

Active Response III

Work at home

Any sudden change requires you to do three things: create calm, nurture connections, plan and reflect.

Self-care and setting up

With little warning or preparation, most of us find ourselves at home, with or without family members, reorganising our normal lives into something new – and trying to get to grips with what [‘working from home’](#) means. For many this also includes juggling un-paid work, parenting or caring for others along with paid work. This is NOT a ‘business as usual’ situation. There are a range of different demands, and we are dealing with our own [reactions to stress](#), unprecedented change and a high level of uncertainty.

- It’s OK to feel however you feel – we react to stress in different ways, all of which are normal. Allow yourself time to notice what you are feeling
- Look after yourself as best you can – think about your [physical, mental and emotional wellbeing](#)
- Allow time to work out what you/your household MOST needs right now – before rushing into being productive.

For many, this is a sudden and steep learning curve on how to [work from home](#).

- Your children and other family members are more important than work: do whatever needs to be done to ensure they are OK
- Compartmentalise and separate as much as possible – be clear where and when you are at work and when you are not.



Figure 1 Dancing to Let it Go

- Have a separate space, if you can manage it, away from whatever else is going on in the home. Set it up to be as inviting as possible.
- [Periods of work](#) may be episodic, built around the needs of the household as a group.
- If you’re sharing your house with others, have a conversation about roles [these may have changed overnight], expectations, boundaries. Clarify the parenting, caregiving or other tasks/responsibilities you share.

Managing Staff

As individuals, communities and a nation, we are dealing with an unprecedented set of events unfurling at speed. We have little control over our external circumstances and must comply with government requirements. i.e. go home - and stay there. Instant adaptation to a changed environment is a skill, and not everyone will be at the same level. This calls for a changed style of management and changed expectations.

Allow staff time to attend to priorities in their personal and home lives. Some suggestions are:

- Organisations, and you as a manager, need to say: “Give yourself a break, get yourselves organised, find a new way of being in this new environment”.

- A long weekend, or more than one, over the next four weeks
- Consider: a **pause** before launching into the next phase. [or anytime in the following weeks...]

Modify expectations: As a manager, understand that these circumstances call for different expectations of staff. Only the **most important things** need to be done.

- Email and meetings [free days](#) to allow them time to focus on doing other work things
- You might offer a 'No Work Wednesday' every week or ensure that people can have free time in the afternoon.

Clearly communicate. This is not just 'working from home'! New Zealand is in a State of Emergency.

- Whatever the messaging from your CEO, it might be time for [that conversation](#).
- Differentiate between pastoral care (a phone call) and work-related communications (emails, Zoom, etc)

Expect a range of reactions. Depending on their personal situation, other commitments, and personality, staff may be less productive over this time.



Figure 2 Pausing

Be aware of where your staff are 'at'.

- Do you know what they are managing at home?
- How are they [reacting to stress](#) and what are their coping responses? Some may cope initially, but are unable to sustain this, and [suffer later on](#). Here are some tips to [manage stress and anxiety](#).
- [Listen deeply](#) to what they are saying and listen for the unsaid too.
- If staff are exhibiting signs of extreme stress, consider accessing good [online help](#). Use this [toolkit](#) for assisting employees.
- [Managing remotely](#) can make you a better manager. You might want to use this [guide to remote meetings](#).

Doing things differently

Enable your staff to take care of themselves and then reconsider their work priorities. Ensure their wellbeing and allow for a pause-in-transmission.

Given that the lockdown period is a circuit breaker in "Business as Usual" there may be opportunities for staff who aren't able to do their usual job. We have heard about:

- Re-development of policies and procedures
- Re design of programmes
- Online training groups.

[Skills Active](#) are working on having all their resources online ASAP, so staff can undertake training while being away from their usual role.

Insights into action

Calm	recovering from trauma, pausing and settling
Connections	the nurturing power of positive relationships (and keeping them going)
Thinking	planning and reflecting is more challenging when we are under stress

Find out more on the Working at Home [webinar](#).