# WR4 Your Space & Environment

This is video four of the working remotely connected module. In this video we start looking at what you can do to make things easier for you to work more effectively from home, starting with things you can do around your physical structure and boundaries and starting in this video for looking at what you can do with your space, and the environment around you.

00:30

Welcome back to the videos, and we are now going to look at how do we create the structure, and the boundaries around us to help make it easy for us to focus and work when we are working from home. The first is looking at our workspace, our physical environment. What do you need around you? What environment helps you to focus and ignore distractions and be at your best?

So we need to think about creating the right space for you to be able to work and focus. So the first thing that we want to think about is to what extent can you set up an actual workstation? So, to be the equivalent of you physically going into your office. We're looking to recreate that in some way in your home space. The absolute ideal is that you can create an entire room or part of a room that you can physically go to, shut the door to the rest of the house, and that is your work space and it is there for you, so you don't have to keep packing everything away every time you go work.

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I appreciate that for most of us that's not entirely possible. If you're setting yourself up to permanently work from home, that would be the absolute ideal if you have a spare room or a spare bedroom that you can dedicate some of that space to being your office. Especially if the two of you are permanently going to be working from home. How can you create different rooms so you're not working in each other’s space and to create a quiet space for each other?

Otherwise if you can create a dedicated desk in one of the rooms to be your office space. The advantage is that you can start creating some of that environment around you, so that when you're looking at it, it’s speaking to you “This is office”, and you're no longer in your truly home space.

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Think about what works for you, in your own personality. So for some people, they're not really comfortable at their desk unless they’ve got lots of stuff spread around them, and all the things that you need in order to feel comfortable. For other people, the things that you need to feel comfortable are an absolutely clear desi so that you can have clear thoughts. Neither is right or wrong. The point is you need to know what works for you. And how do you recreate that optimal environment that helps you forget about what's all around you and actually focus on the job at hand.

Where are you most comfortable? So what's, what is it around you. And, also thinking about comfort. Have you got the right kind of chair that you can sit at it comfortably, for a long time? So this is where we need to think about ergonomics, thinking about your posture. I years ago had an accident and my shoulder was badly damaged so I have a lot of trouble with shoulder pain, if I don't have a properly ergonomic way of sitting.

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Even with a decent office chair I was finding I had problems. Years ago when I was working in Germany, one of my colleagues had a one of those exercise balls. So in desperation I said right I'll give it a go. And actually, that has worked extremely well for me as an office chair, and it has benefits for maintaining my core muscles as well. It gives me a good posture and it prevents the shoulder pain that I was having while using the mouse. So, it might be that things aren't necessarily as obvious as you might think. Think around it.

Next thing you want to think about is what you need to have easily at hand, so that you're not disrupted and distracted, out of flow. So, things that you need around you perhaps your computer, a laptop, your phone. For me, interestingly, a cup of coffee or a cup of water, because if I'm really deeply in flow and being creative and getting into things I'll tend to just reach for the cup and drink, and it's the distraction of it not being there. So, just have a think, what will make your space that you're creating at home, work, more effortlessly for you?

When thinking about what we want at hand, also think about what you do not want at hand. What other noises that you need to switch off that distracts you? The email pings. And what else must you clear out of your environment that is actually distracting. What can you physically put out of the space that you can come back to another time?

Things that’s useful to have around you and at hand that you can easily see are the things that symbolise for you that you are at work. So this is why it's quite helpful to have something on your desk and reminders or a calendar. Just something that we see it and it is a symbol that symbolises I’m at work. What about things that need to be there to indicate to other people that you're at work and it’s ideal not to disturb you just now? When we were doing some of these courses live one person said that she and her husband have arranged that they put a coat hanger on the door handle.

5:40

So when they see that it's literally the Do Not Disturb sign. So what is it that's useful for you, and it's very interesting the range of different things that people come up with that they put out there. It's a reminder for the person coming up to ask a question that just at this moment, I’m not in home mode, I’m in work mode.

We'll be talking a bit more later about how we're managing expectations both for ourselves and other people and part of that managing expectations is about when am I available and when am I not and how to recognise that. So, having those symbols there to show it.

6:20

And lastly, something about a ritual, so this is both a behaviour but also it can become part of your space and the environment that you create yourself while you are going for work. So some of the things that other people find useful is, one is to dress for your work. And so if you normally would dress in a particular way to go to your normal office space dress in the same way to go to your new office space in your home, working environment. Because that is part of what gets you into the mindset of being at work. Going to your space is quite an important part. So obviously, our commute when we are working in the main office is much, much longer, but it's the time that we're switching off from home mode and going into office mode. So having some sense of ritual of moving from home mode to Office mode, that helps us switch in our mindset to focus on work, and put the home thoughts behind, until we choose to come back to them. And vice versa at the end of the day. Equally really really important to have this boundary between work and home, is to be able to switch off from work when we're coming back into home, despite the fact that we're still in our actual home environment. And one of the things you can do to put that “busyness” out of your mind, whether it's coming into work leaving work, is to metaphorically put it at the door or if you really can't just metaphorically do it, write down the list of things that you need to do. Leave it on your desk and put that away for the next day. Or just put it back at the door, notice what things are on your mind, metaphorically put it at the door, or write it on your list, And then you can come back to pick it up again, when you're coming back in to work mode.

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One of the things that you might want to consider if you do have to work at the kitchen table and you are having to clear your office space away all the time. Can you even just get tray so that you can have all your office things on that tray? It keeps them together which is convenient, but you also then part of your ritual is putting the tray away, and then bringing it back out is part of that ritual of being in or out of work, and getting into that mindset and the habit of doing that.

That is the main part of what we're doing in terms of our space. The next part to think about is partly about our space and partly about our setup. It is have we got the right technologies? So what technology do you need? What will make you more effective? What help you focus and concentrate?

Some of the really smallest things can trip you up. One of my clients was... She got cut off in the middle of a call with me and then when I called her back she said “I'm really so sorry about that. I hadn't realised that my contract had run out of minutes because normally, I'm working in the office and not doing so many of these calls from my mobile.” So, little things like making sure that you've actually got enough minutes on a mobile phone now that you have to do a lot of phone calls from home.

Can your office help set you up with the right level of technology for computer power and checking out, if your internet equipment is required, what level of Wi Fi and broadband do you need? What are the systems you need to access at work? Is there anyone in your work or your manager who can help you access the right parts of the local intranet, for example, of the organisation? What are the software you need to use in order to have the connections? So, again, just making sure that you've got all the right equipment and software and hardware that you need for collaborating.

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And that will be the next thing for you to think about. Just write down - what are the things you already have - and what is working - and what are the things you need to check up on to make sure that you do have? So that there is a seamless transition from office to home working. And that might be: - what are some of the processes? What are some of the team-working plans? - How are we, as a team, planning to communicate, and when? So, all the processes. - That’s all part of our space and the technology that we need in order to stay connected with the office.