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with *Barbara Best*

Transcript: Personal Pandemic Podcast

Hey, Barbara Best here and in today's podcast, my focus is you; I want to talk about you and what you need because you're important. If you're new to working from home because of the global pandemic, I know what you're going through, and I want to help.

In this episode, I provide you with insights, sound advice and tips to help you transition to a remote workspace and help make your life easier. Welcome to your new normal.

Before I get started, I want to thank-you very much on behalf of humanity for staying home. Just by doing this, you have helped to stop this pandemic in its tracks. Also, please help others by sharing this podcast with those you know that are struggling to find their new normal at work and in life at the moment.

As I've mentioned before, the transition to a home office space is just as much psychological as it is physical simply because you're being asked to merge a new working space into your personal space. Take it easy on yourself during this time of upheaval. Remember that everyone else around the world is in the same boat including your boss, your co-workers your family and your friends. I know what you're going through – it's a disruptive time for many, especially for those not used to working from home. I get it and I'm on your side. You are going to have to make the best of it for now and manage as best you can.

The world has changed very rapidly due to events beyond our control. This is a new experience for just about everyone; not many people on the planet today have experienced a global pandemic. A lot of people are struggling to cope with it. You are not alone.

You may be feeling any number of emotions right now including anger, fear, anxiety, stress, loneliness, you may feel frozen, disoriented or generally out of sorts. You may not realize this now, but everything will be just fine.

I started working from home 16 years ago. My circumstances were different, but the situation was the same as you're facing now: at one point in time I stopped commuting to work every day and started working from home. At first, it felt weird; I'm at home but I'm supposed to be working or I'm working and I'm at home at the same time. (Like, what the hell...?) I felt disoriented for quite a while, but I worked at it every day and I got used to it and you can too. Today, it's so ingrained in me that I don't even think about it and to be honest, I'm thinking, 'why aren't more people working from home anyway?' Statistics show that remote working reduces overhead costs for companies, reduces the carbon footprint and improves the mental health of its workers. What's not to love?

One of the first things I did when working from home was take the time I used to spend commuting back and forth to work to do something productive instead. For me, it was creating a daily fitness regimen, which I still practice today. There's lots you can do to fill that time! You can get audio books, learn a new language, learn new skills, read, meditate, self-care, get outside.

Everyone reacts and adjusts to change differently. You may be able to create your home workspace in a couple of hours and get right back to work or it may take time for you to adjust to your new surroundings and how you get through your workday and it can be anything in between! Take it easy. If you're struggling, call or video with a colleague, connect with your boss or your friends let them know how you're feeling and the challenges you're having. Talk it through, you will feel better. Katie John said it perfectly: "a problem shared is a problem halved". When you get used to it, you may find it more productive and relaxing to get a day's work done this way. Be open to possibilities.

Here's a few things you can do to bring order from chaos:

1. First and foremost, take time out for yourself in peace and quiet.
2. Think about all the components of your life at the moment. Perhaps you may want to list these in document or journal about them. These components can be your work, your family, your friends, your activities, your commitments, your hobbies and anything else that comes to mind.
3. What do all those components need every day? For example, what do your children need for their day? What does your spouse need for their day? Most importantly, what do you need for your day? Make a list or journal about these pieces.
4. Next, take a look at what space those people and components need daily. Think about how you can adapt what you already have in your home to make it work for you. It doesn't have to be pretty; it has to be functional for your needs and those around you.
5. Think about your typical workday. Think about the tasks that you're responsible for, who you report to, who reports to you, who you interact with, your daily schedule and meetings and your normal routine. Think about the tools you need for your day; what do you need to do your job?
6. Reflect on the fact that you're not seeing people in the hall, elevator or break room; you're not interacting face to face at work. You're working by yourself in your home or other remote space. What does that mean for you? How are you dealing with it and feeling about it?

Just writing these things down will help you focus your mind and start to provide a clearer direction in what you need to do to transition; however long it takes is however long it takes, and that's okay. Take time to find what works for you in your life right now. Please be aware that it does take effort to mind shift to a new way of getting through your workday and it will take commitment.

Healthy boundaries are important in this time of social isolation, especially when you're merging your workspace with your personal space. Discuss with everyone involved and agree on them. Write them down, stick them on the fridge. Ask yourself if the change in your workplace has resulted in a change of your personal routine. What changes do you need to make?

Create a schedule for those in your life, even if it's a daily or weekly schedule that shows your work commitments. It will keep everyone informed and you'll be able to help each other with support when needed.

I've come up with a few ideas on workspaces for you:

- I prefer a room with a door on it as it provides not only a defined physical space but also a defined mental space: when I'm in that room, I'm working; when I'm not in the room, I'm not working.
- You may find that working from your dining room table is okay for you. If so, great!
- You may need to re-jig your living room, dining room and kitchen into one cohesive space with workstations. It's important that you configure in a way that works for you and the other humans sharing your personal space. It doesn't have to be chaos!
- Don't forget about the provision of standing working spaces if that's how you work.
- Add personal touches to your workspace, whatever that happens to be, like photos, a bulletin board, knick-knacks, posters or plants.

Here's a short, remote working story:

A young man I know on the planet works in the area of engineering. He has never worked from home before and he totally loves working from his dining room table! He gets so much more work done than he does at the office and he's thinking about asking his boss to work from home more often in the future.

His mum works in the government. She's an extrovert that thrives in the company of other people as much as possible; she's always on the go and always doing something. Because of her personality, she's struggling with working from her dining room table, alone. Although she is getting work done, she's feeling lonely. It's not her usual work environment where she's interacting with people all day, every day.

All this to say that everyone is different with different personalities, expectations, relationships, families, biases and needs. I can't stress enough that in these turbulent times, it's important to figure out what works for you.

In closing, a reminder to please help others by sharing this podcast with those you know that are struggling to find their new normal at work and in life at the moment.

Here's a few action steps:

- Please feel free to leave me comments or feedback on this platform.
 - You can always drop me a line if you'd like to be considered for a future podcast at info@virtualworks.ca
 - You can visit our website at www.virtualworks.ca
 - And you can always find us on LinkedIn at www.linkedin.com/in/virtualworks
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“Are you struggling with getting things done? Are there projects always on the back burner? We can help! Take a moment to fill out our services questionnaire <https://forms.gle/MDZ88vGCfsL8KJku8> as a first step to get things off your plate!”



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