Managing work during the pandemic is not easy. Essential workers have been on the frontlines for months and coping with the stress and anxiety that comes from potential exposure and chronic uncertainty. And working from home during COVID-19 is far from the pajama party people perhaps imagined. The average WFH workday is 48.5 minutes longer, with 12.9 percent more meetings, as reported by Bloomberg from this global study.

One family of two WFH parents with school-aged children at home became so frustrated with the constant interruptions that they began tracking their experience. As one parent was responsible for watching the children, the other would have a three-hour block of work, and they found the working parent was, “interrupted 45 times, an average of 15 times per hour. The average length of an uninterrupted stretch of work time was three minutes, 24 seconds.”

 Appropriately coined ‘work-life blur,’ this unique experience calls for some new strategies to manage well-being.

**Create Clear Boundaries**
When it comes to boundaries, think of these three primary areas: time, space and attention. Establish clear work times and clear down times. Try working in a dedicated space, with a door that can close if possible. And avoid the multi-minding trap of working-from-anywhere by focusing your attention on one thing at a time. This helps in feeling more engaged at work and more present with loved ones when not working.

**Build-in New Transition Traditions**
Physical shifts like a commute, change in clothes, or even a lunch break were built in psychological breaks throughout the day that helped with mental well-being. Taking a morning walk can substitute for the commute, a breathing or meditation exercise can be the new coffee break, and putting in place 10 minutes of ‘brain breaks’ in between meetings and at the end of your work day will provide necessary absorption time and prevent mental exhaustion.

**Make Self-Care a Top Priority**
The juggling it all, all the time, scenario is leaving many running on empty. Getting quality sleep and eating a well-balanced diet with plenty of water is also incredibly important. If it feels as though there is no time for hobbies or activities that bring joy, that is a sign that some restructuring may be needed. Also, if sleeplessness, loss of appetite, or feelings of disengagement are becoming the norm, these may indicate burn-out: a state of mental, emotional, and physical exhaustion from long-term stress. Reach out to your EAP to speak with a clinician, discuss your experience, and figure out healthy next steps. Contact your EAP through ACI Specialty Benefits at 800.932.0034, info@acispecialtybenefits.com, or using the myACI Benefits mobile app.