

THE WORKING FROM HOME SERIES



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Living with Family while Working at Home

Where you work at home makes a big difference in how productive you are. Here are some tips (based on 20 years of running a business out of our home) on how to make your home work for you.

Tip #1: Create Separation

A big challenge of telecommuting is that your home and work life can get all mixed together (which will make you less productive in both!) If you have a den, home office or spare room you can dedicate to work, that's great. Just think about taking personal projects you're working on *out* of that room so they don't distract you. And you absolutely don't need the TV on while you work, either!

Action Step: If you can't dedicate a room entirely to work, you can create separation by putting your work away at the end of the day. Consider those 5 or 10 minutes a contribution to your spouse's sanity. Clean your stuff off the dinner table or put the bedroom furniture back where it goes, so you aren't reminded of work every time you walk into that room. Otherwise you'll feel like you have to leave the house to get away from work.

Tip #2: Family Boundaries

I started working at home when I had little kids—and we were home schooling, too! With two youngsters around all day we had to make a rule that the kids weren't allowed in Daddy's office. Another was for my wife to knock before coming in. If I didn't answer the knock, that meant I couldn't talk right then.

Action Step: Have a boundaries conversation with your spouse or roommates, and negotiate some ways to keep you undistracted and keep them from having to walk around your work stuff 24-7.

Tip #3: Introverts and Extroverts

To some introverts (like me!), working at home all day can feel like paradise, while an extrovert in the same household might experience it as a death sentence. You are subtracting all the people-interaction you'd normally have at work, plus church, social events, and more from your life all at once, and that energy has to go somewhere. An extrovert will have a hard time sitting alone in a room all day without coming out to investigate every muffled conversation, hanging around with whoever is in the kitchen, or just calling *anybody* to get some human contact.

Action Step: Have a conversation with your household about each person's need for interaction and how you are going to meet it without stepping on each other's toes.