Caring for ourselves
During the coronavirus

Working from home
Practices to care for ourselves whilst working from home during the coronavirus pandemic
Caring for ourselves during the coronavirus pandemic

Working from home

The coronavirus pandemic has changed how we are living our day-to-day lives. For many of us, this includes a change in the way we are working, with many of us now working from home. We are trying to continue working in a world we no longer recognise - trauma on this global scale is probably leaving you feeling overwhelmed, anxious and a little lost; which may be conflicting with your ability to carry on with your job as normal (or as ‘normal’ as it can be at this time).

When we are working from home, the boundaries between our work and personal life can become blurry. Through words, illustrations and a sprinkling of humour, this booklet will explore some of the emotions at work that you may be experiencing during this time, how we can recognise these as being normal & explore ways in which we can be kind to ourselves and our work in these difficult times.

Working from home can be great: no soul-crushing commute, no waiting for the elevator that never comes, no one stealing your lunch from the office fridge... but it is not without its challenges. In addition to nothing making you shake in fear as much as an unstable WiFi connection, working from home can throw some challenges your way. This booklet will identify such challenges, explore how the trauma we are being exposed to may be impacting upon our work lives and provide some tips in adapting to this new way of working whilst upholding self-care.

IN THIS BOOKLET...
- How the pandemic may be impacting upon your emotions at work
- Feedback & decision-making
- Virtual communication & emails
- A work-life balance
- Tips & gentle reminders
*WARNING*

This booklet uses illustrations, a sprinkling of humour & mild sarcasm in an attempt to alleviate some of the stress & anxiety associated with the challenges of working from home.
Some useful illustrations...

How much I'm able to get done

- Normally
- During an unprecedented global crisis
Hierarchy of remote working needs

1. **Physiological needs**
2. **Coffee**
3. **Stable wifi**
4. **Chat & Texting**
5. **Likes & Favourites**
6. **Putting phone on airplane mode**
7. **Esteem**
8. **Self-actualization**
9. **Love & belonging**
10. **Safety**
Hello, I’m human

- stressed
- angry
- proud
- motivated
- sad
- tired
- happy
A normal way in which the global pandemic may be affecting your work

#1

A mushy brain / not being as productive as before
What I thought would make me productive:

Hard work

What actually does:

Exercise
Sleep
Healthy eating
Hard work
Time off
A normal way in which the global pandemic may be affecting your work

#2

Anxiety, conflict & spiralling
There are some emotions that you may be experiencing around work at this time...

**Anxiety**

Get anxiety out of your head and put it on paper instead. Make a list of everything that is causing you anxiety. Then, triage your stressors. There are ‘withins’ and ‘beyonds.’ ‘Withins’ are issues you can act on within your control. ‘Beyonds’ are stressors that are outside of your control.

Reframe ‘good enough’: set a realistic perspective on your achievements. ‘Enough’ has to be a metric within your control. ‘Enough’ can’t be ‘when I feel good’ because feeling good is a moving target.

What to do when you are feeling anxious:
- take deep breaths
- do a little bit of exercise
- meditate briefly
- summon a dark spirit to vanquish your enemies (just a suggestion)
Conflict

Things to say during an argument

HELPFUL

*Helpful unless you’re dating

UNHELPFUL

How do you see the situation?

Let’s take a break*

How can we compromise?

I get that

You’re becoming hysterical

What’s wrong with you?

#sorrynotsorry

Spiralling

Otherwise known as the ‘grump spirals.’ If you are using words like ‘always’, ‘never’ and ‘catastrophe’, it is usually an indication that you are stuck in a grump spiral. One way to keep on top of a grump spiral is by using a ‘smile file’: a file on your PC/laptop where you keep positive feedback from colleagues, positive comments and emails thanking you for your hard work. Criticism will linger longer than praise, so being able to quickly remind yourself of what you do well will help you weather your inevitable gloomy moments.
A normal way in which the global pandemic may be affecting your work.

The personal life & work life boundary becoming blurry.
WORK - LIFE BALANCE

“Balance” before coronavirus

Work hard

Play hard

“Balance” during coronavirus

Work hard

Get into bed, put phone away, read, fall asleep hard at 9:30pm
A normal way in which the global pandemic may be affecting your work

Difficulties making decisions in such uncertainty
THE ‘NO HARD FEELINGS’ GUIDE TO DECISION-MAKING

- write out your options: if you’ve only written two things, take a moment to see if you can introduce additional alternatives. Choices aren’t usually binary. When you limit your decision to ‘yes’ or ‘no’ or ‘A’ or ‘B’, you can end up making the stakes higher than they might actually be.

- list everything you are feeling. Are you irritated? Afraid? Craving caffeine?

- cross out every emotion that is not relevant to the decision at hand; say you are upset because you just had an argument with your partner. These are real feelings but you should try not to let them impact your broader decision-making.

- link the remaining emotions to specific options; notice if they are tied to a specific choice. Are you most excited when you imagine yourself picking option A? Are you afraid that you will regret choosing option B?

- ask ‘what?’, not ‘why?’ Compare ‘why are you afraid?’ to ‘what are you afraid of?’ You can easily answer the first question with a self-pitying platitude (‘because I never try anything new’) but the second forces you to address your specific feelings about the decision at hand.

- run your thinking past another person to help identify biases that may be affecting your decision-making.

- make a decision
## Indecision Jeopardy Diagram

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of hours spent in indecision</th>
<th>No. of things I should be doing instead of worrying</th>
<th>Potentially crippling regrets</th>
<th>No. of people who have listened to me obsess</th>
<th>No. of google searches I thought would help</th>
<th>No. of outlandish worst case scenarios</th>
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</table>
A normal way in which the global pandemic may be affecting your work

#5

Feeling overwhelmed by emails
An affliction of the modern workplace is ‘diarrheamail,’ with the vortex of email misunderstandings only likely to get worse as our interactions move into a digital space. A great deal of our time involves reading, writing and sending emails. So, until someone invents the self-writing email, we all need to figure out how to avoid email overwhelm...

The ‘Touch Email Once’ Rule

When you open an email, try and respond immediately (if you can). Touching an email more than once wastes time and creates anxiety. If you read all your emails first thing in the morning in an effort to get right into work, then mark them all as unread with a plan to respond later in the day, you risk spending the morning obsessively thinking about all the emails waiting in your inbox. This means you may be unable to truly concentrate and by the time you actually open your inbox again, you are so drained by the mental drafts that you may just feel like closing the email again.

If there is an email where you can’t do this with, don’t put pressure on yourself to respond immediately. Adulthood is emailing ‘sorry for the delayed response’ back and forth until one of you gives up. When I write ‘sorry for the delayed response’, what I actually mean is ‘I saw your email and forgot to respond right away and then it turned into a whole thing that I’ve been worrying about for two weeks.’

Google translate for emails:

- ‘just wondering’ = ‘I’m about to make a ridiculous request’
- ‘where are we on this?’ = ‘you’re still not done?’
- ‘maybe I’m missing something’ = ‘WTF’
- ‘I’m aware’ = ‘I’m annoyed’
- ‘I’m sure you...’ = ‘you better have...’
- ‘I’ll take it from here’ = ‘you’re done’
A normal way in which the global pandemic may be affecting your work

#6

Skipping your work lunch break (not eating) / constant snacking at your desk
Desk food

Now that we are missing our daily office debates about chain coffee shops and the superiority of artisanal roasts and the ‘get-out-of-the-office-coffee-run,’ you may find that you are skipping your work lunch or you may be constantly snacking at your desk.

WHAT YOU GRAB FROM THE KITCHEN:

Fruit  Nuts  Chocolate covered nuts  Chocolate

Stress level
A normal way in which the global pandemic may be affecting your work

#7

Virtual communication problems
VIRTUAL MEETINGS CHECKLIST

- Late start
- "WiFi"
- Someone forgets mute
- Complete zone out
- Ends early
- Meeting should have been an email
- "Hi, who just joined?"
- "Can you email that to everyone?"
- ".....Are you there?"
- "I have to jump on another call"
- Sound of someone typing, possibly with a hammer
- Child or animal noises
- Loud, painful echo/feedback
- "Hi, can you hear me?"
- "No, it's still loading"
- "Sorry, I was on mute"
- "Hello? Hello?"
- "Can everyone see my screen?"
- "Sorry, I didn’t catch that"
- "So...(faded out) I can...(undistinguishable) by...(cuts out) okay?"
A normal way in which the global pandemic may be affecting your work

Challenges surrounding virtual feedback
GIVING FEEDBACK

How can you give feedback that doesn’t pack such a painful punch? Great feedback helps the receiver move past their knee-jerk defensive reaction (“I’ve worked so hard, how can there be anything to improve?”) and onto determination and action. How to give feedback that makes the receiver feel good (or at least, less bad)...

- focus on specifics: giving vague criticism makes it easy for the receiver to fall down the “I did a bad thing so I am bad” rabbit hole. Focusing on specifics makes it harder to take personally and gives the recipient a clear directive on how to improve.

- make it about bridging the gap: suggest a different way of doing things and how it will benefit the person. Identify where you want the other person to be, give them clear advice on how to get there and (most importantly), emphasise that you believe that they have the ability to bridge that gap.

- how you say it matters: ask the recipient how and when they prefer to receive feedback. Everybody is different.

Avoid a feedback crime scene

1. Poorly Timed Critique
2. Overly Blunt Delivery
3. Unfiltered Verbal Spray
4. Cutting Remark
5. Devastated Recipient
How to handle criticism without spiralling into self-loathing

STAGES OF GRIEF

DENIAL → ANGER → BARGAINING → DEPRESSION → ACCEPTANCE

STAGES OF RECEIVING NEGATIVE FEEDBACK

HORROR

ANGER → DESPAIR → SHAME → SELF-LOATHING

DENIAL → SELF-LOATHING → ACCEPTANCE

BARGAINING → IMPROVEMENT → EXCITEMENT

Remind yourself that you need feedback in order to improve.
TYPES OF FEEDBACK IN BISCUIT FORM

Oreo
Two positive thoughts around one negative thought

Macaroon
Elegantly worded positive thoughts around one very small negative thought

Black + white cookie
No-nonsense straightforward

Choc chip cookie
Positive with bits of negative sprinkled in

Sugar cookie
Overly sweet and ultimately unfulfilling

Cookie dough
Completely unfiltered
Some tips & gentle reminders
Pace yourself
What people think being emotional at work means:

- Weak
- Unprofessional
- Irrational

What it really means:

You are human
Have regular breaks away from your desk
The Daily Yoga Routine

The “Phone Addiction”
Hold for 20 mins after waking & before sleeping

The “There’s Nothing to Eat”
Lean forward. Stare into fridge. Repeat frequently.

The “Seated Hunch”
Sit down & curl shoulders. Hold for 8–10 hours

The “Despair”
Lie paralyzed with fear on the kitchen floor

The “Existential Crisis”
Lie paralyzed with dread

The “Just Took My Bra Off”
Throw yourself onto couch & revel in your newly found freedom
Have a tidy work space
WHAT’S IN YOUR DESK DRAWER?

2 Pens that work
43 Pens that don’t work
(Dis) loyalty card I used once
Paperwork that seems important
Fake snack: fruit
Actual snack: chocolate
A 2-year old receipt for a sandwich
Set boundaries: you can’t be at your desk 24/7
People pleasing

Say yes

Feel guilty

Feel resentful

Promise myself that I will say no next time
It's okay to procrastinate if you need to.
The five stages of procrastination

1. Denial: “I have so much time”
2. Instagram
3. Everything else on my ‘to-do’ list
4. Bargaining: “I promise I will start in an hour”
5. Last minute panic
Take time out if work is overwhelming
Important lines to draw

“\textit{I need some alone time}”

“\textit{I can’t take this on right now}”

“\textit{I am allowed to feel feelings}”
It's okay if your brain is mushy. Be kind to yourself.
Compassionate working

I hope your day is free of...

- Eternally Moving Deadlines
- Unstable Wifi
- Buffering
- ‘Password is Incorrect’
- Accidental ‘Reply Alls’
You can't be productive all of the time.
Sympathy cards for maximizers

SORRY

DEEPEST SYMPATHIES

YOU HAD TO PICK SOMETHING COOL OVER SOMETHING ELSE COOL

IN THIS TIME OF INDECISION

OUR THOUGHTS ARE WITH YOU

AS YOUR THOUGHTS ARE WITH YOUR NEXT BEST OPTION
Think about how you work best
A GUIDE TO WORKING WITH ME

Fill in your answers, there are some examples below.

It drives me nuts when: I lose my 'to-do' list

On my desk, you are most likely to find: A range of useless pink stationery

I recharge by: Hot chocolate

My work style is: A bull in a china shop

The best way to communicate with me is: Through the medium of dance or post-it note

I prefer to give and receive feedback: IN PERSON
It's okay if you can't concentrate
Start your day with a disco dance party if it helps.
It's okay if you need a bigger cup of tea/coffee/hot chocolate.
You can't do everything
Get dressed for work if you like but pyjamas are also wonderful.
Move around to different work spaces in the house if you need to.
Emails can wait. The world won't end.
Try and work in a space that has lots of natural daylight and next to an open window (fresh air)
It's okay if you haven't got a routine yet
For self-care activity ideas and daily/weekly plans, please take a look at our ‘Caring for Ourselves During The Coronavirus’ booklets. These can be found at www.gina.uk.com/resources

Caring for ourselves
During the coronavirus

Caring for ourselves
During the coronavirus Vol. 2

Trauma-informed practices to care for ourselves during the coronavirus pandemic

Free to download
Caring for ourselves

During the coronavirus

Working from home

This resource has been created by the GINA project CIC.

GINA provides private, specialist counselling for individuals subjected to sexual violence and abuse.

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