

Working through the holidays: How to cope



Some people are in a career that doesn't have typical holiday time-off. Health care workers, first responders, retail staff and essential employees have been dealing with odd hours as well as expectations that don't fall neatly into a typical calendar's notices. It may be difficult, but expectations about holiday time off, and the fact that they are part of a group adhering to their own calendar, go a long way toward dealing with their specific career's uniqueness. Within many of these careers, one's family may have also become used to

adjusting their holiday activities based on their loved one's schedule. The important point is that they aren't doing this alone.

But this year may be different for many. Employee shortages and the pandemic has put a damper on anything "usual" as well as our "traditions". There are probably more people who have to work – or even need to work during the holidays - and it is not fun, nor easy. Different kinds of deadlines, trying to make up for financial shortages, working from home, and a "new reality" has "come to town," as the song says.

Tips to make the holiday work schedule a bit brighter and productive:

- Reschedule the holiday
 - Plan to celebrate with co-workers, like a special lunch, for example.
 - Plan your family celebrations when you will be available.

- Start each day with a renewed attitude
 - Grumble and complain as you might, that won't change the fact that you are working during a holiday, and you don't want to.
 - Grumble once, then plan at least two ways to make each day special.

- Reframe your thinking
 - Try changing the words you keep repeating in your head about having to work on a holiday. How might it be helping others? Can you look at having to work more positively?
 - Write down your newly-shaped thinking, put the thought in front of you to stay balanced and keep your energy in check!

- Avoid Social Media at work

- Chances are, social media and your personal emails are filled with holiday messages, gift-buying ideas and possibly remind you how bummed you are about not being 'there', when you are 'here'.
- Use some mindfulness techniques to re-set your thinking. This includes practicing being fully present (the only place you can really "be"), aware of where you are and what you're doing, not being overly reactive or overwhelmed by what's going on around you. This is a skill of purposely bringing your attention to current experiences without judgement.
- Stay focused on a goal
 - Plan your productivity! What do you need or want to get accomplished?
 - Write down each of your tasks on colored post-it notes – those you can reasonably plan to accomplish. As you finish each task, toss the post-it note away.
- Compartmentalize your personal responsibilities
 - This can be particularly difficult if you work from home. Try to plan your breaks and check on pets, kids and other family members during your breaks.
 - Post your schedule on the door, along with paper for the kids/family to write down their intriguing and constant questions.
- Whether you are in your home office or your company's office space
 - Add some holiday cheer as decoration for the holiday. You are not cancelling the holiday – your timing is just different than others'.
 - Use noise management solutions – or play music, whatever might bring you a little cheer along the way.
- Create a transitional activity to signal for yourself (and perhaps your family) that the workday is done
 - At many workplaces, a horn may sound, or a bell might ring. This is a signal to your mind and body that there is a change coming.
 - It can also help to change clothes – from work to home. Yes, this can be a moot point since many people are working from home, but any kind of alteration is the idea.



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