

Working From Home

JEN: Okay. Time to work. Maybe just a little snack first. Time to pay a little visit to the ol' snack shack.

NEIL: That's exactly what I'm talking about! It's time to think outside the box for that triple bottom line. Do you mind? I'm on a call.

JEN: I just... uh, how did you...?

NEIL: Sorry, I have to hop off, you guys—keep talking.

JEN: What are you... doing here?

NEIL: Well, I was trying to work. I'm Neil, by the way—Neil, the Work-from-home Gnome. Productivity coach and lawn ornament.

JEN: Huh.

NEIL: See, the key to staying productive while working from home is setting boundaries between your work life and everything outside of it. Like this!

NEIL: Uhhhh! I see you need a refresher on the whole “boundaries” thing. No problem. We all know working from home can be great. It saves you money, there's no commute...

JEN: I can wear sweatpants; I can eat my crazy snacks.

NEIL: Sure... But working from home can also contribute to stress.

JEN: Really? I thought it was good for work-life balance.

NEIL: It can be—but without clear boundaries, your home life and your work life start to overlap.

That overlap can be a source of distraction, isolation and even burnout. Healthy boundaries help you avoid the overlap.

JEN: What do you recommend?

NEIL: Well, for starters, it helps to have a dedicated workspace.

JEN: That's really nice, but I don't have a separate office.

NEIL: That's okay! You can still separate your workspace even when you don't have... mushroom! Eh? Pick a consistent spot. Maybe you have a special desk or chair just for work. If that's not doable, use light and sound to separate your workspace. Use a little desk lamp, get an instrumental playlist going... Basically, you want to give your brain and body the cue that it's time to focus and work.

JEN: That makes sense.

NEIL: Another thing that helps is dressing the part.

JEN: Uh...

NEIL: Check it out. Work hat!

JEN: Sorry, it looks like your regular hat.

NEIL: What! No! This is my work hat. This is my garden hat. See? Garden hat, work hat. So clearly different.

JEN: Of course. My mistake.

NEIL: Anyway, even when you're working from home, changing into a different outfit for your workday helps establish the boundary between home time and work time. Speaking of time... Respect yours by setting a consistent schedule. Respect your work time by shutting down distractions at home.

Just as importantly, respect your personal time by actually taking your breaks and by saying no to after-hours work. You can use your schedule, your routine and your physical space to establish healthy boundaries that will make you a happy "Work-from-home Gnome."

JEN: Awesome! Thank you so much. But, um... question about that last part.

NEIL: Yes?

JEN: You're a "Work-from-home Gnome."

NEIL: Uh, yeah.

JEN: Doesn't that mean you should be working from your home, not mine?

NEIL: Would you look at that! Break's over. I'd love to keep chatting, but gotta respect that time boundary. Bye!

JEN: (Sigh)

JEN: There's no way that putting on a hat can...

JEN: Woah.