



# Finding the Balance that Works for you

**Leadership & Work/Life Balance While Working Remotely**

**Presented By: Michelle Coussens, Plan B Consulting**

**Disclaimer:** Note that this webinar is intended to provide useful information but should not be construed as individual legal or financial fact, advice, or opinion.

# **Session Objectives**



*"I can't remember—do I work at home  
or do I live at work?"*

- **How to improve your productivity**
- **Methods to set limits and boundaries**
- **Ways to stay connected with and support others**
- **How to plan for and take self-care**

# **Workstyles are changing.**

- **Focus on work-life dynamics and support**
- **More and more work done in teams**
- **More casual work environments**
- **Acknowledgement of individual needs and preferences**
- **Experimentation with different ergonomic office configurations, furniture and elements**
- **Fewer “facetime” workplace requirements**
  - More flextime and telecommuting options
    - *More virtual work, not only from home but from anywhere, any time*

# **Implications of the increasingly remote workplace**

- Almost 9 million employees worked remotely in 2017.\*
  - During and post-COVID19, there will continue to be more.
- Remote workers are not just working from home, but even internationally.
- Fluidity between work and life
- Incorporation of shared-desks, reduced office space, and co-working spaces
- Allows hiring of otherwise unavailable employees

\*SHRM via *Outsourcing Insight*.

# Remote work pros and cons

## • Organizationally

- Savings on office space and related costs
- Can actually increase productivity
  - As long as goals and expectations are clear
- Workers are typically appreciative
  - Increased job satisfaction
  - Lowered turn-over

## • Individuals

PROS	CONS
Flexible schedules and locations	Lack of visibility
No commute time/cost/risk	Home and family potential distractions
Comfortable work conditions	Government ordinance restriction
More time for family and personal life	Potential insurance liability issues
Eat healthier lunches and spend less	Need adequate and appropriate workspace
More sense of control over time and work	Potential loneliness and/or burnout



# How Remote Work Styles May Affect You and Others

- **Negatives\***

- Less collaboration
- Lower innovation
- Harder to gauge activity
- Isolation (lonely worker syndrome)
- Temptation of distractions
- Lack of visibility with colleagues
- Difficult to validate work conditions

- **Positives\***

- Higher productivity
- Increased employee retention
- Decreased sick days/time off
- Increases workforce diversity
- Reduces costs for employers/employees
- Reduces stress
- Increases talent pool
  - And attracts women in male-dominated fields
- Prolongs careers of older workers
- Attracts new candidates and hires
- Benefits the environment
- Benefits personal and family relationships

Source: <https://remote.co/10-stats-about-remote-work>

# **How to improve your productivity**

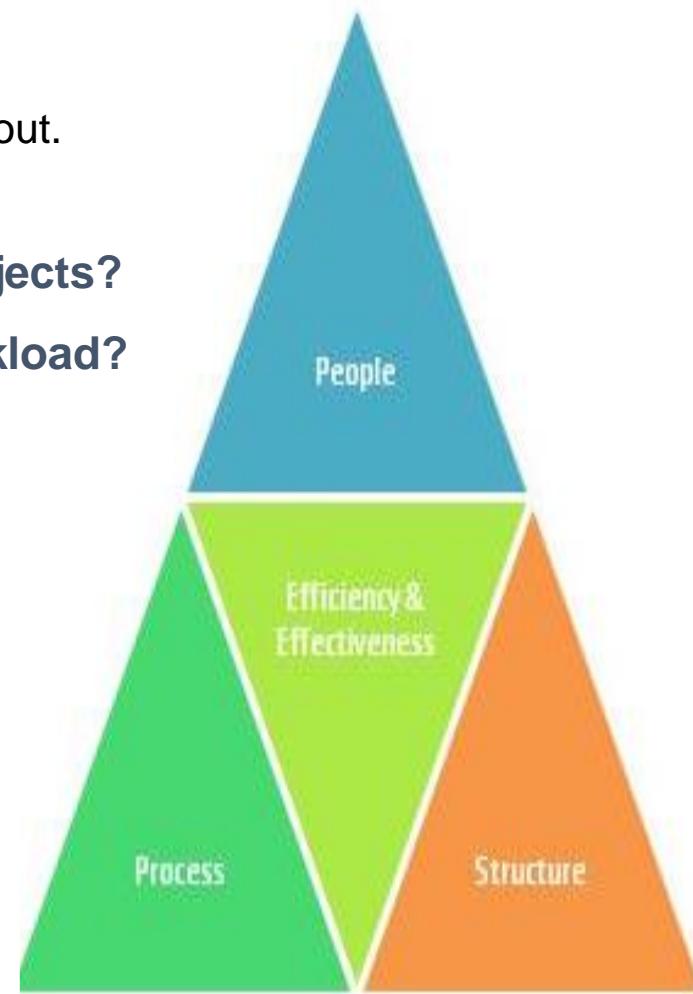
- Best efficiency practices
- The value of SOPs
- Prioritizing
- Managing your time
- Minimizing disruptions
- Holding debriefs to learn for the future



# We must be both efficient and effective.

- Operational excellence is a continuous improvement mindset.
  - Work on the right things.
  - Ensure access to the right resources.
  - Identify and eliminate waste day in and day out.
- How well do you strategically prioritize projects?
- How well do you manage your current workload?
- How well do you collaborate with and communicate with others?

***Check out my Productivity Assessment Worksheet in your handout!***

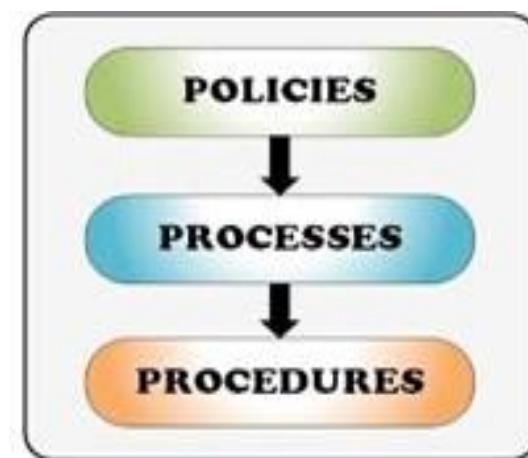


# **Best efficiency practices**

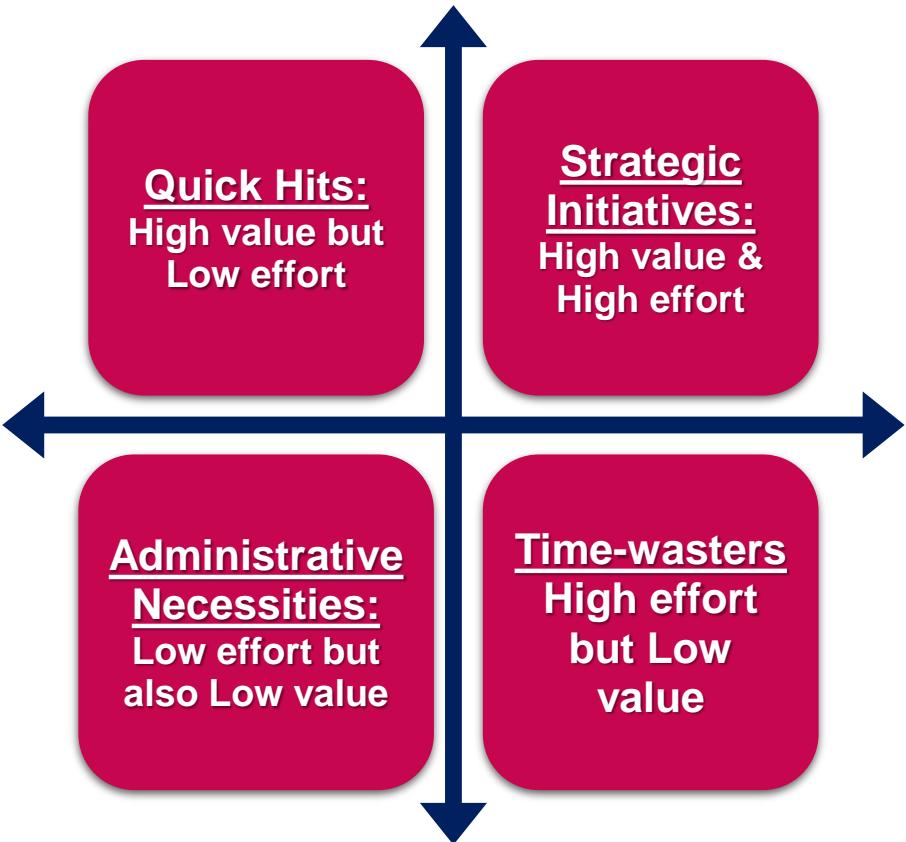
- Clearly define roles and responsibilities for yourself and your staff
- Establish clear policies and procedures
- Document all business-critical processes
- Institute a clean desk policy
- Cross-train staff across various activities
- Do not start processing work until all required information is received
- Ensure availability of needed resources
- Avoid or mitigate procrastination
  - Do boring tasks when energy dwindles, not first thing
  - Do challenging tasks first thing (“eat the frog”, “Put the big rocks in the jar first”)
- Eliminate barriers to success
  - Being busy does not necessarily equal useful activity
  - Beware of Parkinson’s Law
- Avoid the temptation to multi-task
- Determine what, and when, to delegate
- Address all three aspects of performance and prioritization
  - Quality, quantity, and timeliness

# **Develop, update, and enforce SOPs**

- Purpose- to assist in consistently making decisions and taking actions
- Identify and modify other ancillary, upstream and downstream processes
- Regularly review processes around expectations, gaps and issues
- Make sure your staff, processes and technology are appropriately aligned
- Streamline and validate data collection at all stages of each process
- Consistently follow documented protocols while still addressing individual employee needs with decorum and sensitivity
- After reviewing processes and resulting changes:
  - Update staff roles
  - Build staff skills
  - Communicate and reinforce usage



# Prioritize Thoughtfully



- **Are you efficient? In what ways?**
  - Doing things right
  - Productive use of resources
  - Turn-around times
  - Manual versus automated efforts
  - Continuous improvement
- **Are you effective? In what ways?**
  - Doing the right things
  - Actions in line with organizational priorities?
- **Which of your activities produce the most impact?**
- **What will it take to continue to be successful?**
  - Are there any problems or barriers?
- **Is there anything you should stop doing?**

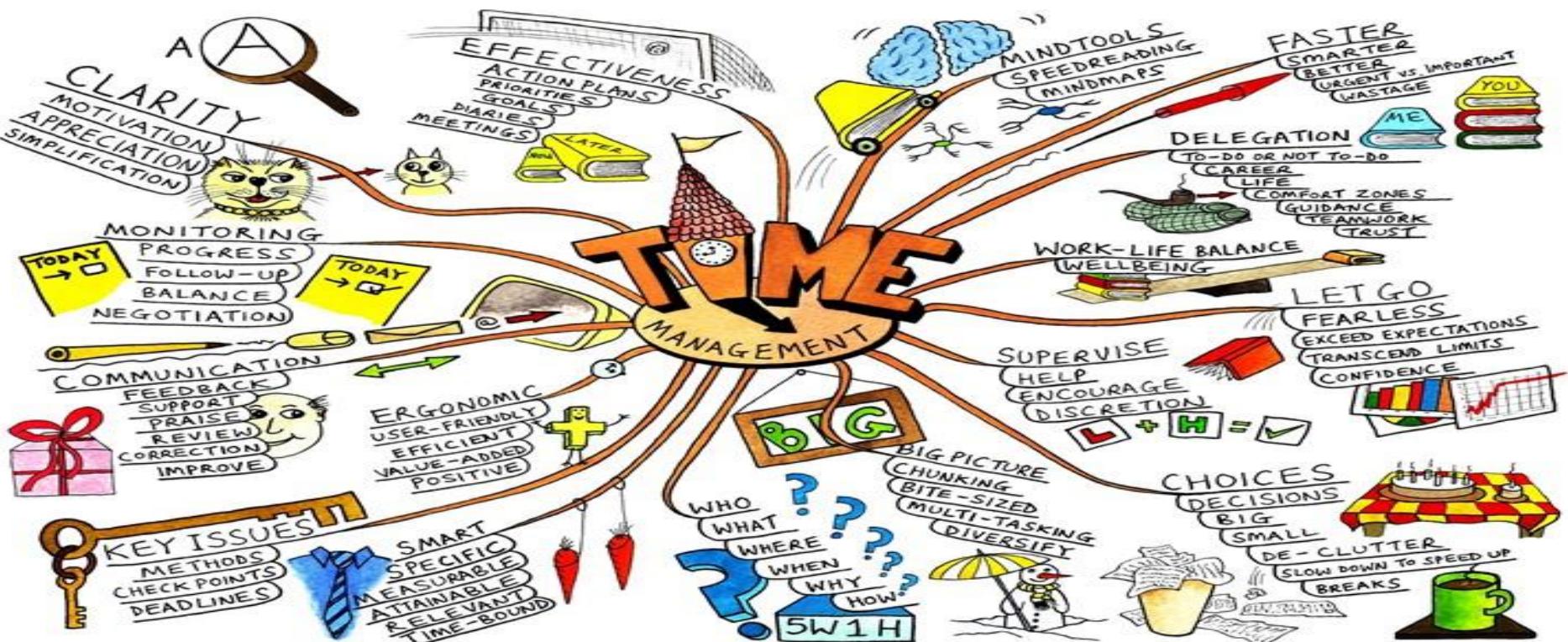
# Focus and work deliberately

- Find ways to “clear your head”
  - Chat question: Where do you do your best thinking? What do you do to stay focused?
- Give yourself deadlines
- Batch tasks
  - Set microgoals
- Avoid “scope creep”
- Take a new approach to time management

## TASC approach:

- Who owns the Task?
- Do they have the authority to be held Accountable?
- Do we agree that they are set up for Success (time, resources, clarity)?
- Do we have a Checklist of what needs to happen to accomplish the task?

--Brene Brene, Dare to Lead.



- Conduct a time audit
- Use “Stop/Start/Continue” methodology
- Use Urgent/Short-term/Long-term priority lists & time allocation
- Use a scanner and electronic filing
- Sync to the cloud
- Delegate meetings, tasks, and decisions
- Block off “think” time on your calendar
- Shut the door or work elsewhere
- Pause/Hide email
- Have meeting agendas, minutes, and next steps
- Resist responding right away

# Managerial multi-tasking rarely works.

- Fragmenting our attention leads to less deliberate action.

In addition, it can cause:

- Excess/undue stress and burnout
- Declining ability to concentrate
- Lack of completion of tasks
- Decline in quality

- Avoid the “complexity trap” associated with excessive task-switching

- Avoid switching hard and soft costs

- Some recommendations\*:

- “Do less, then obsess”
- Practice “disciplined collaboration”
- Follow “Occam’s Razor”



\*Great at Work: How Top Performers Do Less, Work Better, and Achieve More, by Morten T. Hansen, 2018, Simon & Schuster.

# Execute debriefs

- Activities
  - Conduct a debrief
    - Capture lessons learned
    - Results against targets
    - Team members' experiences
  - Celebrate success
- Tools
  - After action review (AAR)
    - One-on-one reviews
    - Data & written reports
    - Site visits
  - Rewards & recognition



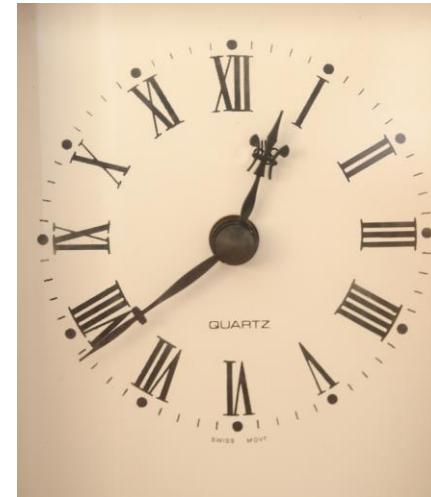
***Check out my Debrief Template in your handout!***

# **Methods to set limits and boundaries**

- Create and follow routines
- Use the 10-10-10 rule
- Consider the 80/20 phenomenon
- Manage disruptions
- Delegate
- Say no or not right now

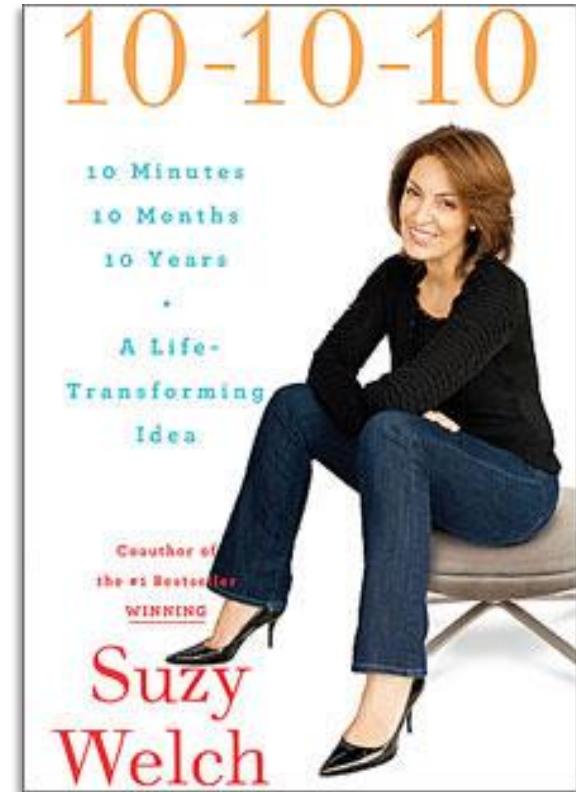
# Create and follow routines

- Frame your day in advance
  - Morning routine
  - Workday startup routine
  - Workday shutdown routine
  - Evening routine
- Reflect at the end of each day on how things went in anticipation of the next day
- Use your Outlook calendar to block out start and end times, as well as personal activities
- Try using a Bulletjournal ([bulletjournal.com](http://bulletjournal.com))



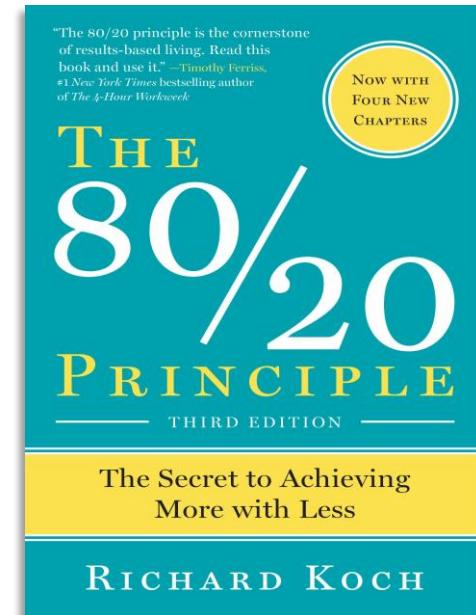
# Apply the 10-10-10 rule

- Considers both the short-term and long-term impacts of our decisions
  - Good check and balance
- What are the consequences of my decision in 10 minutes?
- What are the consequences... in 10 months?
- ... in 10 years?
- Attributed to Suzy Welch
  - <https://www.oprah.com/spirit/suzy-welchs-rule-of-10-10-10-decision-making-guide/all>



# Consider the 80/20 phenomenon

- *Could being a perfectionist be holding you back?*
- *Is the difference between good and perfect weighing you down?*
- **Apply the Pareto Principle**
  - 80% of value comes from 20% of effort, customers, etc.
  - Discern real vs. marginal impact
  - “Be selective, not exhaustive”
    - Strive for excellence in a few things, rather than good performance in many
- **Avoid or mitigate procrastination**
  - Do boring tasks when energy dwindle, not first thing
  - Break projects down into confined “chunks”
- **Allow yourself and others to fail**



# Manage disruptions

- **Do the same people stop in or call over and over?**
  - What are the underlying reasons?
- **What types of issues or questions are people coming to you with?**
  - How much is it focused on work issues versus personal issues?
- **What “rules of the road” have you established on the frequency and types of impromptu discussions?**
- **Do you actually encourage interruptive behavior?**
  - Do you micromanage? Check on employees throughout the day?  
Assume the worst?
- **Set the stage up front:**
  - Execute your controlling function
  - Develop implementation plans
  - Set metrics to ensure progress and results
  - Engage others in determining progress and lead by example

# Determine what and when to delegate

- What CAN be delegated?
  - What CAN'T?
- What SHOULD be delegated?
  - What SHOULDN'T?
- WHY delegate?
  - Best use of resources (people, time, money)
  - Development opportunities
  - Job enrichment and empowerment
    - Addresses 3 higher-level needs:
      - Desire for mastery
      - Sense of autonomy
      - Need for a driving purpose
- *Also applies to your personal life!*



*Be clear on expectations*



***“I’m not able to attend tonight’s virtual meetup.”***

***“This is beyond the scope of the project and I’m not able to add this in.”***

# **Get comfortable saying “no” or “not now,” without guilt**

***“I’m not able to partner with you under these terms.”***

- Be courteous but assertive
- Consider opportunity cost
- Offer an alternative:

***“What would you like me to put aside in order to complete this?”***

***“What would be the impact to the business if I did this later?”***

# **Ways to stay connected with and support others**

- **Maintain organization culture and cohesiveness during social distancing**
- **Maximize productivity without causing burnout**
- **Continue a personal connection even when physically distanced**
- **Help yourself and others counter social isolation**

# Maintain organization culture and cohesiveness during social distancing

- Open “office hour” online forums
- Hold online contests and socials
- Have “show and tell”s, allowing off-site staff to share something (appropriate) from their surroundings
- Host affinity groups with outings and virtual hangouts
- Facilitate access to online and on-ground learning opportunities both within and outside the organization
- Create YouTube videos on office topics and for fun.
- Provide live feeds to general office meetings, announcements, and even webcams of common areas

*so·cial dis·tance (noun)*

*the perceived or desired degree of remoteness between a member of one social group and the members of another, as evidenced in the level of intimacy tolerated between them.*

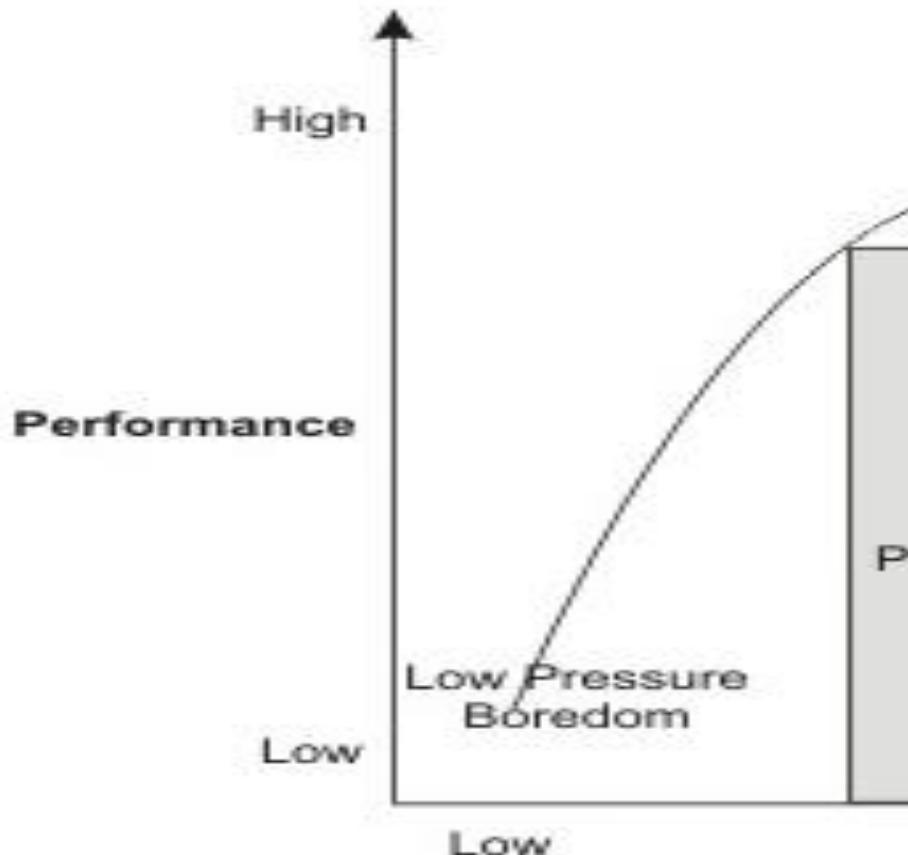
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# Maximize productivity burnout

Emotional and physiological manifestations depend on circumstances

- Can have positive effects through drive and motivation
- Can have negative effects through excessive stress (*distress*)



The Inverted-U relationship between  
Progressive Women's Leadership

# **Continue a personal connection even when physically distanced**

- Show your personality
- Keep them up-to-date on the status of the situation and expected future plans and changes
- Add emotional connection to practical work efforts
  - Tell stories
  - Show empathy
- Ensure that managers have training on how to handle employee concerns over uncertainty
- “Read the room” even in a virtual environment
  - Understand the emotions and thoughts of others
    - *Observe visual and verbal cues*
    - Communicate effectively
    - Body language matters!
    - Apply active listening skills

# **Help yourself and others counter social isolation**

- **19% of remote workers say loneliness is their #1 problem\***
- **How to counter such feelings:**

- Have weekly meetups in person or online (video chats)
- “Walk and work” outside
- Exercise “breaks” during the day
- Online classes (professional and otherwise)
  - Ex: Virtual yoga sessions

- **Create work-life boundaries**

- Power down devices during certain hours
- Set “no work” hours
  - **Structure your day, preplanning it the night before**
  - **Address both emotional and structural issues**
    - Take time to check in, not check up on your employees

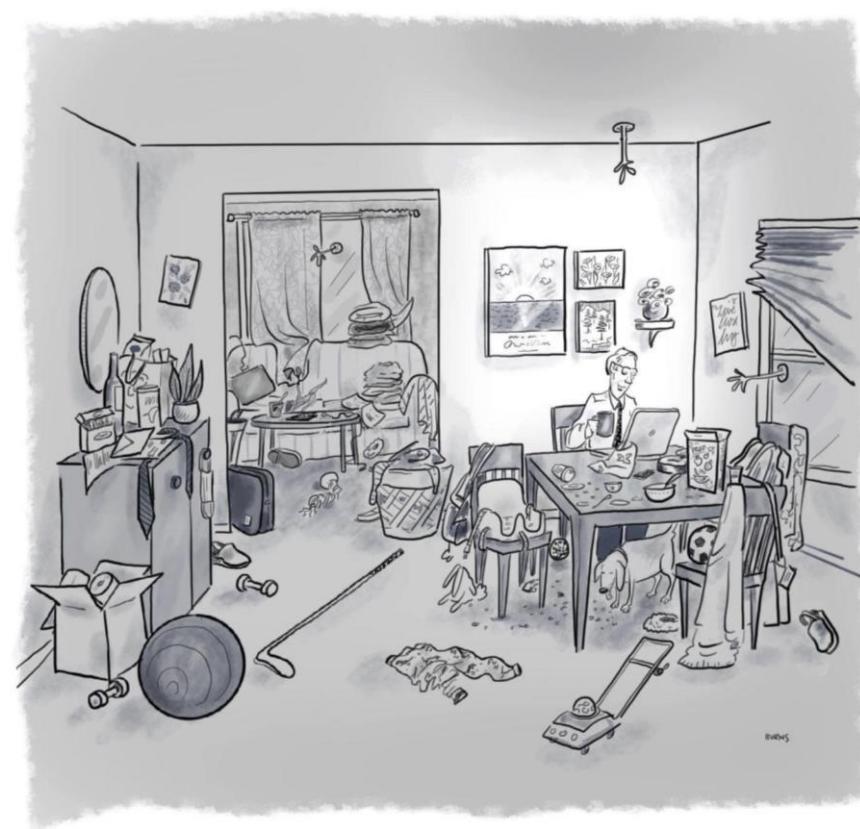
Include remote workers’ names and projects when talking with others in the office

If you see me  
talking to myself,  
please go your way.  
I’m self employed  
and having a staff  
meeting.



*\*Buffer's 2019 State of Remote Work*

# How to plan for and take self-care



- Identify and address anxiety
- Think holistically about your life
- Find ways to unplug



*"You're wrong, Ted, this is absolutely the right time to organize three decades of photos."*

# **Workplace anxiety drivers**

- **Anxiety is feeling out of control.**
  - **Potential causes**
    - Co-worker conflicts
    - Short deadlines
    - Managing others
    - Working hours— time of day; total # of h
    - Treatment from the boss
  - **Why people don't talk about it\***
    - 34% fear it being seen as uncooperative
    - 31% fear being seen as “weak”
    - 22% fear that it could affect current or future promotion opportunities
    - 22% fear that associated notes would go into their permanent file
    - 20% fear being mocked or disregarded

**\*According to the Anxiety and Depression Association of America (ADAA), 72% of Americans say that workplace stress and anxiety interfere with their lives.**

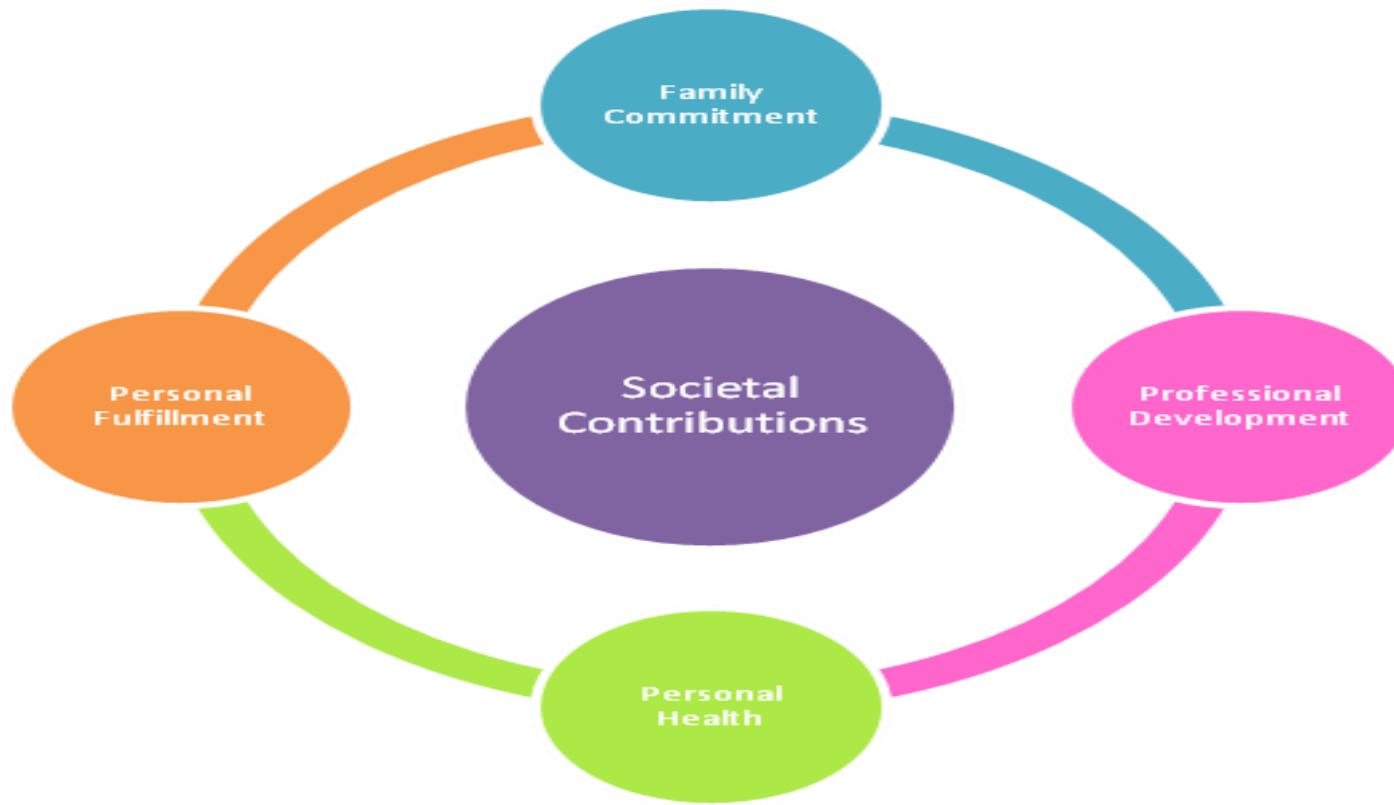


# **How do I address my employees' anxiety when I feel anxious myself?**

- Acknowledge your feelings (self-talk)
- What's the worse that could happen? Could you live with it?
- Remember what F.E.A.R. means
- Let yourself be vulnerable
- Remind yourself and others that you are all in this together
- Invoke humor



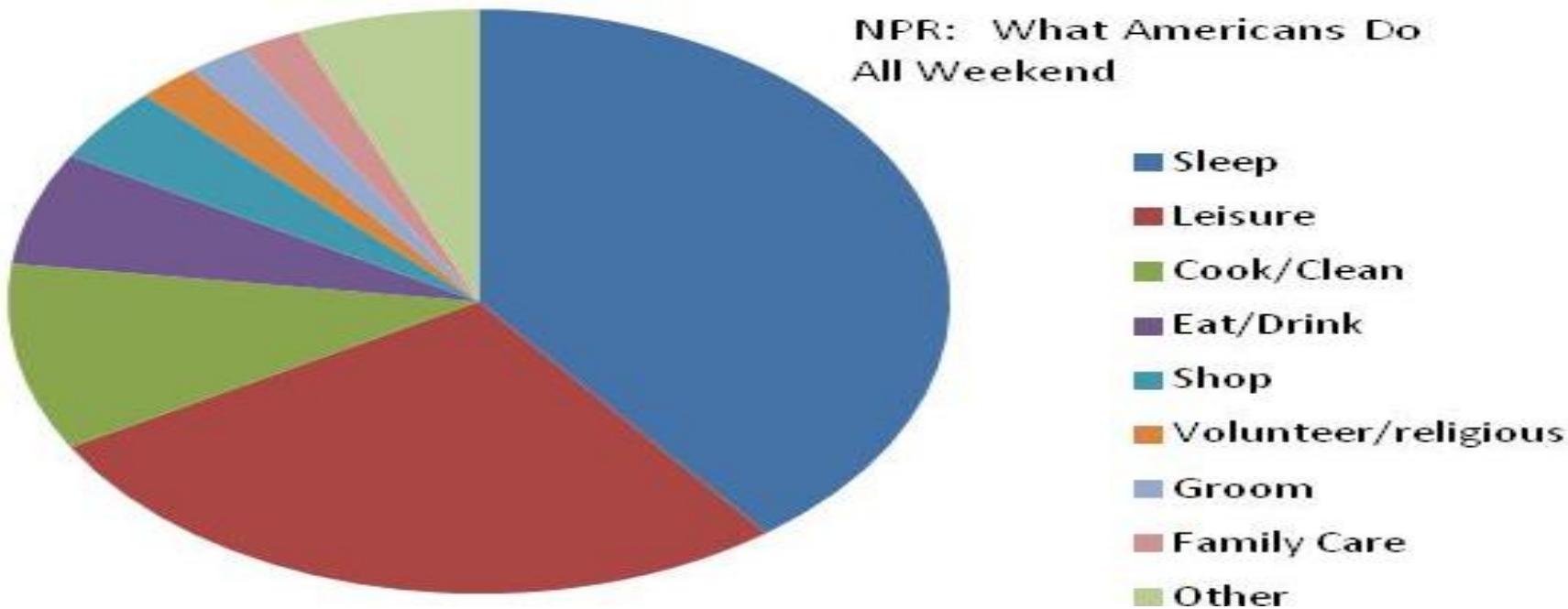
# **Think holistically about your personal and professional life**



*"In our desperate search for joy in our lives, we missed the memo: If we want to live a life of meaning and contribution, we have to become intentional about cultivating sleep and play. We have to let go of exhaustion, busyness, and productivity as status symbols and measures of self-worth... play shapes our brain, fosters empathy, helps us navigate complex social groups, and is at the core of creativity and innovation."*

*- Brene Brene, Dare to Lead*

# Remember to “unplug”

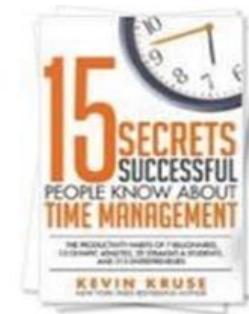


- *Chat: what do you do to physically step away from work during the day?*
- Maintain connections with friends outside the remote office
- Go for walks with friends
- Virtual games
- Pick up the phone, or make video calls
- Schedule “connection” time

# Some additional advice...

## THE 15 SURPRISING THINGS ULTRA PRODUCTIVE PEOPLE DO DIFFERENTLY

**15 Secrets Successful People Know About Time Management**, by New York Times bestselling author, Kevin Kruse, is the **only** guide based on actual research into thousands of working professionals and on interviews with Mark Cuban and other billionaires, Olympic athletes, straight-A students, and over 200 entrepreneurs.



### #1: They focus on minutes.

There are 1,440 minutes in every day. Invest every one of them intentionally.

### #4: They beat procrastination with time travel.

Your future-self can't be trusted. What can you do now to make sure your future-self does the right thing?

### #7: They only check email three times a day.

Don't let email or social media interrupt your flow; schedule times to read and respond to email.

### #10: They follow the 80/20 rule.

80% of outcomes come from only 20% of activities. Identify the 20% and ignore the rest.

### #13: They touch things only once.

If something will take less than 10 minutes to complete, do it immediately..

### #2: They set daily priorities.

Identify your Most Important Task (MIT) and work on it for two hours each morning.

### #5: They make it home for dinner.

There will always be more that can be done. Time-block your priorities and end the day guilt-free.

### #8: They avoid meetings at all costs.

Don't hold meetings. If you have to, keep them short and make everybody stand up.

### #11: They delegate or outsource almost everything.

Identify your unique ability, utilize it, and outsource everything else.

### #14: They have a consistent morning ritual.

Wake up early and give yourself 60-minutes for mental, physical and spiritual health.

### #3: They don't use to-do lists.

Throw away your to-do list; instead schedule *everything* on your calendar.

### #6: They use a notebook.

Capture everything in your notebook so your mind can stay carefree; move to-do's to the calendar.

### #9: They say "no" to almost everything.

Every "yes" is actually a "no" to something else. Say no to everything outside of your goal areas.

### #12: They have work themes for days of the week.

Create a set day of the week schedule to focus on major areas; batch your tasks during the day.

### #15: They don't think about time; they focus on energy.

Maximize your energy to maximize productivity. Focus on sleep, diet, exercise and short breaks throughout the day.

# **Questions?**

**Please submit your  
questions in the chat box.**

# LET'S STAY IN TOUCH!

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# Thank you for your participation!



PROGRESSIVE  
**WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP**

