



Women And The Future Of Work in the New Normal World

PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR WORKING WOMEN TO ADAPT TO THE NEW NORMAL



Social distancing, Lockdowns, Quarantine Requirements, Economic Slowdown, and Fears of Uncertainty have been the bane of the Covid-19 pandemic. Owing to this, business-as-usual in all spheres has pivoted to a completely new normal.

Work, Home, Relationships, Health, Finances, Meanings, Values, Beliefs are all being recalibrated.

Coping with all these unplanned uncertainties has been building fear, anxiety, stress and helplessness. To recover from this state, it is necessary to equip ourselves with mindfulness to make a smooth transition to the new normal, build up resilience and ensure our wellbeing for now and into the future

This would require us to understand and acknowledge the various facets of this “New Normal”, as well as identify actions needed to navigate the challenges and opportunities each of these pose in our lives.

We've identified 6 Dimensions of The New Normal and actions you can take to adapt to each of these:

1. Meeting new demands at home and reconfiguring your support systems
2. Adapting to the hybrid model of work, alternating “work-from-home & back-to-office”
3. Embracing opportunities and challenges of digital technologies and virtual work
4. Altering models of leadership, team building and workplace collaboration
5. Career progression and building financial security in uncertain times
6. Looking after physical and mental wellbeing

1.
**MEETING NEW DEMANDS
AT HOME
AND
RECONFIGURING
SUPPORT SYSTEMS**

Dimension	Challenges	Opportunity	Actions and Solutions
Increased household chores	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Domestic helpers not available • All meals being cooked at home • Extra work with need to sanitise groceries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chance for men to get involved in housework • Pick up cooking skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delegate work • Prioritize by urgency • Purchase gadgets that help with tasks • Use short-cuts like cooking one-pot dishes or on mopping alternate days • Make advance meal plans • Don't try to be perfect • Establish routines that suit you • Try think of chores as part of fitness routine!
Unrealistic demands from families on women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most family members are home all day • Less control over focussed “office time” • More gender stereotype roles, expectations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unburden “guilt” by spending more time with family • Learn new skills/ hobbies together 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negotiate with family • Inspire collaboration for house work • Ask for Help/ Support • Be firm about the time you are “at work” & not available for housework

Dimension	Challenges	Opportunity	Actions and Solutions
<p>Added Burden on Working Mothers</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Juggling work and children since schools are closed • Closed day-care & creche options • Accommodating childrens' online classes • Nannies and domestic help not available • No or limited fall back options / support from parents • Disturbance by children during meetings • Tough to separate work time from family time • Anxious children • Little/ No “me-time” or downtime 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spending extra time with the kids helps get over “mother’s guilt” • Time to teach children life skills (cooking and cleaning, hygiene, good health, cook to use • Good time for fathers to bond with children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure fathers’ share responsibilities – by practically dividing time and duties, without being critical or judgemental • Involve older children in housework • Make longer screen times constructive (online hobby classes, facetime with family, online resources made free) • Allow children to be bored • Don’t stress about children bombing calls • Start your day early • Force fit in “me-time” at any hour

Some useful resources to manage home and family

- How to help kids during Corona virus by Save The Children - [Link](#)
- UNICEF's Tips for Parents during Corona virus - [Link](#)
- Lower Your Expectations, And Other Parenting Advice For The Era Of COVID-19 - [Link](#)
- Resources for Families During the Coronavirus Pandemic - [Link](#)
- How Dual-Career Couples Can Work Through the Coronavirus Crisis – [Link](#)
- Balancing work and elder care through the coronavirus crisis – [Link](#)

2.

ADAPTING TO THE HYBRID MODEL OF WORK

Dimension	Challenges	Opportunity	Actions and Solutions
Working from Home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Availability of comfortable work space • Distractions of home demands • No work-home boundaries • No start-end-time for work or home chores • Working with children around • Family members not respecting your work commitments • Erratic wi-fi Connectivity and electricity supply 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No more wastage of commute time • No office distractions • More flexible schedule • Continue to work even with care-giving responsibilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design & own a defined work space (but don't fret over how good it is) • Dress to the role • Draw virtual time-lines • Structure the day the same way as in office. • Build breaks into work
Transitioning back to working from office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to be safe & sanitised • Adapting to physical & social changes at workplace 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structured life • Working face to face with teams • Completing pending tasks that couldn't be done remotely 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take precautions • Be mindful of others' safety • Carry your own food, mugs, cutlery. Clean them yourself

Some useful resources for Working from Home

- TapChief's Practical Guide to Work from Home in India - [Link](#)
- How to Work from Home with Kids - [Link](#)
- The ultimate work from home guide for small business - [Link](#)
- Work from home survival guide for self care - [Link](#)
- Harvard Work from Home Guide for parents - [Link](#)
- Indeed Work from home with kids during Corona - [Link](#)

3.

**EMBRACING
OPPORTUNITIES AND
CHALLENGES OF
DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES
AND VIRTUAL WORK**

Dimension	Challenges	Opportunity	Actions and Solutions
<p>Increased use of technology for virtual meetings, online calls and webinars</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of Wi-Fi, infrastructure or skills • Too many meetings/webinars • Sexual – harassment in form of calls at late nights, other demands 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning new skills and applications • networking • Chance to connect with people from wider geographies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not hesitate to ask for employer support for updating infrastructure • Identify and learn two new tech skills • Prioritise webinars – don't over-attend • Do not accept invites for calls at odd hours
<p>Communicating effectively in virtual world</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hesitation to speak up during online meetings • Lack of face to face rapport with senior management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chance for impactful communication • Participating/ Speaking in Online Seminars/Events • Lesser “stage-fright” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be prepared & keep notes • Dress well • Keep hydrated • Make brief, emphatic points • Use video whenever you can

Some useful resources using virtual technology

- How to use Zoom like a pro: 13 video chat hacks to try at your next meeting – [Link](#)
- Tips for Effective Online Meetings – [Link](#)
- 8 Tips for Virtual Meetings, Leading an Effective and Productive Video Call – [Link](#)
- It's Not Just You: In Online Meetings, Many Women Can't Get a Word In – [Link](#)
- Support other women and advocate for yourself on Zoom – [Link](#)

4.

NEW DIMENSIONS OF LEADERSHIP, TEAM BUILDING AND COLLABORATING AT WORK

Dimension	Challenges	Opportunity	Actions and Solutions
Working as a team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced face to face contacts • Tougher to work collaboratively • Reduced chance of informal bonding • Tough to brainstorm and ideate together 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everyone is in a similar situation • People are less competitive and more open to helping and collaborating • Personal team-bonding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate effectively • Put things in writing • Take time to pause and assess to avoid burn-out • Share feelings, personal situations
Leading, Inspiring and team Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anxious, stressed team members • Job insecurities • Employees finding it tough to balance work & home • Pressure to deliver, optimise resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time for deploying “feminine leadership” • Increased team bonding • Getting to know team members more personally 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empathize • Be positive and spread positivity • Be clear, decisive & focused on future • Offer mentoring • Give enough breaks • Check about personal situations of team members • Provide flexibility and extra lead times

Some useful resources for leadership during crisis

- Leadership Resources for Times of Crisis – [Link](#)
- Effectively leading through COVID-19: Leader Toolkit by Astra Zenca – [Link](#)
- Will the Pandemic Reshape Notions of Female Leadership? - [Link](#)
- Avoiding Bias In The Virtual Workplace – [Link](#)
- How To Be A Better Ally To Women On Zoom – [Link](#)

5.

CAREER PROGRESSION AND BUILDING FINANCIAL SECURITY IN UNCERTAIN TIMES

Dimension	Challenges	Opportunity	Actions and Solutions
<p>High Delivery Expectations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excess pressure to perform and remain relevant in times when businesses are cutting costs and downsizing staff • Tougher to remain visible in virtual settings • Challenging for mothers to meet official deadlines without childcare/eldercare support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No more time wasting activities in office • Since everyone is on a virtual work-model, working mothers and caregivers may no longer be penalized. • Others will realize that work-from-home and flexible working hours do not impact efficiency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteer to lead/contribute to a key project • Help build thought leadership • Negotiate flexibility with seniors/ team members • Provide regular updates and don't "disappear" • Keep in touch informally on company networks • Regularly follow-up with clients and other stakeholders

Dimension	Challenges	Opportunity	Actions and Solutions
Professional Learning and Self Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employers are cutting down on L&D costs • Rescheduling of planned training programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More time for skill / subject knowledge building • Availability of excellent free online courses • Availability of online mentors/ guide (some pro-bono) • Free coaching and learning programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get an internal mentor • Stay focused on IDPs • Listen to relevant webinars/ podcasts • Undertake online courses to upskill

Dimension	Challenges	Opportunity	Actions and Solutions
Securing finances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sudden outflows on health • Building a kitty to secure against eventuality of getting the Pink Slip 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Great time to save, budget and plan since there are reduced expenses on socialising, travel, entertainment and shopping 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan the next one year in terms of income and outflows. • Prepare contingency plan

Some useful resources career and finance

- What to do if you lose your job By Ellevest - [Link](#)
- How to find a job during recession - [Link](#)
- How to set coronavirus work-from-home expectations with your boss – [Link](#)
- Many of us are now WFH. Here's how to ask for the schedule you need – [Link](#)
- List of Free Online Courses by ClassCentral - [Link](#)
- Tech tools made free during crisis - [Link](#)

6.

LOOKING AFTER PHYSICAL AND MENTAL WELLBEING

Dimension	Challenges	Opportunity	Actions and Solutions
Staying Fit and Building Immunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gym or fitness centers closed or unsafe • Limited availability of outdoor activities • Need to build immunity to resist health impact • Limited access resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time to move to a healthier lifestyle (healthy, homecooked food) • Lower pollution and exposure to stressful traffic • Lower exposure to other kinds of bacteria and viruses as well • Lots of free online courses to facilitate healthy lifestyle 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calendarize physical activity into daily routine • Create make shift exercise areas on Balconies, terrace, driveways etc. • Join online fitness sessions • Take walks if allowed in your locality • Increase your intake of Vitamins and immunity boosters

Dimension	Challenges	Opportunity	Actions and Solutions
Looking after mental health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anxieties, fears, mood swings and worries – of self, family and team members • Uncertain future, no sign of vaccine or cure for Covid19 • Economic uncertainties • Too much negative news • Extreme loneliness and social disconnect • Anxiety about loved ones in other cities • Panic created by WhatsApp forwards and social media 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time to reset and prioritize on what matters • Opportune time to begin practicing and expressing Gratitude • Building support circles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reach out personally and professionally for help, if needed • Download meditation apps • Join online group meditation classes • Try and stick to reliable sources of news • Seek out positive stories and news about hope and resilience • Make time for indulging in creative hobbies • Help community in some way, to feel better yourself

Dimension	Challenges	Opportunity	Actions and Solutions
<p>Maintaining relationships in times of social distancing and uncertain times</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virtual meetings are not the same as face to face • Difficult sustaining close personal relationships • No outside sources of entertainment to experience together • Navigating existing strained relationships within family 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality Time to connect with friends, family virtually • More time available to reach out to and revive long lost connections • Greater flexibility to connect with friends and family in different geographies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lay emphasis on quality of interaction - - practice active listening • Be genuine, authentic, empathetic • Initiate actions to improve any strained relationships • Take a lead to organize virtual social events with family/ friends • Find new ways to celebrate milestones with friends & family • Connect children with elders of the family

Some useful resources for physical and mental wellbeing

- 10 Ways to Ease your Corona Virus Anxiety - [Link](#)
- TeD Article: I'm incredibly anxious about coronavirus - [Link](#)
- Therapists Answer Your Top Questions About Coronavirus Anxiety - [Link](#)
- How to cope with coronavirus anxiety, according to psychologists - [Link](#)
- Activities to Maintain Your Physical and Mental Health During Lockdown – [Link](#)
- How to stay healthy in a lockdown – [Link](#)
- Stay physically active during self- quarantine - [Link](#)

Create your Own Self-Leadership Inventory

Dimension	Opportunity	Challenge	Leadership Actions for self
Professional Responsibilities			
Home Responsibilities			
Health (Physical & Mental)			
Relationships (Family & Friends)			
Unwinding/Me-time Activities			
Financial and Estate Planning			
Spiritual/ Personal Growth			
Giving back to the Community			

A note to readers

The above lists are compilations we derived from our first-hand interactions with stakeholders and by collating inputs from secondary sources.

But there may be more issues and solutions, and we invite you to send in any additional issues you may face or any suggestions on tackling these to make our document a more comprehensive guide for all women



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