BUILD IN BREAKS

- [Pomodoro technique](#) – 25 minutes of work, 5 minutes of break
- Consider how many “chunks” of time you need, based on how many hours you’d like to work
  - Ex: 6 hours of work = 12 “tomatoes” with Pomodoro, or 6-7 50-minute segments of work.
  - Consider taking a break for exercise/lunch.. DO WHAT WORKS FOR YOU!

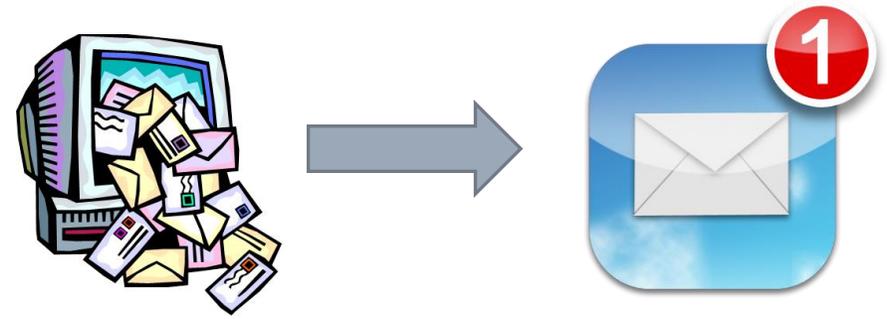
## BE FLEXIBLE WITH YOURSELF

Allow yourself to make changes as you go, while looking for strategies and routines that are working for you! Every day may bring it’s new challenges.

*This crisis is about running/lasting a marathon, not winning the race for the day.*

# Email suggestions

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Consider devoting different chunks of time to just checking and responding to email

- Similarly to what I'd suggest for dedicating time to responding to text messages and personal calls from friends/family)
- Keep work and personal life as separate as possible.
- **Boundaries are KEY. Consider the intention, as always** ("Right now, I'm going to check emails...)

Organize emails into **different categories**, using folder systems

- Split projects, work themes/tasks, or people.

**Pin** emails at the top of your inbox that need to be addressed today/this week.

Create a **"Feel Good" folder** to look at when motivation is running low.

- This can include emails of praise or encouragement from colleagues, the University, or anything that made you feel good about your work.
- Also include work you have done that you're proud of in this folder (presentation, employee review, etc).

# Motivational strategies to deal with Procrastination

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**Set a timer** for 10 or 20 minutes.

- Promise yourself to work on that task for that amount of time.
- Chances are, you will continue to work on it. Often, it's more about *starting* the task that you're avoiding than it is about *not being able to do it*.

**Change your work environment/space** if you're not feeling productive.

- Go to a different room, table or space.
- Changing your environment can help to start a task with a fresh outlook.

Do **less desirable tasks first**, reward yourself later with more enjoyable ones.

- Get them out of the way!

**Get physical!** (especially if deep breathing or mindfulness isn't your cup of tea)

- Stand up, move, stretch, do 10 jumping jacks or pushups
- Getting the heart rate and blood flow going can increase focus, energy and attention to task.

**Practice positive self talk**

- "I don't want to do this" → "You can do this"
- Be willing, not willful – "Even though I don't want to do this, I am going to do this because it's important." Do it anyway!

*When this ends, may we find that we have become more like the people that we wanted to be, we were called to be, we hoped to be, and may we stay that way – better for each other and because of the worst.*



*You do not need to know precisely what is happening, or exactly where it is all going. What you need is to recognize the possibilities and challenges offered by the present moment, and to embrace them with courage, faith and hope.*



# Other ideas...

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Consider a creative project that you may have more time to do.

Take up a new hobby.

Reward yourself with self care after a long day or work week.

What has worked from the [Mental Health Took Kit](#)?

What are some things you have been doing?

Other thoughts or ideas?

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