

Managing Working from Home and Childcare Responsibilities

Working from home while trying to manage childcare can be a challenging task especially if your partner is working outside the home, you are both working from home or, you are lone parenting. Here are some tips from the Civil Service Employee Assistance Service (CSEAS) to help you. Should you wish to discuss any concerns you have in relation to this or any other issue, please contact the Civil Service Employee Assistance Service (CSEAS) by phone at [0761000030](tel:0761000030) or e-mail cseas@per.gov.ie. For individual Employee Assistance Officer's details, click on the 'Meet the Team' photo on our website www.cseas.per.gov.ie.

Work and your work space:

- Manage expectations – you may need to take a flexible approach as you may not be working regular hours but instead, for parts of the day. Speak with your manager about your availability
- Prioritise your work into 'must do' today and 'nice to do' today
- Set up your workspace where you can see your children but where young children cannot reach your work equipment
- Consider mentioning at the start of calls that there may be interruptions and make allowances for same on the other end of the line. Use headphones and the mute button where possible. If a child requires your attention during a call, reschedule and end the call. Most people will understand
- Have a 'do not disturb' signal for older children. Use a sign or a coloured piece of paper that announces when you are not available. Your children can even be involved in making the sign
- Schedule work that requires focussed attention when your children are occupied or napping



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Children:

- Explain to children that this is not like a holiday or weekend and let them know when you will be available to play, go outside etc. don't just focus on when this won't be possible
- Identify and anticipate children's needs – you will get much more work done if they are not hungry, tired or searching for their favourite toy
- Try role playing 'working from home', maybe your child would like to sit near you in their own office complete with toy phone, laptop, notepad
- Don't feel guilty if the children are watching more television than usual. Let them know that this is temporary
- Keep children entertained *(See list below for some ideas)
- Have focussed one-to-one time with your children. Studies have shown that just 8 minutes a day, one-to-one with your child, can significantly increase their self-esteem and confidence levels



Help:

- If there are two of you at home, alternate work and childcare responsibilities
- Use virtual babysitters. Perhaps a friend, grandparent or other relative may be able to video call with the children, read them a story or play a game while you work
- Older children may be able to help with younger children for short periods of time
- Where possible see if someone can help by dropping off meals, get groceries or items from the chemist. If this is not feasible you may be able to pre-prepare some meals in the evenings or at weekends
- Connect with other parents in similar situations to share meal plans, activity schedules and lesson plans. This can be useful for generating ideas but be careful not to compare achievements as every household is different

Routine:

- It is good for everyone to have a routine. Develop a schedule for the whole family. Where age appropriate, get the children involved in planning their day

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- Write a joint 'To-Do' List, you will have your tasks for the day and they will have theirs with various activities, crafts, and if relevant, school work – tick off as you go
- Make an effort to get some fresh air

Remember:

- Keep as good a work/life balance as possible, try not to work too late into the evening or over the weekend unless really necessary
- Try to remain positive and look at what you will be able to do which you would not be able to do if you were in the office

*Ideas for Activities:

Below are some suggestions for activities to keep children occupied, however this list is not exhaustive. Remember you can only do your best and don't put too much pressure on yourself. Be realistic about what you can achieve



Exercise:

If you have any concerns regarding your child's health please consult their General Practitioner (GP) before your child engages in any strenuous activity.

The Health Service Executive (HSE) Healthy Ireland guidelines suggest 60 minutes plus of daily moderate to vigorous exercise for children between 2 and 18 years of age. As a guideline, when exercising moderately you could still be able to have a conversation but, while exercising at a vigorous level, your heart rate elevates and it is difficult to speak to somebody. **All** activity counts. Some ideas include:

- Dancing – home or online discos
- Yoga – www.cosmickids.com
- Exercise - www.gonoodle.com and www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rz0go1pTda8
- Family challenges – there are now various challenges available online but you can organise your own to suit your own family
- Ball games, skipping, races etc.

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Education:

- Remember children are always learning. Education does not only come from school books
- Join the library – see www.librariesireland.ie for more information
- Many museums, galleries, zoos, aquariums and safari parks worldwide offer virtual tours for children or colouring books to download

Examples of Activities by age:



- **0-3 years** - theme play times such as dinosaurs/farm, building blocks, shape sorters, balance bikes, hand/clap games, play dough, teddy bear picnic/tea party
- **3-6 years** - snap card game, flash card games, colouring, Lego, musical chairs, indoor bowling, rock-paper-scissors, hand/clap games, give toys a bath
- **6-12** – writing to pen pals, mindfulness colour books, pitch penny game, indoor bowling, screen time with educational games, card games, Pictionary, treasure hunt, board games
- **Whole family** – board games, reading, card games, singing, musical instruments, charades, staging a show for parents, plan and cook a family meal, baking, treasure hunts, time capsule

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