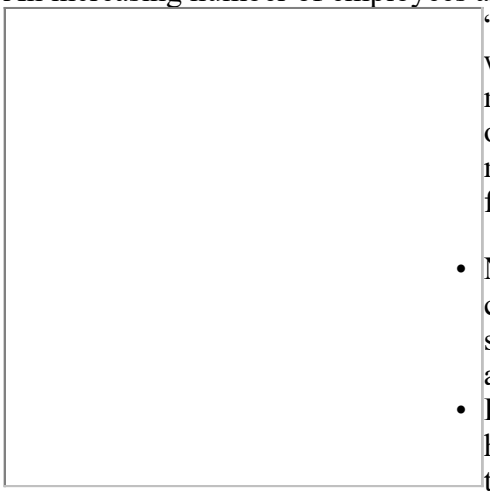
Your Employee and Family Assistance Program is a support service that can help you take the first step toward change.

The pros and cons of working from home

An increasing number of employees are beginning to work from home as organizations expand into "virtual offices" all over the world. This arrangement can be a win-win situation for everyone involved. Organizations save money on space and furnishings and are able to establish local offices across the province, the country or even the world at a minimal cost. There are also advantages for individuals working from home, which include:



- **No commuting.** For people living or working in busy urban centres, this can save two or more hours a day – and eliminate the stress of bumper-to-bumper traffic and needless delays in an already busy day.
- **Flexibility.** Many individuals enjoy the ability to set their own hours. Flexibility also means the ability to work from anywhere – the cottage, the local coffee shop, or the back garden.
- **Fewer interruptions.** Co-workers chat and often visit other colleagues' desks to ask questions. These innocent distractions can all be avoided by employees who work from home.
- **Higher productivity.** When you remove the time involved for getting ready in the morning, travelling to work, and dealing with the distractions of co-workers, there's more time to get actual work done.
- **A comfortable environment.** Each person knows themselves best, which allows them to customize an optimal, individualized working space. This can include a particular chair, certain decor or preferred lighting.
- **Better health.** Working from home and setting their own hours means virtual employees can make time to exercise, eat well and better manage their stress.
- **Better work/life balance.** Flexible hours and no commute also mean that individuals working from virtual offices can find more time for family activities, hobbies and social engagements.

Working from home can be the ideal situation for many people, but it's not for everyone. Some find it challenging for a number of reasons, including:

- **Isolation.** The peace and quiet of a home office can also be lonely at times. It's also more difficult to establish and build professional relationships with co-workers when working remotely.
- **Less collaboration.** Working from a virtual office can make collaborating with colleagues more difficult. Sometimes the best ideas come from quick chats at the coffee or water station!
- **Distractions.** Although office distractions are avoided by working from home, different distractions may arise. Individuals working offsite may experience interruptions from children, neighbours, friends, family and pets, or feel tempted to get a head start on the laundry or watch some daytime television. They may need to make it known that they're unavailable during work hours despite being at home.
- **Work doesn't end.** Flexibility is a double-edged sword. Employees can take time out of their day to run their child to the doctor or make a trip to the gym, but then they need to make up that time in the evening. The lack of physical separation between home and work adds to the temptation to keep on working long after the typical working day is over.
- **Out of the loop.** Employees may find themselves removed from important developments within the company such as staff changes, new business, changes in company direction, new competitive intelligence, etc.

- **Being overlooked.** The danger of being overlooked for promotions and career development opportunities is quite real when you work virtually, especially when more visible employees are aggressively vying for the same positions.

Working from home takes a great deal of commitment, discipline, and dedication - not only to make it work, but also to make it a career advantage. The easiest way to find out if it will work for you is to try it – start small, perhaps half of the month at home and half in the office, to evaluate if your productivity and engagement levels will stand the test of time.

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