



July 2020

QuickTakes

When Work-From-Home Becomes More Work Than Home

Quarantine has eroded the boundaries between work and home, and as a result, many of us are working more than ever, even when we're supposed to be off the clock. This can lead to an unstable work-life balance, an important aspect in any healthy lifestyle, but especially now. Read on and learn a few tips to help you preserve your work-life balance, even when you're operating from home.



The Productivity Pandemic

Since the onset of stay-at-home orders due to coronavirus, most people have found themselves with more free time than ever before. In fact, some optimists have even chosen to view quarantine as an opportunity: a chance to finally write that novel, start training for that marathon, learn a new skill. In short, seizing all that free time to be productive in a meaningful way.

At first glance, this seems reasonable, even admirable. After all, there's no more lunch dates, no more happy hours, no more get-togethers. Shouldn't we all be using that free time constructively?

The answer isn't a simple "yes." In fact, there are several concerns with the widespread acceptance of a global pandemic serving as a productivity booster—both for the people who are stressing over being as productive as possible, and those who are feeling the pressure to be productive. It all coalesces into a different kind of crisis: a productivity pandemic, where everyone is worried about what they're doing to be productive, what everyone else is doing to be productive, and if we could be doing more.

This mindset can put strain on our beleaguered mental health, which has already been coping with the fear, anxiety, and stress of COVID-19 for several months now. If you find yourself worrying about your productivity during quarantine, read on for a few tips to help you recalibrate your mindset.

Reexamine “free” time. While quarantine has given some people more free time than usual, for countless others it has meant more responsibilities, not less.

Parents have found themselves struggling to simultaneously balance work-from-home with child care. Essential workers have been tapped for longer and more strenuous shifts. Others still have found themselves as caretakers of those who have fallen ill due to COVID-19. If you're stressing over the fact that you're not using free time as well as everyone else, remember that for many people, this free time does not exist. Everyone is coping with pandemic differently—which is why comparing yourself with others is an exercise in futility.

Acknowledge COVID's mental strain. While it's tempting to try and be productive during these unprecedented times, for many of us those hours would be better spent recharging. While we may not be fully cognizant of it at times, living and working amidst a global pandemic is a tangible drain on our mental health. Prioritizing self-care, rather than stressing over whether we're being productive enough and pushing ourselves, will ultimately result in a healthier lifestyle.

Limit your social media intake. As we've said, it's pointless to compare your COVID productivity with those of other people, no matter how much you might be tempted. Social media exacerbates this problem, giving the illusion that everyone is being productive, and almost forcing you to compare yourself to other people. Remember that social media is a funhouse mirror—it doesn't show reality, it distorts it. Rarely are our failures or anxieties shown on Twitter or Instagram, just our successes. Limit your social media intake so that you can stay connected and informed, without getting sucked into unrealistic standards and comparisons.

Quick Chicken Picatta with Parslied Orzo Serves 4

////// Sautéed lemon slices intensify the flavors of the pan sauce and make a beautiful garnish. Cook the orzo while you bread the chicken; while the chicken cooks, spread the orzo on a baking sheet to cool and to keep the grains from sticking together.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup uncooked whole-wheat orzo
- 3 tablespoons lemon juice, divided
- 2 1/2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, divided
- 1/2 cup finely chopped flat-leaf parsley
- 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt, divided
- 1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper, divided
- 1/2 cup all-purpose flour
- 4 (4-oz.) chicken breast cutlets
- 1/4 cup finely chopped shallot
- 2 teaspoons minced fresh garlic
- 8 thin lemon slices, seeds removed
- 1 tablespoon capers, drained
- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter

DIRECTIONS

1. Cook orzo according to package directions, omitting salt and fat; drain. Spread orzo on a baking sheet; cool 10 minutes. Place orzo in a bowl; add 1 tablespoon juice, 1 1/2 tablespoons oil, parsley, 1/4 teaspoon salt, and 1/4 teaspoon pepper, stirring to combine.
2. Place flour in a shallow dish. Sprinkle chicken with remaining 1/4 teaspoon salt and remaining 1/4 teaspoon pepper. Dredge chicken in flour, shaking off excess. Heat remaining 1 tablespoon oil in a large skillet over medium-high. Add chicken to pan; cook 3 minutes on each side or until done. Place chicken on a platter (do not wipe out pan).
3. Add shallot and garlic to pan; cook 2 minutes, stirring frequently. Stir in remaining 2 tablespoons juice and lemon slices, scraping pan to loosen browned bits. Reduce heat to low; add capers and butter, stirring until butter melts. Spoon lemon mixture over chicken. Serve with orzo.



NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION

459 Calories
 15 g Total fat
 4 g Saturated fat
 9 g Unsaturated fat
 348 mg Sodium
 45 g Carbohydrates
 8 g Fiber
 1 g Sugar
 33 g Protein