

# Limit your stress in this always-on virtual post-Covid world

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The always-on virtual post-Covid world is where many people work remotely or have shifted to online communication and collaboration resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic. With the availability of technology and the internet, people can work, study, and socialise from anywhere at any time. However, this has also led to an 'always-on' culture where people must constantly be available and connected. The negative impacts of the always-on culture on health can be significant.



Firstly, the expectation to always be available and connected can lead to higher stress levels and adverse health outcomes such as anxiety, depression, and sleep disturbances. Poor sleep quality can lead to fatigue, decreased concentration, and other health issues. Secondly, working remotely or spending more time online can lead to a sedentary lifestyle, contributing to health issues such as obesity, diabetes, and heart disease. Furthermore, spending long periods looking at computer screens can cause eye strain and headaches, affecting productivity and overall well-being.

## It is not all bad

The always-on culture can have some benefits. It allows individuals more flexibility in how they structure their workday and better balance work and personal obligations. It facilitates collaboration across geographical and time boundaries, making it easier for individuals and teams to collaborate and share information. The ability to work and communicate in real-time can lead to increased productivity, as individuals can quickly respond to issues and get work done efficiently.

“ Keeping your mind sharp and your body healthy

*should be the number one priority.* ”

Access to vast resources is possible, including online learning opportunities and virtual communities that may not be available in their physical location. The always-on culture can expand opportunities for individuals, such as the ability to work for companies or clients in different parts of the world or to pursue education and professional development opportunities online.

While there are benefits, people must actively manage their screen time, maintain a healthy lifestyle, and prioritise self-care.

### Tips to limit stress when 'always on'

1. **Establish clear boundaries:** It's essential to set clear boundaries between work and personal time when working from home. Set a schedule for when you'll be working and when you'll be taking breaks or logging off for the day, and stick to it as much as possible.
2. **Take breaks:** Regular breaks are essential for reducing stress and preventing burnout. Take short breaks throughout the day and a more extended break to recharge during lunchtime.
3. **Get moving:** Physical activity can help reduce stress and boost your mood. Take a walk, stretch, or even stand up and move around periodically throughout the day.
4. **Connect with others:** Social connections are essential for mental health, so connect with family, friends, and colleagues virtually. Schedule virtual coffee breaks, happy hour drinks, or other social events to stay connected with others.
5. **Practice self-care:** Taking care of yourself is vital for managing stress. Set aside time each day for activities you enjoy, such as reading, listening to music, or relaxing. In addition, keep your doctors' appointments and look after your mental and physical health.
6. **Set realistic expectations:** It's easy to get caught up in the always-on nature of virtual work, but it's essential to set realistic expectations for yourself and your workload. Prioritise tasks, and don't hesitate to delegate or say no when necessary.
7. **Unplug:** Finally, make sure to unplug and disconnect from work and technology at the end of the day. Put away your phone and computer, and take time to unwind and relax before bed. It can help improve sleep quality and reduce stress levels.



Adequate sleep is a prerequisite for overall better health

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Employers can also promote healthy work practices and create a supportive work environment that values work-life balance and mental health. For example, reducing the expectation that people must constantly be connected and available can be helpful as they will not feel too pressured to respond to messages and emails immediately, even outside of regular working hours. Importantly, people need people, and ensuring face-to-face physical interaction with others from time to time can combat feelings of isolation and loneliness and thus reduce stress.

Keeping your mind sharp and your body healthy should be the number one priority. Follow these tips above, keep to your annual medical screenings, and see a mental health specialist if required. These will not cost you an arm and a leg as Medshield members have access to both these benefits.

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