7 Signs You're Suffering From Work-From-Home Burnout

Working from home certainly sounds like the stuff of dreams for many of us. I've been working from "home" (i.e. hotels, hostels, huts and, most recently, a converted van) for two years while freelancing around the world. And I'm still not yet immune to the natural high of dilly-dallying around pant-less for the entirety of a workday.

There are some days that I sit on the couch all day with my laptop propped up on a pillow beside a big ole' bowl of snacks. I never have to worry about mind-splitting traffic in my morning commute from my bed to the kitchen table. And I find that, despite the crippling boredom that sometimes ensues after not engaging with the outside world for days on end, I'm far more productive when I work from home. I've no distractions – no coworkers with whom to chit chat about the weekend, no one sitting next to me loudly chewing their lunch with their mouth open, no nothing. Just me and my laptop.

There's a whole host of research that supports the many benefits of working from home. That said, working from home is not always so idyllic.

Some days, I cope with deafening silence and a severe lack of socialization. I'm devoid of a team spirit surrounding me to keep motivation up. And I often grapple with the level of sheer willpower it can take to not procrastinate when I have the freedom to work at my own pace. I also find myself suffering from workaholism to some degree. In other words, when I'm *not* doing something work-related, I question whether or not I should actually be doing more. That's probably a product of not being able to "leave work at the office."

Truthfully, working from home can sometimes feel like I'm burning myself out – and as more and more of us move to remote work options amidst the COVID-19 outbreak, warding off burn out and paying attention to our mental and emotional health at this time is more important than ever. Here are seven signs of WFH burn out that may mean it's time to log off, put stronger boundaries in place and switch up your routine.

You find yourself working around the clock

Working from home means that you don't have that tangible separation between work-life and home-life. You can't just leave the office, head home and "turn off." Because of this, you might struggle to set boundaries for yourself and, therefore, you may find yourself working all the time.

Working around the clock could be affecting your health in that you're experiencing exhaustion to the nth degree. You're not eating properly because you have no time to cook or, because you're so tired, you're making unhealthier choices. And you have little to no time to focus on self-care, whatever the looks like to you.

You procrastinate now more than ever

Maybe you got yourself on a work kick once you discovered the benefits of working from home; free of distractions, you found yourself on a roll. But you never slowed down to find a steady, comfortable pace. So, eventually, you felt too fried to continue on, and you began procrastinating. You went from a having a killer, productive few weeks last month to feeling like you don't have the brain power or bandwidth to accomplish anything this month. You've burned yourself out.

Of course, procrastination can take a toll on your mental health. When you don't have goals toward which you're working, even small ones, you can feel like you're failing. Tons of science suggests that having aspirations you're actively trying to achieve can boost your overall morale. And a happier mindset, of course, mitigates stress, which keeps you physically healthier, too.

You feel like you have no one to whom you can turn when things go south

You might have experienced "too much people-ing" around the office in the past. So having time and space to yourself is hugely valuable. But working without others can be a blessing *and* a curse. Sustainable connections are key to both our work lives and our personal lives.

When you're in the office and a problem arises, for example, you have an entire company surrounding you — people to whom you can turn for help. When you're on your own in the isolated confines of your four living room walls, however, you might feel utterly alone in figuring out a resolution. And you might burn yourself out in trying to do just that.

The fact of the matter is that we're all only human, and we largely rely on others for support. While you can certainly reach out to colleagues and managers by email or set up phone or video calls, not having that immediate in-person interaction can quickly derail your spirits.

You feel an overarching anxiety to do more

Whether or not it's a good idea, we tend to compare ourselves to others. When I used to work at the office, it just simply felt better to skip out only *after* someone else left first. If I was the first to go, I couldn't help but question how others perceived my work ethic. Listen, I'm neither saying this is healthy nor that it's an acceptable mentality, but it's honest.

Working from home, however, I don't have anyone against whom I can compare myself. I just assume people are working harder and longer than me, so I should work harder and longer, too, right? Wrong. It's easy to get wrapped up in the feeling of having to do more and more and more, but I've said it before, and I'll say it again: Working longer doesn't necessarily mean working better and vice versa. You only burn yourself out. After all, I probably finish my workload in a fraction of the time I'd finish if I were in an office because when I go into my zone working at home, I'm in it until I'm out of it.

This anxiety over having to do more because other people probably are (an unfounded assumption) can take a toll on your mental health and, equally, affect your work. After all, isn't it better to just do your job well than to pile on as much as

possible just for the sake of taking on more?

You check your email notifications like clockwork

I'm addicted to email. I refresh my email inbox on my phone more often than I scroll through social media, which I admittedly also do far too much. If you, too, find that you're constantly checking work communication platforms at all hours of the day and night, you're probably burning yourself out.

It's OK to unplug. It's important to set boundaries for yourself and make the effort to not check your emails — unless urgent — on weekends and during odd hours when you should be, well, probably sleeping. If you don't pull your head out of work every now and again, you won't be able to properly recharge and tackle your workload with 100%.

You're allowing meetings to run well past their delineated time blocks

When you work from home, you'll likely have to take phone calls and sign into video meetings every now and again in order to stay connected with your managers and colleagues. This kind of communication is important to keep everyone abreast of workplace happenings and ensure that each person on the team is on the same page.

That said, it's easy to let calls and video conferences go over when you're all working from the comfort of your own homes. If you have no meetings following your current one, you may feel like you've got nowhere else to be, so why not? You're not in a rush to get home, after all.

But it's important that you treat all WFH meetings as you would in-office meetings. Even if you don't have any following obligations, your teammate may have other engagements to which they need to tend. And, frankly, you do have other ways you could be spending your time, whether that's working or capitalizing on some more "you" time. Again, without adherence to boundaries, you can burn yourself out.

You stop "adulting" altogether

OK, truth be told, working from home is wonderful in that you don't *have* to adult all that much. You don't really need to get dressed. And you don't really need to make your bed if you're only going to sit on it all day.

But I find that it takes a serious toll on my sanity if I start to get lazy — which happens, I find, during times when I've burned myself out. I will go — and have gone — stir crazy. And it does affect my work output.

I, therefore, make it a point to do a workout and meditate for 30 minutes every morning before I dive right into work. I make my bed every day. And, despite not having to get dressed, I more often than not do. It makes me feel more professional and, when I feel more professional, I act more professional and produce more professional work.

The point is not to let your newfound freedom turn you into a hobbit. Because it easily can and, while working from your dark and cozy lair might feel fantastic for a few days, it can quickly become a toxic environment if you don't treat your home like a workspace and yourself like a professional.

A version of this post previously appeared on Fairygodboss, the largest career community that helps women get the inside scoop on pay, corporate culture, benefits, and work flexibility. Founded in 2015, Fairygodboss offers company ratings, job listings, discussion boards, and career advice.

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