

*Remote Guide to*

# **WORKING FROM HOME WITH KIDS**

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# Introduction

As summer comes to a close, millions of working parents are once again preparing for back to school — but this year is likely to look a lot different from years past. For employees continuing to work from home (WFH) amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, the prospect of several more months of a home office alongside home school might seem daunting.

Dipti Sirisinahal, a Senior People Leader at Google, had this to say about supporting and engaging your employees when [speaking to a global audience of HR Leaders](#).

**“I think humans are at the core of battling COVID when it comes to their organization teams, and from a personal perspective. Human beings are the shock absorbers of the system.”**

The Remote Guide to Working From Home With Kids is filled with tips, strategies, and company policies for business leaders and managers to help alleviate some of the stress on their workforce while maintaining productivity and flexibility.

## 5 Strategies for Setting Routines & Schedules to Help Employees Work from Home

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One of the most important things people can do to create some order in what can feel like a chaotic situation is to create specific routines, schedules, and space for working and learning. This section can be shared with your team to help them navigate the potential challenges of working from home with families.

## Key 1

### Set up a workstation for everyone in the house

These stations don't always need to be separate rooms, but if possible, should be separate from each other and your living space. When you are working from the same place you live, physical space and distance becomes important. Physical separation for work and home life can help employees and kids mentally check out when work and school is over.

- Location is important - making sure to be far enough away from daily distractions can help add a buffer during the work day
- Being able to shut a door to signify working time vs. open door policy can also make a big difference for employees with families (or roommates)

## Key 2

### Create a plan for childcare

People in a two-parent household where both parents are working from home should create a schedule for childcare. In the absence of a set plan, the majority of childcare usually falls to one partner, and [it's most likely going to be Mom](#).

University of Southern California's [Understanding Coronavirus in America Study revealed](#) that women are taking on a disproportionate amount of childcare as more parents work from home, with **44% of women in two-parent homes reporting that they are the only household member providing childcare versus just 14% of men.**

Creating a plan in advance of what hours each person will take on childcare duties provides everyone a chance to focus exclusively on work without distractions and meet work obligations. Many employees are [scheduling online fitness and wellness classes](#) for their kids throughout the day to help them stay active and occupied.

### Key 3

## Establish some ground rules

Help employees with strategies on creating rules for members of the family around work hours, play time, schoolwork, and other responsibilities. [Boundaries are critical to success](#) in a setting where parents and kids are all together in the house. For example, letting kids know that during certain hours they cannot interrupt, or creating an “Open/Closed” sign on the door to signal availability or a need for quiet and privacy. When kids have boundaries set, they develop valuable social skills.

Setting expectations as a company may also be necessary, but keep in mind that everyone is struggling to adapt to a new way of working right now, so whenever possible avoid rigid rules that only add to employees’ stress.

### Key 4

## Segment your workdays

Working for eight hours straight with limited breaks probably wasn’t realistic when people sat in an office, and it’s even less so in a WFH setting. Creating short “work bursts” and taking frequent breaks is actually more productive. The [Pomodoro technique](#) recommends repeated segments of working 25 minutes, then taking a 5-minute break. Other analyses have shown that [working for 52 minutes and breaking for 17](#) is also very effective.

How people divide up work/rest time depends on many factors, and each WFH scenario may dictate how someone segments the day. What's important is creating "time buckets" that allow intense focus on work, then breaks as needed to attend to kids or just relax.

HR leaders and management should also recognize that everyone's schedules may be a little different right now (which doesn't mean employees aren't working or aren't productive). It could require rescheduling some of your mandatory meetings or eliminating them altogether to allow more flexibility to employees. It may also require letting go of the standard 9-to-5 schedule and emphasizing productivity based work.

These are some innovative company policies we've seen employed recently:

- Encouraging employees to **restrict internal email for tasks only**, and keep communication on other tools and internal messaging apps
- **Limit meetings to certain hours, like 10am-3pm** so employees have time to work outside of specific meeting blocks
- Having employees take mandatory time to block off their calendar to learn a new skill or further **develop individual competencies once a month**
- One company even recommended having your entire team **wipe their calendars of recurring meetings and start from scratch** with a focus on reducing unnecessary standing meetings (*you know, the ones that could have been covered in an email*)

## Key 5

# Focus on wellness for employees and families

Stress and anxiety are at [all-time highs right now](#) as parents try to figure out how they will cope with another school year with kids at home. In a [Human Resource Executive survey](#):

- **7 out of 10 employees say that COVID-19 is the most stressful time in their working lives**
- **88% of workers have experienced moderate to severe stress in the past four to six weeks**
- **62% of workers lose about an hour a day in productivity from stress (32% lose two or more hours)**

According to the American Psychological Association, parents with children report [average stress levels of 6.7](#) on a scale of 1 to 10 (compared to 5.5 without children), and 46% reported stress levels between 8 and 10.

Tools like BurnAlong, which offers resources for employees and their families to deal with stress, can alleviate some of the burden. With thousands of classes to choose from, parents can find:

- Family-friendly exercise classes
- Kid-friendly exercise classes to help them release some energy
- Yoga for all levels
- Stress management
- Meditation
- Nutrition
- And much more

These resources can also fill extracurricular activity gaps — camps, [after school groups](#), team sports, and more — rather than filling all their extra time with YouTube or video games.

## Managing Relationships Up and Down Your Organization

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When employees are working from home, one of the biggest challenges can be communication. That includes communication to employees, but also upward communication for employees to let you know how work is going. HR leaders and managers need to empower employees to reach out with concerns and challenges, and offer the right tools to do so.

Without these tools, employees feeling the crushing stress of juggling WFH life, kids, isolation, and other coronavirus-related issues may become increasingly despondent. Not only does that affect their emotional well-being, it can also [impact their physical health and productivity](#) as an employee.

Managers and leaders in your organization must recognize the importance of flexibility and trust, now more than ever before. Creating more rules, more cumbersome hoops for people to jump through, or more barriers that conflict with realities of employees' home situation can lead to turnover or other negative consequences.

If you're looking for inspiration or ideas on how you can improve connections in a remote world, companies like Slack are sharing ideas with [webinars like this one](#) on how CIOs worldwide bring teams together. Speaking of Slack, there are tools and technology you can implement in your organization that will help streamline communication and increase collaboration while working from home.



## 5 Best Tools to Communicate and Stay in Touch While Working from Home

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These tools allow you to stay in touch as a team, and also keep scheduled meetings short and to the point because you have other ways for teams to collaborate on their own time.

1. [Slack](#): one of the most popular team communication tools today, Slack allows you to organize all your messaging into categories, teams, and other groupings. It also has calendar features, video conferencing, lots of integrations with other popular productivity apps, and things like polls and GIFs to maintain camaraderie and streamline communication off of email.
2. [Zoom](#): some meetings need to be in person, and video conferences can bridge the gap. Zoom has become one of the most popular with a simple and intuitive interface and advanced features like recording and screen sharing.
3. [Microsoft Teams](#): this all-in-one tool combines features like instant message, Skype video calls, email, calendaring, and more. It's ideal for companies already using Microsoft Office for email.
4. [Google Suite](#): if your team has been using Gmail, Google Docs, Calendar, Drive, and Meet, the G-suite for Business brings it all together in a convenient central space. Plus, once you're on the G-suite for email the other functionality is unlocked and boosted by integration across the product suite.
5. [Trello](#), [Asana](#), [Hive](#), [Monday](#): these project management tools help teams stay on track and meet deadlines when they can't be together. There are several to choose from (beyond this list), and the right one is often a matter of preference. Speak with your team and understand their specific needs to help understand which solution works best for your organization.

*Bonus:* [World Time Buddy](#): while this isn't a communications tool, it's essential for companies with remote workers all over the world. Input specific geographic locations and it helps coordinate meetings and collaboration across time zones.

## Keeping Kids Busy and Entertained

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One of the biggest challenges for parents during this time is finding ways to keep kids busy and entertained, whether they are in school or not. HR departments can share resources with employees like:

- [How to Work from Home with Kids](#)
- [PBS Kids](#)
- [American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry](#)



*Not everyone's 'WFH Buddy' will be this quiet - or occupied - but you can help*

## **You can also share creative new ideas for employees with kids:**

### **Online learning tools**

When you need some quiet time but also want your kids learning: [Common Sense Media](#), [Educational Insights](#), [Hand2Mind](#), and [Learning Resources](#) offer free online educational tools.

### **Reading and storytelling**

Check your local library, use online literacy-based programs like [Audible](#), [Stay Home Kiddos](#), and [Storyline Online](#), or get creative and let kids [share a Google Doc](#) with friends to create their own story.

### **Mindfulness hour**

[BurnAlong](#) yoga or meditation tools help kids (and parents) de-stress for a specific period of time each day. Take classes with family and friends from anywhere in the world where you can see and hear each other live on the screen.

### **Cooking, art, and music**

[Raddish Kids](#) has kid-friendly cooking classes with a subscription, but offers plenty of free resources too. Large organizations like the [Kennedy Center](#) also have educational art-focused online materials.

### **Exercise**

Provide “recess” and [other exercise](#) during the day to burn off some energy. If they can’t safely go outside, use [BurnAlong](#) for kid-themed exercise programs indoors.

## Be Flexible and Adapt

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While parents are learning how to adapt to their life with kids in school at home, HR leaders and managers are also learning to adapt. That means understanding the new barriers and challenges that employees are facing, and modifying your own expectations to meet people where they are today. It requires a high level of trust, but the companies that are succeeding now and will continue to cultivate high levels of employee trust and loyalty in the future are those that lighten up on the rules and let employees figure out their own solutions.

You may be surprised to learn just how creative and adaptable your employees can be as they juggle kids, home, and work obligations.

## Working From Home Doesn't Have to Be Challenging - We're Here to Help

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At BurnAlong, we're passionate about helping employers find better ways to engage employees and improve physical health and well-being. We've taken what we know works offline — the choice of classes, instructors, and interactions with friends — and make it available online. Since the start of the current health crisis, BurnAlong clients have seen significant increases in virtual engagement.

### **How BurnAlong Works**

We provide 1000's of live-streamed and on-demand classes across 45+ health and wellness categories from 100's of certified instructors all over the country. With so many options to choose from, people can find classes to specifically fit their needs.

Classes go beyond just physical activity to incorporate key categories that address and support overall health and well-being for happier, healthier employees. Companies can also create virtual challenges and other activities that encourage engagement and foster social connections.

Every class is accessible from any internet connected device — smartphone, tablet, computer, or television — and any location. Each corporate account comes with 4 free family sub-accounts, so employees can invite friends and family members who motivate them to participate, keeping them connected when health concerns or geographic distance may keep them apart.

WELLNESS FOR ALL YOUR EMPLOYEES

# SCHEDULE A DEMO



400+ Relatable Local Instructors



45+ Health & Wellness Categories

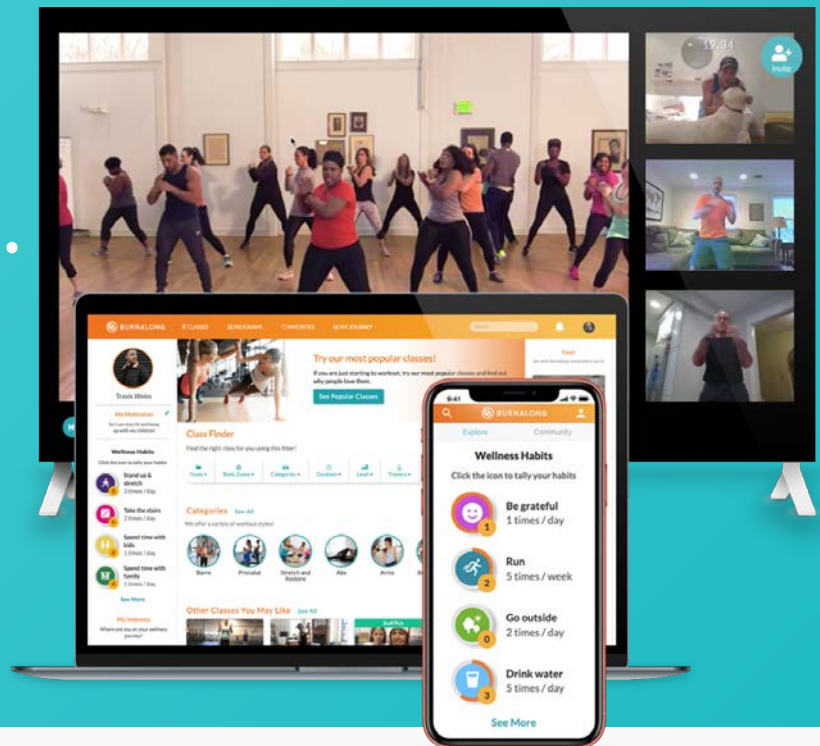


3000+ On-Demand & Live-Streamed Classes



BURNALONG

Take Live Classes with Friends and Family, Anytime, Anywhere



REQUEST A DEMO

Schedule a demo to learn more about BurnAlong's employee wellness platform.