



Live Well, Work Well

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MANAGING WORK-FROM-HOME PARANOIA

As we all know, working from home (WFH) has become the norm for many organizations across the country this past year due to COVID-19 restrictions. This change has almost entirely eliminated the social aspect of the physical workplace, which has made it difficult for some employees to fully understand what their co-workers or managers might be asking of them. As a result, WFH paranoia has become common in remote work settings.

What Is WFH Paranoia?

Paranoia is a state of distrust or fear in which someone misinterprets an ambiguous situation in a negative way, thus causing them to feel some type of persecution. With this in mind, WFH paranoia can be a result of misinterpreting a comment or action from a peer or supervisor, among other occurrences.

For example, let's say your boss decides not to include you in a meeting that you expected to take part in. Paranoia could bring you to the conclusion that you did something wrong or you're going to get fired. Yet, in reality, your boss knew you had a lot of work to take care of and they were just being respectful of your time.

What Might Cause WFH Paranoia?

WFH paranoia can be rooted in many different things and come in a variety of forms. A common cause of WFH paranoia can be a delay between sending an email to a co-worker or manager and receiving a response.

During that time, you might be second guessing your word choice or thinking you may have done something poorly. In a scenario like this, it's important to remember that everyone has a unique, oftentimes busy schedule. Instead of getting stressed about the delayed response, it's best to just relax and trust that you did everything to the best of your ability.

Ways to Manage WFH Paranoia

Although people might deal with WFH paranoia in different ways, there are some common tactics that can help you alleviate it. Here are healthy ways to manage WFH paranoia:

- **Eliminate the personal aspect.** As it relates to the workplace, you may take actions or comments personally. Try to view these actions or comments as constructive and assume they are for the betterment of the workplace, not for your personal detriment.
- **Write down your anxieties.** At the end of the workday, it is essential to step away from work tasks and focus on yourself and your mental health. However, this will be a difficult feat if you're feeling anxious. As such, write down your anxieties throughout the day, do what you can to manage them and throw them in the trash at the end of the day.

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- **Get ample rest.** Rest plays an important role in many aspects of your well-being, including work productivity. Make sure you're getting proper sleep so you can stay energized and complete your daily tasks effectively. If anything, getting enough rest can help alleviate thoughts of paranoia due to poor work performance.
- **Make your expectations known.** If you are looking to receive an email response or other form of workplace feedback within a certain time period, clearly communicate those expectations. Nevertheless, ensure the amount of time allotted permits others to navigate through their own remote work schedules.
- **Talk it out.** If you're feeling paranoid, talk about it with a close friend, family member or loved one. Doing so can allow you to get those negative thoughts off your chest and out of your mind.

Especially in a remote work setting, it's essential to set aside ample time each day for yourself to relax and recharge for your mental health.

Remember, communication is key in hybrid and remote work settings. Taking care of WFH paranoia can be difficult. If it's becoming hard for you to manage your WFH paranoia and you've tried to alleviate it through multiple mediums, consider seeking a mental health professional to further assist you.