



# Make Room for **WORKSPACE WELLNESS**

Create a healthy work-life balance,  
no matter the location



**NATIONAL BUSINESS  
FURNITURE**



# Welcome to the New Workday

While some industries have had remote workers for ages, the majority of the workforce was grounded in an office.

The pandemic quickly changed that, sending employees home in a way that we had thought unfathomable. Even though we quickly adapted, it hasn't been without its trials and tribulations. We have all come so far but after a while it became clear that there's a lot of challenges that come with working from home.

Those challenges all have their own solutions. While working from home (WFH), you're in control of what solutions works best for you. Find the right ways to remedy lapses in productivity, waning focus, lack of communication, and deteriorating mental and physical wellbeing by optimizing your WFH workspace. A holistic approach to your workday, space, and self is the start to building a happy, healthy work life.

At National Business Furniture, we partnered with Kelton Global to conduct a survey of over 1,000 Americans ages 18+ to see how employees feel about their work. We overwhelmingly found that workers of all ages are eager to address the issues related to their workspace setups. The solutions aren't always easy, but a little innovation and a lot of optimism has shown us all that there's always answers to the growing need for workspace wellness.

# Curate Your Space

## Then vs. Now

Somewhat surprisingly, we discovered that 35% of people miss what their workspace used to look like. It's easy to assume that corporate offices are nothing but a series of cookie-cutter workstations, but the reality is that these spaces use design elements that are tried-and-true solutions for workday needs.

At home, there's ample opportunity to create a perfectly personalized workspace that builds off of the core tenets of workplace design. Embrace your highest office aspirations and add a personal touch to your day-to-day office oasis.



# Design Matters

## Decorate for Success



The hues you choose have a major impact on your overall emotion. A bright and sunny color palette can add a little bit of pep to your workday, using inspired yellows, pastels, and bright whites to wash the room in light. Darker, more brooding colors aren't necessarily sleepy; they can create a studious and serious atmosphere that can inspire a sense of pride in your workday.



Art for art's sake is a must for interior design in both the workplace and living space. As you select purely decorative pieces, look for items that aren't too cluttering or distracting, opting for positive and inspiring imagery on the walls.



Bring in a bookcase to expand your storage for workday supplies as well as decorative pieces. With new and inventive designs dominating the market, the bookcase itself can add an artistic appeal to your space, opting for something with an inventive combination of storage cubbies in fixed and adjustable heights.



## All About Ambiance

- » Wake up and smell the roses or whichever scent works best for you. Candles, wax melts, and oil diffusers are a great way to enhance your space and invigorating options are ideal for workday productivity. Seek out bright and vibrant scent profiles, such as lemon, orange, or peppermint, to keep up-beat or allative stress with the calming scent of lavender or chamomile.
- » Soothing sounds are a luxury that is hard to recreate in a shared office. While there's many people who prefer podcasts, others work well with white noise, and some are interested in inspired instrumentals. Find what works best for an ambient out-loud soundtrack instead of sticking to office-friendly headphones.



## Workday Must-Haves

- » Design your desktop accessories to match the vibe of your workspace. Online marketplaces have taken desktop staples to another level, offering fun and funky designs that can add to your overall decorating scheme. Gone are the days of simple Swingline staplers and drab tape dispensers. Find something that's fun to use and functional at the same time.
- » The smallest stuff matters, including the office supplies you use to get the job done. Find the perfect pens to write with or seek out paper clips that are more than just simple curves. When purchasing for yourself, it's less necessary to blend into the status quo than it is when buying for an entire office.



## Go Green

- » Pick a plant or maybe many plants. Home offices with ample natural light are ideal for thriving greenery of a maintenance level of your choosing. While some prefer fickle ferns, the tried-and-true ease of a pothos is great for those who might not have a green thumb.
- » Go with faux plants if you're in a dimly lit area or just don't have it in you to keep up on a watering schedule. The options are endless and there's more and more hyper-realistic options available every day.
- » Fresh might be best for a quick pick-me-up. A bouquet of flowers or quick-blooming seasonal plant can instantly invigorate your space and add a nice little oomph to the air with a sweetly-scented selection.



Lamp by Adesso

## Fun and Functional Needs

- » The stuff you store is just as important as the way you store it, be it on a bookcase or in a concealed cabinet. Expand your storage capacity with solutions that look great and blend in with the rest of your interior design scheme. New designs are available that go beyond the basics. Accent these pieces with clever bins and storage boxes to make it easy to conceal pesky small supplies and unsightly clutter.
- » Let there be light! While home offices often feature more natural light than a corporate workspace, there's always a need for lamps and lights that are easy-on-the-eyes and just right for your vibe. Choose lightbulbs that emulate the sun or go with vibrant options that can invigorate your space. For the winter months, SAD lamps are an easy way to keep up your spirits during long hours of working from home.





**Making it Work**

## **Make the Most out of Makeshift Spaces**

In today's world of small-space living and full households, it isn't the norm to have a dedicated home office. Especially for those who aren't planning on working remote for the long-haul, it's likely that your workspace is doing double-duty at least part-time.

Not all "make it work" workspaces are created equal. As you find the perfect place for your WFH home base, consider the way that your physical area may impact your working hours.



## Sharing is Caring

Your new coworker might be a spouse or roommate that works for a completely different company. Managing both of your workdays could lead to distractions. Our study found that 28% of WFH workers find it challenging to stay focused due to a lack of privacy. Instead of working against these new coworkers, try to work with their workflow:

- » Find an affable two-person setup that creates personal space for everybody. Especially in spacious workspaces, it's worth taking a page from the corporate office playbook to create coordinating workstations that aren't unlike an open office setup. Position yourselves back-to-back to minimize noise and visual distraction and seek out furniture that creates an aesthetically cohesive environment.
- » Share your schedules so you know when you'll be up against dueling meetings. Find a separate area in the home that's ideal for voice and video communication without bothering other WFH workers.
- » Bring in a bookcase to expand your storage for workday supplies as well as decorative pieces. With new and inventive designs dominating the market, the bookcase itself can add an artistic appeal to your space, opting for something with an inventive combination of storage cubbies in fixed and adjustable heights.

# Discourage Distractions

Distractions are here, there, and everywhere! How you handle them is the difference between a successful workday and a productivity nightmare. Each annoyance has its own set of hurdles but there's a few notorious challenges that all remote workers experience.

## **For physical items try to remove, relocate, or repurpose the distractions:**

- » Remove visual noise, including excess clutter, dirty dishes, stacks of paper, and other easy-to-eradicate items that are crowding your workspace.
- » Relocate more sizable fixtures, such as TVs or video game systems that might be situated too close to your desk.
- » Repurpose distractions if you can't remove them. A day-at-a-glance screensaver on a smart TV can make it less appealing to turn on Netflix or a video game system can be used to play music instead of games.

## **And then there's your new "coworkers" at home:**

- » Communicate your schedule and make sure that family members or roommates are aware of your worktime.
- » Set up a new cozy spot or play area for pets who like to make appearances during virtual meetings, ideally one that's in another room entirely.
- » Find a truly quiet zone, even if it's not your desk, that's behind a closed door to make it clear that you can't be disturbed.

# Don't Get Too Comfortable



Figuratively? Yes, make yourself as emotionally at ease as possible. Literally? Avoid the coziest corners of your home while you're hard at work. Studies have shown that just being in a bedroom can trigger sleepiness, which is further impacted by working while sitting in bed. While it's tempting, it's a known detractor to productivity.

Sometimes it's not possible to separate a sleeping space from your workspace. If your office setup is in your bedroom, lean into sensory tools that are easy to adjust depending on the time of day. Use candles or an oil diffuser with a bright, invigorating scent during the daytime and switch them out to a calming, sleepytime scent at night. Make sure that the light source at your desk has a bright daylight-mimicking hue while other room lighting is more suitable for non-working hours.

For other parts of the home, try to have an office chair that can be swapped out for other seating at a kitchen table or countertop. This is an ergonomically-friendly solution for long hours at work but can also help your subconscious understand the difference between sitting down for dinner and getting down to business.

A woman with her hair in a ponytail, wearing a bright yellow sweater, is sitting at a wooden desk. She is looking down at a laptop, with her hands on the keyboard. A small, fluffy dog with white and brown fur is sitting on the desk next to her, looking towards the camera. A white mug is on the desk to the right of the laptop. In the background, there is a large green plant and a window with soft light coming through.

## Life is a Balancing Act

## The Inevitable Intersection

When work makes its way into the living space, it starts to feel as if work is everywhere. We've always used the term "work/life balance" when evaluating the workplace. The same ideals still hold true, it's just that they're a little more difficult to conceptualize and enforce.

While it might feel like work is everywhere and everywhere is work, that's just not the case. Acknowledging your needs, enforcing your boundaries, and remembering that you're only human is the start of creating a healthy relationship with work, even when it's situated so close to everyday life.



## Ergonomics are Essential

At the office, your company chose desks, chairs, and supplies that they thought were ideal for the greater good. At home, you might not have these workplace essentials ready to go. As you settle in to your workspace, consider furniture that is a net benefit for physical health.

We found that nearly one in four (22%) of those who are frustrated with their current space are currently using outdated furnishings or equipment that impacts productivity. Meanwhile, three in 10 (30%) believe that their workspace needs an upgrade. If you're part of either group, make sure that your new-and-improved setup is doing its best to help you stay on task.

## Take A Seat

It's no surprise that seating is a constant struggle for work from home employees. As you look for the right seat to suit your sit, you aren't bound by traditional office options, but consider finding a task chair that has the same support and features that are staples of workplace seating.

- » **Size and Shape:** Whether you're big & tall or petite & small, there's a chair that's suitable for your stature. Find a chair that's designed to fit your body type with as much or as little padding as you'd prefer.
- » **Materials:** While the colors and styles are endless, there's a few main materials that are used in office furniture. Polyurethane and other faux leathers are very easy to clean and durable while actual leather is a luxurious option for an elevated office. Cooling mesh can make working a breeze while fabric can add style without sticking to skin.
- » **Ergonomic Adjustments:** The right combination of adjustments can make your workday experience feel like a dream. Mix and match the right tilt (synchro, knee, or center), lumbar support, arm movements, and seat depth that works for you.

## Desk Decisions

From traditional tables to storage-rich setups, desks have a wide array of configurations and features to help you customize your workspace. No matter what size space you're working with, there's endless options to fit every floorplan, design scheme, and budget.

- » **Desk Height:** Standard height desks are the standard for a reason, but these days people are turning to standing height solutions for an added ergonomic benefit. Height-adjustable options marry the best of both worlds for those who like to sit or stand at any stature.
- » **Storage Options:** Pedestal desks have a wealth of supply and file storage while others are lighter on storage and encourage users to use mobile peds and other storage units to conceal their workday musts.
- » **Tabletop Organizers:** Coordinating hutches both big and small are there for your right-at-hand needs. These can occupy valuable vertical real estate to further enhance small space work areas.



# Set (and stick to!) Boundaries

**In short, what you allow is going to continue.**

The boundaries you set with management, coworkers, and yourself will determine the success of your work/life balance. Likewise, leaving loopholes, creating exceptions, and relaxing boundaries can quickly erode any positive groundwork that had been set.

After determining reasonable boundaries, communicate them to managers and colleagues. Then? Stick to them. Calendar programs often have the ability to set available hours to establish a rough guideline that's visible to everybody while other nuanced boundaries may need more direct communication.

- » Determine what hours are reasonable for responding to emails, calls, and instant messages as well as which of those hours are available for scheduling meetings.
- » Decide whether or not you will check incoming communication during nights or weekends. It's okay if you keep all work-related communication to working hours only.
- » Select what applications you'd like to install on personal devices and set notifications to correlate with your available hours.
- » Realize that it's okay to keep worktime separate from personal time. If possible, determine who can take care of emergencies in your absence should you be unreachable.



# Build Out a Routine

Thoughtful workday boundaries will begin to naturally establish a workday and workweek routine. Once your working hours are established, begin to schedule important activities at easy-to-anticipate times and don't forget to include what's important to you. These little rituals can have a big impact on workday happiness.

## » Start Strong

Find the right way to start your day on a positive note. Brew a great cup of coffee, tidy up your desk, or do a quick sweep of your mailbox while listening to your favorite podcast.

## » Take a Break

Real, scheduled breaks can feel like a luxury when you're working from home. Build in time for lunch, a quick walk, or any necessary appointments that might conflict with the workday. Even a small 15-minute meditation session can make its way into the daily routine as a way to clear your mind and get ready for the next task.

## » Add a Little Personal Time

While it's ill-advised to blend your work life and personal life too much, it's okay to schedule a little bit of time to accomplish a household chore during the day. Use one of your breaks to run a recurring errand or quickly tidy up a part of your house without feeling guilty for wasting work time.

## » Make a Perfect Playlist

Everybody has a different ideal soundtrack to the workday. Take a little time to find a great auto-generated playlist, explore curated collections on your favorite streaming service, or subscribe to a podcast that you can keep playing in the background. White noise apps are another great way to keep the room tone lively without adding distracting words or lyrics.

## » Wrap Up and Wind Down

Ease your way out of the workday mindset with a relaxing task that will leave you in tip-top shape for the next day. Take the last fifteen minutes to leave your workspace organized, sterilized, and clean so that your early morning self can start the day off right.

A man with glasses and a beard is sitting at a table, holding a white coffee cup. He is also holding a baby in his arms. The baby is looking towards the camera. In the background, there is a laptop and a window with a view of trees. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a sunny day.

## Need a Helping Hand?

When you're alone at home, it's easy to forget that there's a lot of resources available through your employer.

**Employee Assistance Programs** aren't all created equal, but if these benefits are available through your company, look into what they offer and keep these benefits in the back of your head. Some EAPs offer free counseling for both workplace and personal issues, both of which can be used as a singular solution as well as a stepping stone to additional help. Childcare support, legal advice, and gym discounts are commonly available in EAPs, however these programs do differ from company to company.

**Talk to Your Manager** about your needs, including how your personal needs intersect with and affect your work. The pandemic presented an all new set of challenges that impacted every employee differently. Accommodations can be made to ensure that employees' professional success and mental health are all accounted for but sometimes this takes input from one's supervisor or even human resources.

# It's Time for Me

## Make the Most of the “Me” in Team

You can't be the best employee, colleague, or teammate if you're not operating at 100%. Being self-aware of self-care is the first step to being a productive, reliable person in every aspect of life. Especially in the workplace, everybody's job is important for the success of the greater organization. Taking time to fine-tune yourself is key to everybody's collected success.



# Make Time for Mindfulness

## » So... What is Mindfulness?

It's a big word with a big impact. Sure, it can seem intimidating, but practicing mindfulness is actually pretty simple. It's all about listening to yourself and the world around you in order to make things manageable. Think about the human brain like a snow globe that's been shaken up: there's thoughts flying every which way and sensations are coming from all sides. Practicing mindfulness, at its core, is simply picking out one snowflake and paying close attention to it until all of the others settle down.

## » How to Practice Mindfulness

There's no right or wrong way to bring mindfulness into your life. Some of the more mainstream options include yoga, breathing exercises, and meditating, though there are endless resources online and in-person to find the right mindfulness practice for you. Look for apps on your phone, blogs online, social media pages, or local establishments that can get you started with finding the right practice for you.

## » What If I Don't Have Time?

Human nature makes it easy to think of things as "all or nothing" but that doesn't translate to mindfulness practice. Something is always more than nothing. Even if your goal is to meditate for ten minutes a day, it's okay if you can only manage thirty seconds. A half hour of yoga might not be possible but standing up and stretching for a quick two minutes is manageable. Establishing a breathing routine can be daunting but a few focused breaths still adds up to more healthy, patient time than you would have otherwise. It's okay--and advisable--to start small and work your way up from there. It's also okay to do what you can, whenever you can, without a bigger goal in sight.

# You Are What You Eat

...And if you're eating food that makes you feel good, you'll start to feel good too. Ditch the DoorDash orders and take advantage of homemade food while it's right at your fingertips, ideally at a scheduled time within your daily routine.

## Nourishing for Success

Keeping your blood sugar stable through the day can only happen if you start off on the right foot with breakfast. Many busy professionals are used to skipping breakfast, or grabbing something on the go, like a protein bar. You'll set yourself up for a much more productive day if you take the time to have a nutrient dense, filling breakfast, and then eat at reasonable intervals (not going longer than 4 hours without food) after that.

### Quick Tuna Salad

- 1 packet or can of tuna
- 1 celery stalk
- ¼ cucumber
- 1 large carrot
- Cherry tomatoes
- Kalamata olives
- Mixed greens

### Easy Balsamic dressing

- 2 teaspoons olive oil
- 3 teaspoons Balsamic vinegar
- ¼ teaspoon dijon mustard

Place one large handful of greens into a bowl. Chop the celery, carrot (peeled or unpeeled), and cucumber. Add the celery, cucumber, carrot, tomatoes, and olives to the bowl of greens. Open the packet or can of tuna (you can substitute other meat or fish) and drain, then add to the salad. For the dressing, add all ingredients to a small jar; cover and shake until thoroughly mixed. Pour desired amount over salad. Mix and enjoy!

After you've started your day with a good breakfast, it's imperative that you keep up your energy by refueling midday. A lunch that contains a good mix of healthy carbohydrates, protein, and healthy fat is the best way to make that happen.

Sometimes, snacking is a way to keep a sustainable amount of energy in your body. Easy to prepare items, such as a piece of fruit or a small handful of nuts, can be kept near your workstation for easy access, ensuring that you won't get distracted going to and from the kitchen.



## Stay Hydrated

Ideally, humans should drink half their body weight in ounces of water a day (so if you weigh 140lbs,  $140/2=70$  oz of water per day). Keep in mind that caffeinated beverages are dehydrating, so it's advisable to drink an additional 12oz of water for every 8oz of caffeinated beverage you have. Impaired cognition and mental sluggishness are some of the earliest signs of dehydration -- so drink up!

### **Need a little help staying on track with your water intake?**

- » Splurge a little with a fancy cup that can hold a lot of H<sub>2</sub>O while looking cute on your desk.
- » Find a water bottle that has goals along the side to encourage your intake.
- » Look for an app that can remind you to take a second to take a sip of water. These are available for phones, desktops, or smart watches to best suit your style.
- » Jazz up your water with cucumber slices, lemon peels, or any other additives that can add a little jolt of flavor at the same time.



## Get Up and Get Moving!

While researching the new workday, we found that 46% of Americans have found it challenging to be physically active during the pandemic. Some of us may have underestimated how many steps we got in moving about the office while others haven't been able to easily make it to the gym on the way to or from work. Make an effort to add physical activity back into your workday or maybe it's time to get started with a new step in your day-to-day.



## Your Social Network Needs You

As time goes on, we've all started to forget about the importance of the watercooler. The WFH workday is often lonelier than it is in-person and we're really starting to miss the magic that comes between coworkers creating meaningful connections. This used to happen in the halls between meetings, while taking a breather in the lunchroom, over lunch hours, or by stopping by to another person's desk. Now, we've taken to filling those workday minutes with more work, forgetting how important it is to connect with others on a person-to-person level.





## Connect with Coworkers

As restrictions wane and companies begin to return to work, see if there are any meetings that can be held in safe, distanced spaces onsite. Even if you haven't returned full-time, taking a few meetings can increase employee morale when it's needed most.

If you and a coworker have similar comfort levels, seek out simple social opportunities during and around the workday. For those who live in close distance, it's worth finding time to meet up for lunch or a quick walk or even for a fun happy hour after EOB.

Even if you aren't able to meet in-person, there's still the need to check in with one another. Don't hesitate to send a friendly email or IM to say hey, share a recipe, or chat about shared interests. We're still in this together, even when we're apart.



## Substitute Social Interaction

Even if you're not one for connecting with coworkers, it's possible that you're still missing the energy of a people-filled space. Grab your laptop and take a few hours working from a coffee shop or public park to be around other people as you maintain focus on the tasks at hand.

Outside of work, ensure that you're connecting with friends and family members. Maintaining a social life outside of work can help you stay positive during business hours. Whether these interactions are online or in-person is relative to your comfort level, but these interactions are key in a world where we're more isolated than ever before.

## Meet the Expert



Amanda Couturier has a Master's degree in Community Counseling (2012) and has practiced as a licensed therapist for nine years. In the last three years of her clinical practice, she worked for Advocate Aurora's Employee Assistance Program. She has focused on many areas of workplace wellness including providing individual support to employees and family members. In 2019, she received her Functional Nutrition training through the Nutritional Therapy Association. Functional nutrition is about supporting and/or restoring optimal function to the body. The focus is on using real, nutrient dense food and good lifestyle choices to support overall wellness.

Amanda offers nutritional therapy, life coaching and corporate wellness through her personal consulting business *Whole Life Wellness* [www.wholelifewellnessmke.com](http://www.wholelifewellnessmke.com)