

The **Leapers** Little Guide to...

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# Working well from home under self-isolation.



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Support and advice from  
**Leapers.co**

**Whilst the world continues to discover the impact of the global pandemic of COVID-19 caused by Coronavirus, people are increasingly remote-working and working under isolation.**

Leapers offers support and guides to anyone working differently. As many who are self-employed have to tackle the issues of isolation, much of our advice is suitable to share with those who are employed too - so we've grabbed the most useful points to consider when you're working from home unexpectedly, in order to support good mental health.

This is not a guide on how to be productive, what technology or tools you'll need, or on the importance of process and communication for distributed teams - there are many guides created by brilliant organisations which you can look towards for working together effectively - we are focusing on people being able to work well: your mental health whilst working, especially under challenging circumstances.

Not everyone can work from home, but for those who do - we hope this guide will help.

Work well.

Matthew Knight  
Community Host  
**Leapers**



# Isolation can be ... isolating.

If you're suddenly forced to work from home, and have never done this before, it can be a shock to the system - and in addition to anxiety about having been in contact with someone who is potentially infected with COVID-19, it's understandable to feel worried.

There are some brilliant guides online of how to embrace remote working, how to create really strong communication and support for each other whilst working remotely (there are links at the back of this guide) - but it can be easy to feel frustrated, bored, or worse, feelings of low mood.

We want to equip people with some tangible ideas on how to work well when in enforced isolation.

## Get ready now.

Start to plan for working remotely now - speak to your employer about how you can work remotely, get up to speed with the technology required, and chat to your team about how you're planning on communicating - what tools you need to use, what habits you'll put in place, what structures you need to agree.

Even try a day working from home, so you can check the systems and processes work.

Don't wait until you have to.



# Structure your day.

Without the patterns of getting up, going to work, and returning home - it can be hard to establish good boundaries between work and home, especially if you're in the same space for a prolonged period of time.

Build yourself a structure for your day - ideally stick to what you did before, the same time waking up, getting dressed, having breakfast, the commute (use the time to read, listen to a podcast, learn something new, do some exercise), and then your working day.

Equally, at the end of your day, shut your computer off, stop checking emails, and 'finish working' at the normal time.

Build in time for lunch breaks, cups of tea, even slacking off. There can be a sense of 'having to show you're working' constantly when you're working from home, but if you've agreed what work is to be done, rather than just being present, having time to relax and do other things is critical. Check facebook, plan a holiday, chat with Susie in accounts, do all the things you'd do at work.



# Remember the basics.

Eat well, sleep well, get some exercise in.

Even if you're not infected, your physical health and mental health are intertwined, and whilst there is heightened anxiety, it's even more important to make sure you're getting good sleep and eating well.

Exercise is even more critical, as you'll be more sedentary than usual. There's no shortage of videos online for little exercise routines you can do from home to suit your taste.



# Don't rely upon text.

It's really easy to lean heavily on digital tools when you're remote, slack, email, texts, intranets, but these all lack the nuance of face to face and non-verbal communication.

Mix up your use of communication forms: make a phone call, do a video chat, do a group call. Whilst lots of people dislike conference calls or video - they're a much quicker way of communicating, and you'll feel less disconnected.

Even try leaving your voice chat open: create a group voice call with your team and leave it running, so people can work away and pipe up any time. It's odd at first, but when you start hearing the little things in the background like a dog barking, or someone yawning, it can help with disconnection.



# Schedule in Socials.

Don't make it all about work - there's plenty of time during the working day where your interactions are not work related.

Making a cup of tea for someone else, waiting at the printer, standing at the lifts - all of these small microinteractions are essential for a sense of belonging, but are lacking when we're remote. So put them back in.

Schedule at time in the morning for a team catchup - that first bit of banter you have in the morning, before you get stuck in to work; put something in mid-afternoon over a cup of tea to just chat about nothing; spend lunch breaks with others over skype or google hangouts.



# Ask "how are you?"

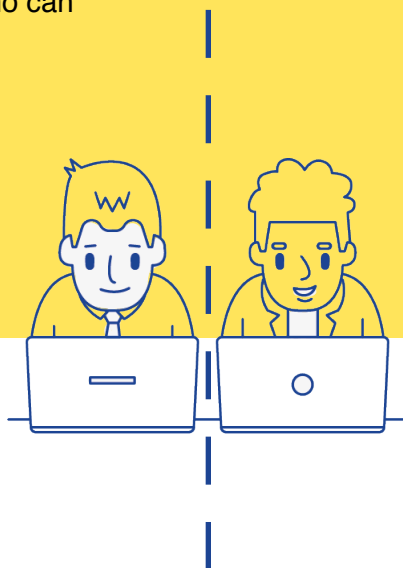
Most importantly - listen and share.

Take time to ask "how are you?" to your colleagues - and listen for the answer. If it's "fine", ask again and listen to the answer. Give people an opportunity to share if they're struggling, and talk it through.

Lead by example and share how you're feeling, so when someone asks you, be honest. If you're struggling, say so.

Often, just the simple act of saying it out loud helps, and helps others know they can be honest if they're struggling too.

If you are really feeling low or struggling with feelings of isolation, there are people who can help - see the end of this guide.





# Remember, it's not forever.

Whilst quarantine can be challenging, remember this is not forever - hopefully, after 14 days you'll be able to return to work, and reminding yourself that this is temporary is really important.

Equally, panic, concern and poor mental health can be just as much of a problem as the virus itself. If you're reading about the virus, read trusted sources, voices of authority such as NHS and WHO, and avoid speculating articles with leading headlines.

Keep track of any concerns by writing them down in a notebook, and then try to let go of the worry.

**If you're feeling at risk emotionally or physically:**

**Call NHS on 111  
or Samaritans on 116 123**

## **Additional Helpful Resources:**

We're compiling useful links and resources which you may find useful at:

**<https://leapers.co/go/coronavirus>**



## About the Author

Matthew Knight is a community host at Leapers, and advocate for the mental health of the self-employed. Based in London, Matthew is a father of two, and drinks an inordinate amount of coffee.

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Matthew Knight hereby asserts his right to be identified as the author of "The Leapers little guide to working well from home under self-isolation"

[www.leapers.co/go/coronavirus](http://www.leapers.co/go/coronavirus)

# Leapers supports the mental health of the self-employed.

We're a **free, open and inclusive** community for anyone who wants to work differently. Founded in 2017, we've welcomed over 2000 members, and supported over 25,000 visitors in the last 12 months alone.

We offer a **community of peer-support, create tangible things that help, and guide those who hire freelancers** to help us all work well together.



We're the team for people without a team - if you're looking for a supportive group of people who understand the self-employed experience, come say hello.

We also support organisations looking towards better supporting modern workers.

<https://www.leapers.co>

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<https://www.leapers.co/go/supporters>



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**Get ready now**, rather than when it happens, sort out your tech, discuss how you'll communicate as a team, do a dry run to check everything works.

## **Remember the basics.**

Eat well, get rest and good sleep, exercise. Physical health and mental health are intertwined.

## **Don't rely on text.**

Call people, do video calls, mix up how you're interacting with others.



**Structure your day:** keep to the routine you're used to, don't work all hours, put the laptop down at your 5pm, schedule in your lunch breaks, cuppas.

**Schedule in socials**, having a non-work chat with colleagues is a critical part of the working day, give someone call, share memes, talk about other stuff. scheduling it in seems odd, but it's important.

## **Remember, this is only temporary**

Don't forget you'll be back together soon. You might even enjoy remote working and encourage your business to allow you to do it more often!

**Above all else - ask "how are you?"**

## **People at home:**

1. Check in on your colleagues
2. Share how you're doing and answer honestly

**Employers:** check in on your people at home.



find more resources at  
[leapers.co/go/coronavirus](https://leapers.co/go/coronavirus)