

VALASSIS' (un)OFFICIAL) GUIDE TO
MAXIMUM PRODUCTIVITY & HAPPINESS WHILE

WORKING FROM HOME

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Can you believe it's been about a month since COVID-19 turned life as we know it upside down?

Professionals across the U.S. are working from the comfort of their couch or master bathroom.

Working from home (while also homeschooling, and pet-canoodling, and scavenging for toilet paper) might be more challenging than expected; so I've created a list of totally useful and absolutely not official tips for maximizing your WFH productivity and happiness.

Take my recommendations with a grain of salt – or twenty.

1 Ensure you have an ergonomic setup.

The best option is to be hunched over on a bean bag or papasan, but if you lack access to these, being curled up on a futon is a close second. If you absolutely must, you may use your kitchen table and chair. If so, ensure that the surfaces are hard and that your back hurts after no more than 45 minutes of working. Like many things in life, there is no gain if there is no pain.

2 Watch out for those 'ergent' emails.

You may not be in the office, but "Caution: External Email" still means you should practice caution. If UrPrezAndCEO@aol.com emails you needing "ergent procurement monies," it is still best to not respond and instead to forward it to your spam and phishing team. Remain vigilant, no matter how "ergent" it appears.

3 Celebrate the wins.

If you are one of the lucky few to actually find toilet paper in a store, make sure you take a picture and rub your good luck in all of your co-workers' faces. You are a true winner and don't you forget it.

4 Don't lose hope...

just because you haven't been promoted to Head Homeschool Gym Teacher yet; it takes hard work. Top tips: up your counts of jumping jacks, add that extra lap around the house, and – if you really want to go above and beyond – start a health class or two. As always, never go easy on them in dodgeball.

5 Don't forget to eat.

Be sure to take a lunch break! For those of you who have forgotten, "lunch" is the meal that usually happens around noon and a "break" is where you take a short respite from working.

6 Invest in a protractor, and learn how to use it.

If you choose to either a) not wear pants or b) wear something wild like Hammer pants, your laptop monitor angle should never go below 97.5 degrees. With anything less, you risk embarrassment.

7 Feed your soul, too.

Joining virtual yoga and meditation sessions is extremely good for the soul! Do it often. While you may be screaming on the inside, be aware that you might also be screaming on the outside. It is therefore advisable to mute yourself as a precaution.

8 Spice up your next virtual meeting.

A fun way to spice up virtual meetings is to decide upon themes for everyone's virtual backgrounds on Zoom. Even put it in the meeting invite! Some possibilities: places you'd like to go; your favorite vacation spot; the place you're supposed to be currently on vacation; favorite nebula; least favorite nebula; and that abstract artwork you did in MS Paint last night that shows how you actually feel about this whole stupid, frustrating, no-good situation.

9 It remains unacceptable to microwave fish for lunch.

For more serious meetings, backgrounds may be inappropriate. In these cases, it's better to silently judge the bedrooms of your co-workers.

10 Take a break from the constant news stream.

Time and minds work in mysterious ways when routines change. To not lose track of time, count each day with a mark. For this, a sharp rock against drywall works nicely. For companionship, Wilson volleyballs remain mercifully in stock at your local sports store, which may or may not be open.

11 Check in with the world.

Given the overwhelming normalcy of the current situation, you may forget that larger things are going on in the world. Be sure to check the news and social media as often as you can. If that doesn't calm you enough, check your stocks.

12 Show a little compassion.

House burglars are having a tough run of things now that everyone is working from home. If you see someone furtively sneaking around, hand them some silverware and jewelry and tell them, "We all gotta stick together through these trying times." Don't forget the cash you hid in your nightstand! They will appreciate your gesture of goodwill.

13 Get to know your new officemates.

Sure, it may seem like these new interns are getting younger every year, but they deserve to be here just as much as you do. In particular, they may have insights you haven't thought of, so be sure to invite them to all of your conference calls. Stuck on how to move forward with a client? Try, "But Mooooooooommmmmmmmm, I'm hungry noooooowwwww!" Not sure what the product priority is? Try irrational intransigence and unintelligible screaming. These are proven strategies that drive results.

14 Flexibility is key.

With fewer people around, you may, at times, need to pat yourself on the back for all the good work you're doing. Stay limber so that you can still reach. Go ahead, do it now. You deserve it.

15 Exercise is important!

Now's the time to explore those new routes you've been eyeing: try a new loop in your bedroom or the other side of your hallway.

On a serious note, thank you for all you're doing through uncertain times. Keep showing up. Make today better than ever. You've got this. We've got this.