

SUDDENLY, YOU'RE WORKING FROM HOME

NOW WHAT?

Staying productive when your world turned upside down

5 Tips to Keep Your Work on Track While You Are Social Distancing

A microscopic virus has become a global disrupter.

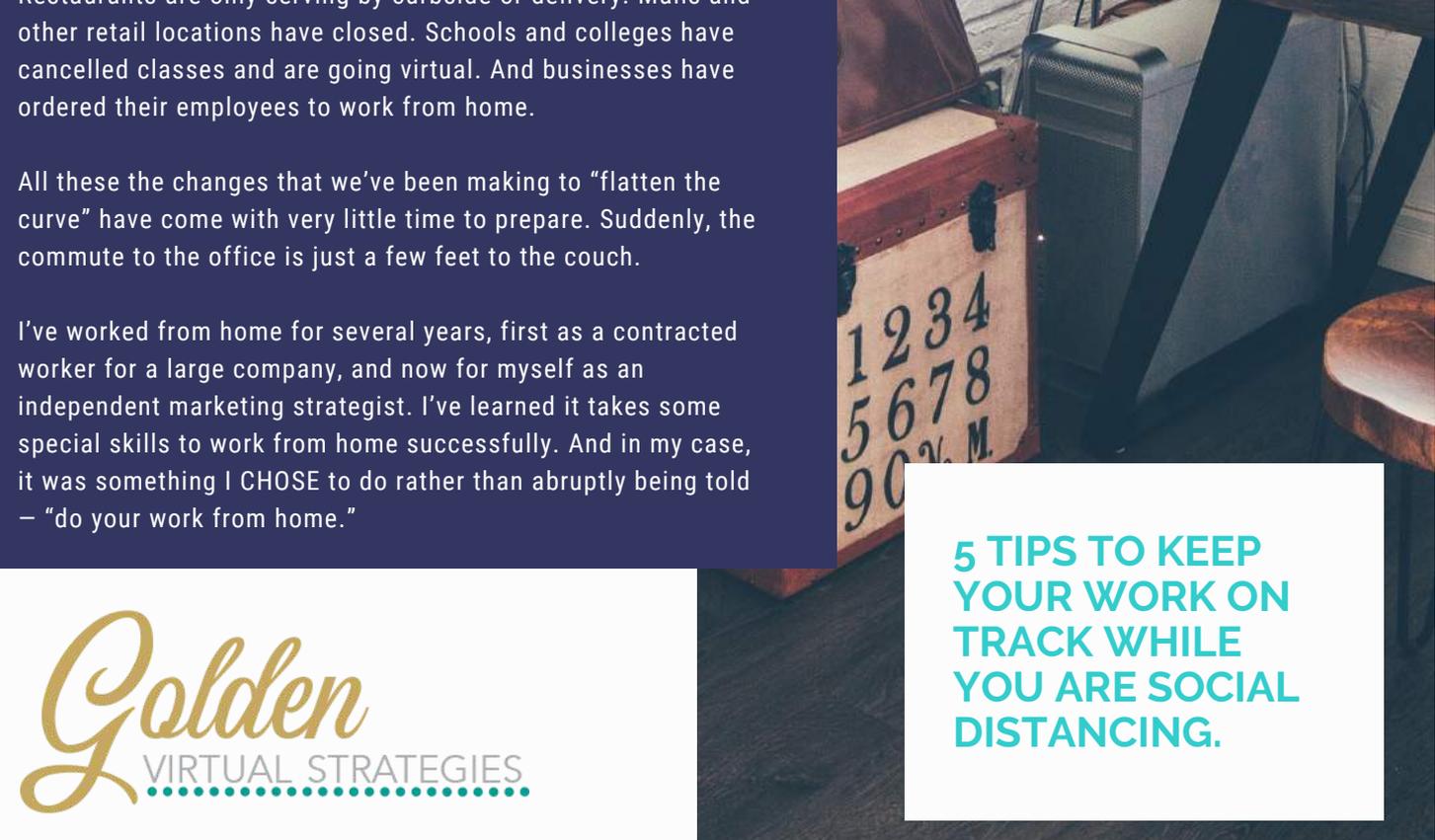
Stores have been emptied of toilet paper and hand sanitizer. Restaurants are only serving by curbside or delivery. Malls and other retail locations have closed. Schools and colleges have cancelled classes and are going virtual. And businesses have ordered their employees to work from home.

All these the changes that we've been making to "flatten the curve" have come with very little time to prepare. Suddenly, the commute to the office is just a few feet to the couch.

I've worked from home for several years, first as a contracted worker for a large company, and now for myself as an independent marketing strategist. I've learned it takes some special skills to work from home successfully. And in my case, it was something I CHOSE to do rather than abruptly being told – "do your work from home."



Contact us at hello@goldenvirtualstrategies.com

A photograph of a home office desk. The desk is made of dark wood and has a black lamp with a large, adjustable shade. A computer monitor is on the desk, displaying a scenic landscape. A blue mug and a small container are also on the desk. The background is a white brick wall.

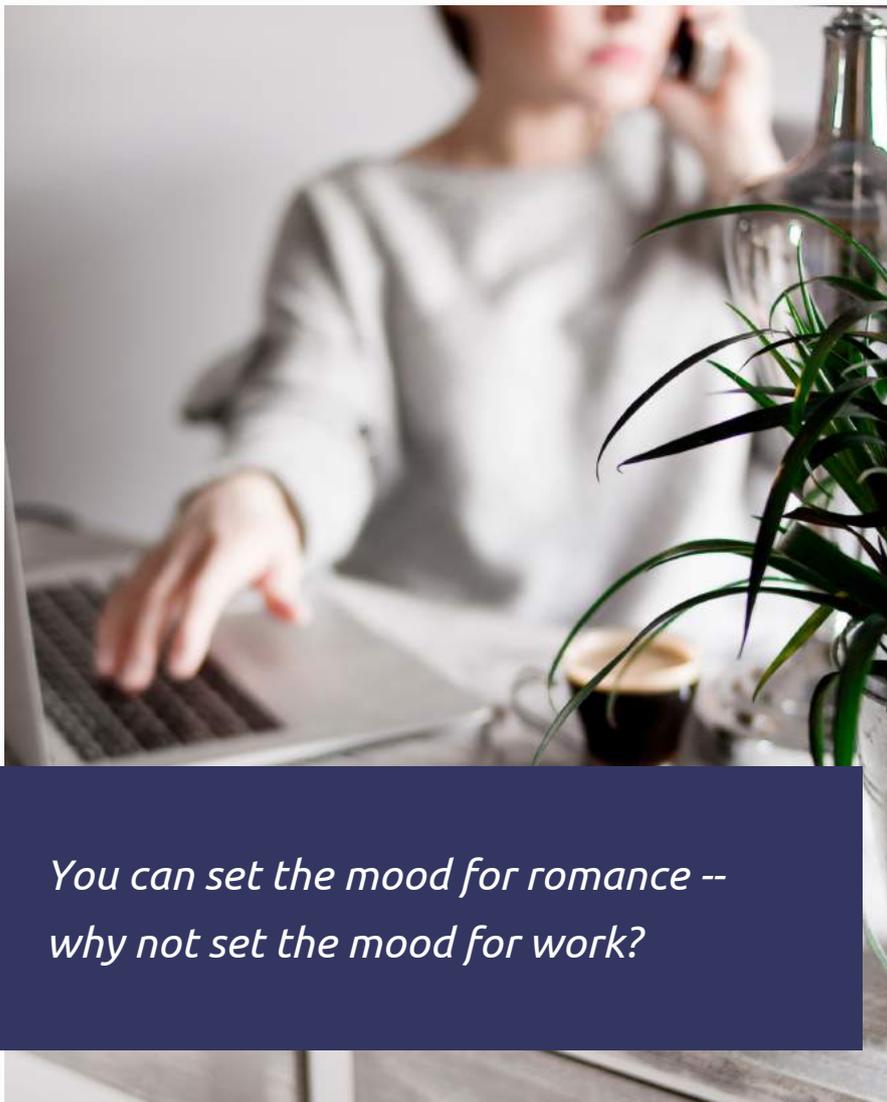
5 TIPS TO KEEP YOUR WORK ON TRACK WHILE YOU ARE SOCIAL DISTANCING.

Set a schedule and establish a routine

This may seem a little silly. Still, nothing can be harder on your productivity and overall emotional health than thinking you've got plenty of time to get things done because you don't have a structured schedule. It's easy to fall into the trap of thinking - your boss can't see if you are at your desk - so what's the harm in hanging out on the couch for several episodes of *The Office*. That counts for work, right? I wish.

It's important to set "working hours" and keep that routine. Find balance. Your schedule should include starting and ending time. Especially during these unusual conditions, it's vital that you have time to recharge (more on that later).

We thrive with order. Without a schedule, our focus will be scattered. With everything out of order, it will help if you set up a routine and stick to it.



Anarchy is the enemy of productivity.

Create signals that it's work time

Our minds are incredible. But you can trick them. When you are used to going to work at an office, your brain may have a tough time being able to focus on office work when you are sitting in your living room or kitchen. Pick a designated space that is just for office work - you are telling your brain that you are now going to work.

I've got a light on my desk, and I turn it on when it's time for me to focus on work. That helps me trick my brain into shifting into work mode. I also chose a specific "soundtrack" of music. With a TV in my 'living room' office, it can be tempting to think I can have the TV on in the background and still be productive. I know I can't. I'm pretty sure it's the same for you.

Setting the mood works for romance - it can also work for work. Another benefit, visual or audio signals that it's work time can also let your new miniature "co-workers" know you're working. It may not keep those calls for snacks from happening, but artificial signals may help set up some work boundaries.

You can set the mood for romance -- why not set the mood for work?

Work in time blocks and plan for breaks

Picking a task or project and working solely on that for a set time is a great way to get your work done. Jumping from one project to another task and then back again to the original project makes getting anything accomplished next to impossible. Studies have shown multitasking reduces productivity.

And let's face it, without your boss around, it's easy to let distractions take you down a rabbit hole on Facebook or YouTube. And that doesn't even include the distraction of emails and texts.

My tip on this is to set the timer on your phone for 20 minutes. Work just on one task or project. Don't be tempted to check this one detail for that other project, if you need to - jot that random thought down and get right back on task. Any phone call can wait for 20 minutes. Just because it rings doesn't mean you have to answer. An email response can wait and so can that text. Turn off notifications.

When the timer goes off after 20 minutes, get up and walk around. Working at home (especially if you are by your self), it is possible to have hours to go by and you haven't stood up – even with your Apple Watch thumping away on your wrist. Move around. Then you can check that email, return the call, and get ready for the next 20 minute time block.

Set a timer - that email can wait for 20 minutes

Make connections

Working from home can be lonely. Even when there is a house full of miniature “co-workers.”

Set aside some time in your schedule to connect with others. When possible, use Facetime, Zoom, or Skype (or another app that includes seeing and talking to another human).

We crave connection.

We need community.

Even you introverts out there - you do need others some times. Plus, one of the most significant benefits of connecting with someone else – you don't get stuck just thinking about yourself.

Join an online book club, share advice in a Facebook group, have a Zoom coffee date with a friend, check on your neighbor. Do something that allows you to interact with someone else.



Connect with someone who is not sharing your living space.

Make time for fun!

I'm talking about self-care here.

In the last point, I may have extolled the virtue of thinking about others, but it's equally important to take time out to care for yourself.

That episode of The Office I mentioned earlier – it's good to laugh.

Take time to stretch or meditate.

Maybe find something to do that's new.

My inbox is filled with offers that are discounted or free during this crazy time.

We can treat this as our own Groundhog Day and learn a new skill. Plus, creating is good for the soul and helps you be more productive when you are back in work mode.

Most important of all – give yourself Grace.

Life is going to be messier than normal. Like the saying goes, "If you're going to be anything, be kind." Start with yourself.

Hopefully, these tips can help you still get your work done and keep your sanity while you are in an unusual environment.

And for our friends that have been laid off, I hope these tips may help make this time a bit more bearable while life is uncertain.



*All work and no play
makes Jack
a dull boy.*



Give yourself Grace.