

Optimising your living and work space



Simple tips for optimising your living and work space to support your well-being journey

Introduction

Most of us spend the majority of our time at home and at work. Both of these spaces play an active role in influencing our behaviour and as a result our well-being journey. Environmental factors affect our decisions and can equally help or hinder health-conscious choices.

In this article, I offer some simple yet effective steps to help you optimise your living and work spaces to support and complement your healthy lifestyle. In doing this, the intention is to make it easier to stick to the dietary and lifestyle changes you wish to implement.

Creating healthy boundaries

This is an opportunity for you to begin to create healthy boundaries. Asserting your sphere of influence in your environment will help prevent external factors from knocking you off track. By taking pre-emptive action, you will influence your decisions later on, which can help you make more aligned food choices in the moment. In most cases, some preparation and planning can make all the difference.

For example: Do you find it challenging to eat healthily in the car on your commute? Many people find themselves reaching for convenience foods on the go because that's all that's available? You can avoid this situation by preparing some lunch from your meal plan to bring with you or having some healthy snacks in the car. This simple shift in action will have a ripple effect which will positively impact your well-being over time.

At Home

Kitchen Reset

A very beneficial thing to do, especially at the beginning of your program, is to remove foods from your kitchen and shopping list that no longer serve your well-being. Do a quick scan and remove anything you no longer wish to include in your new diet. This is a clean slate to start from and an opportunity to let go of some things that are no longer useful.

Tip: If you are cohabiting this step may have additional challenges. If there are shared foods in the house that you can't remove but don't want to eat, you can create spaces for yourself in the cupboard, pantry and fridge that's just for you. Politely let people know that this is your space and ask that it remains free of all other foods than yours.

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At Home. Cont

Kitchen Restock

The second step is to restock your kitchen with what you need to prepare your healthy meals. If you are tired and hungry and there isn't anything in the cupboard to prepare, it can be very easy to just call a takeaway or go for snack food. So, having the appropriate ingredients at home to follow your nutrition plan is a very important step.

Stock up on essentials like:

- Cooking oils (olive oil, coconut oil)
- Frozen fruit and vegetables
- Nuts and seeds
- Herbs and spices
- Dry foods like rice, oats and lentils

Make it easy. If online shopping is more convenient for you, then do it. The invitation is to remove as many potential obstacles as possible.

At Work

At the Office

Your office space may prove more challenging to alter depending on your situation. If your workspace provides vending machines or a canteen, your food choices may be limited and not optimal for your needs. **The most effective way to move forward is for you to bring your own food and drinks with you.**

- You can start by prepping lunches at home and batch-cook a few meals for the week ahead.
- Secondly, you could make extra food at dinner time and bring the leftovers for lunch or freeze it for another day.
- It's also a great idea to keep a bottle of water at your desk to sip on throughout the day to stay hydrated.

Tip: If you often feel an energy crash in the afternoon or have a habit of eating sweet snacks from the vending machine, you might like to bring a small container of mixed nuts and seeds to work. This is a good way of getting some healthy fats like Omega 3 as well as keeping up with your daily protein target too.

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At Work. Cont

Car (or commute)

Another place you may spend a significant amount of time in is your car or on public transport. Travelling to and from work, there may be times when you have to grab food on the go. So, having a strategy here is very useful to help you avoid the garage deli and sweet convenience foods.

The first option is to bring your lunch box with pre-prepared meals. You could also bring a flask of homemade soup or a smoothie.

You can keep snacks in your car too to keep you going until your next meal time, like:

- Mixed nuts + seeds
- Piece of fruit
- Homemade protein balls

Lastly, I also recommend keeping a bottle of water in the car with you too.

Working from home

Working in this environment has its benefits and challenges but maintaining your healthy boundaries while working from home is a very important step.

- One vital boundary to protect is your time so don't overwork and burn out. Try taking a mindful break from the screen when appropriate. You can set an alarm to remind you.
- Secondly, make your home office for work and not food. It can be easy to graze on snacks and eat mindlessly at your desk. The invitation is to take your meals in the kitchen or outside, and device free if possible. You can combine this with your break from the screen.

Tip: Take your work outdoors

Change up your environment. If it's available to you, take your laptop to the garden or local park to get some sun. This can benefit your mood, help you get more Vitamin D and being in nature can positively impact your sleep cycle too. If you have access to nature close by, why not give it a try and see how it works for you?

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Your Action step

Before you start, remember no one is expecting you to make all of these changes so please don't feel overwhelmed. The invitation is to pick just one improvement that feels manageable right now that will bring you more ease and joy on the path to better well-being.

Things to consider:

- Which one will have the most beneficial impact on your well-being right now?
- Which one is the easiest to begin with?
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Remember it is useful to focus on one change at a time until it becomes integrated into your routine, then you can move onto the next. When we try to do a lot at once it may prove to be overwhelming and ultimately unsustainable.

Something is more beneficial than nothing. Do the best you can now with what you have, it doesn't need to be perfect to make a start.