



SwitchOff

Supporting worker's well
being during remote work

Project No: 2022-1-PL01-KA220-VET-000085734

SwitchOff Training Programme Module 3



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Training Programme

Module 3

Challenges of remote workers in disconnecting from work

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Module 3	
Module 3	Challenges of remote workers in disconnecting from work - CARDET
Short description of the module / abstract	The aim of this module is to introduce learners (HR managers) to the various challenges that remote workers face, with focus on the challenges that prevent workers in disconnecting mentally from work. In this training learners will explore the unique challenges of remote workers and get an understanding of how such challenges can lead to blurry boundaries between their professional and personal life. They will also learn about the psychological and behavioural implications of blurring boundaries between work and personal life. After attending the training, learners will be able to learn how to achieve a healthier work life balance and detach from work by applying boundary management strategies based on empirical evidence. Finally, learners will be presented with a case study where they will be asked to read and identify the main challenges that the main character is facing and provide solutions and suggestions to them. At the end of the training learners will be assessed with different methods such as multiple-choice questions, True/False statements, and open questions.
Learning Outcomes	<p>Learning outcome 1: Learners will be able to identify key challenges that remote workers face in achieving work-life boundaries and detaching from work.</p> <p>Learning outcome 2: Learners will be able to summarise basic psychological and behavioural implications of blurring boundaries between work and professional life.</p> <p>Learning outcome 3: Learners will learn some key boundary management strategies.</p>
Learning Units	<p><i>Unit 1:</i> Identification and analysis of the unique challenges faced by remote workers in achieving work-life boundaries and detaching from work.</p> <p><i>Unit 2:</i> Examination of the psychological and behavioural implications of blurring boundaries between work and personal life.</p> <p><i>Unit 3:</i> Achieving Work Life Balance in remote working settings through boundary management strategies.</p> <p><i>Unit 4:</i> Case study; Challenges of remote working.</p>

Learning core material	Learning Unit	Learning Material
	<i>Unit 1: Identification and analysis of the unique challenges faced by remote workers in achieving work-life boundaries and detaching from work</i>	Text, Article
	<i>Unit 2: Examination of the psychological and behavioural implications of blurring boundaries between work and personal life.</i>	Text, Articles, Video
	<i>Unit 3: Achieving Work Life Balance in remote working settings through boundary management strategies.</i>	Text, Article, Video, Practical Activity
	<i>Unit 4: Case study; Challenges of remote working.</i>	Case study
Assessment method	For each Learning Unit please mention the assessment method	
	Learning Unit	Assessment method
	<i>Unit 1: Identification and analysis of the unique challenges faced by remote workers in achieving work-life boundaries and detaching from work</i>	Multiple Choice Questions, Open Question
	<i>Unit 2: Examination of the psychological and behavioural implications of blurring boundaries between work and personal life.</i>	Open Question, True/False
	<i>Unit 3: Achieving Work Life Balance in remote working settings through boundary management strategies.</i>	Multiple choice question
Workload (Estimated study time) (min)	We have estimated 120' for this module, including the assessment activity. Detailed breakdown of time estimation: 90' for learning units (including studying parts of the articles provided) 30' for assessment activities	
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LEARNING UNIT 1- IDENTIFICATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE UNIQUE CHALLENGES FACED BY REMOTE WORKERS IN ACHIEVING WORK-LIFE BOUNDARIES AND DETACHING FROM WORK.

Challenge	Description
1. Lack of Physical Separation	One of the most significant challenges is the absence of a clear physical boundary between work and home life. When your workspace is also your living space, it can be challenging to mentally separate the two.
2. Difficulty in Switching Off	Remote workers often struggle to "switch off" from work because there's no clear endpoint to the workday. Without the physical act of leaving the office, it's easy to continue working well into the evening, leading to burnout.
3. Blurred Work Hours	Remote workers may find themselves working irregular hours, including late nights and weekends, to accommodate different time zones or meet deadlines. This can disrupt their work-life balance.
4. Isolation	Remote work can be isolating, especially if you live alone. Loneliness and a lack of social interaction can lead to a tendency to overwork, as work becomes a way to fill the void of social connections
5. Distractions at Home	Home environments often come with numerous distractions, such as household chores, family members, or noisy neighbors. These distractions can hinder productivity and make it challenging to focus during work hours
6. Feeling Constantly On-Call	Some remote workers feel pressured to be constantly available, leading to an "always-on" mentality. This can make it difficult to disconnect from work and relax during personal time.
7. Difficulty Setting Boundaries	Communicating and enforcing boundaries with colleagues, clients, or supervisors can be more challenging in a remote work setting. It may be challenging to say "no" to additional work or meetings outside of regular hours.
8. Tech Overload	Remote work often involves heavy reliance on technology, which can make it challenging to disengage from work. Constant notifications and the temptation to check emails or messages can disrupt personal time.
9. Lack of Commute	While not having to commute is a perk of remote work, it also means that employees miss out on the buffer that commuting provides. Commuting used to serve as

	a transition period between work and home life, and its absence can make it harder to mentally detach.
10. Inadequate Workspaces	Some remote workers may not have access to a dedicated and ergonomic workspace. This can lead to discomfort and physical strain, making it more tempting to leave work equipment set up in communal areas and continue working when not intended.

Remote work offers many benefits, including flexibility and reduced commuting, but it also presents unique challenges when it comes to achieving work-life boundaries and detaching from work. According to **Charalampous et al., (2018)** some of the **key challenges remote workers** face in this regard include:

Reflection question: Can you think of other possible challenges that remote workers face during work that might prevent them from detaching from work?

To complete this Learning Unit you have to:

Read the online article: Charalampous, M., Grant, C. A., Tramontano, C., & Michailidis, E. (2019). Systematically reviewing remote e-workers' well-being at work: A multidimensional approach. *European journal of work and organizational psychology*, 28(1), 51-73. Link: <https://pure.coventry.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/21773783/Binder7.pdf>

LEARNING UNIT 2: EXAMINATION OF THE PSYCHOLOGICAL AND BEHAVIOURAL IMPLICATIONS OF BLURRING BOUNDARIES BETWEEN WORK AND PERSONAL LIFE.

Blurring boundaries between work and personal life can have various psychological and behavioral implications for individuals (Kreiner et al., 2009). While some individuals may intentionally choose to blur these boundaries to achieve greater flexibility, others may experience consequences that affect their well-being and productivity. Below you are presented with the various ways with which blurry boundaries can affect an employee both psychologically and behavioural.

Psychological Implications:

1. **Increased Stress:** Blurring boundaries can lead to increased stress as individuals find it challenging to disconnect from work-related concerns during personal time. The constant accessibility to work can lead to burnout and heightened levels of anxiety.
2. **Role Ambiguity:** When work and personal roles are mixed, individuals may experience role ambiguity, which refers to uncertainty about the expectations and responsibilities

associated with each role. This ambiguity can lead to psychological distress and a sense of being overwhelmed.

3. **Reduced Job Satisfaction:** Overly blurred boundaries can reduce job satisfaction as individuals may feel that they are always on-call, making it difficult to fully disengage from work even during personal time. This can lead to feelings of job dissatisfaction.
4. **Conflict and Guilt:** Blurring boundaries can result in conflicts between work and personal responsibilities, leading to feelings of guilt when individuals cannot fully engage in either domain. For example, missing family events due to work commitments can induce guilt, as can neglecting work tasks due to personal obligations.

Behavioral Implications:

1. **Decreased Productivity:** Blurring boundaries can lead to decreased productivity as individuals may find it challenging to focus on work tasks during official work hours. Constant interruptions from personal matters can hinder concentration.
2. **Negative Impact on Relationships:** When work intrudes into personal time, it can strain relationships with family and friends. Frequent interruptions for work-related tasks or being emotionally unavailable during personal time can lead to conflict and dissatisfaction in personal relationships.
3. **Physical Health Consequences:** Extended work hours due to blurred boundaries can result in physical health consequences, such as sleep deprivation, poor eating habits, and decreased physical activity, which can lead to health issues over time.
4. **Professional Identity Erosion:** For some, blurring boundaries excessively may erode their professional identity, as they might struggle to disconnect from work-related concerns and maintain a sense of self outside of their job.
5. **Difficulty Detaching from Technology:** Blurring boundaries often involves the constant use of technology (e.g., smartphones, laptops) to manage work tasks during personal time. This behavior can lead to addiction-like tendencies, such as compulsively checking work emails or messages, even during non-working hours.

It's important to note that not all blurring of boundaries is inherently negative. Some individuals may choose to blur these boundaries to gain **greater flexibility and work-life integration**, and for them, it may lead to positive outcomes. However, balance is crucial. Achieving a healthy equilibrium between work and personal life, where boundaries are appropriately managed, is essential to mitigating the negative psychological and behavioral implications mentioned above. It often involves setting clear boundaries, time management, and effective communication with supervisors and colleagues.

Reflection question: Take some time and think about your own boundaries...Do you tend to blur them or do you take measures to manage them?

To complete this learning unit you have to:



Watch the following video: **'Your 3-Step Guide to Setting Better Boundaries at Work | The Way We Work, a TED series'**;

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4SCrXqbhmCY>

Read the following article: Kreiner, G. E., Hollensbe, E. C., & Sheep, M. L. (2009). Balancing borders and bridges: Negotiating the work-home interface via boundary work tactics. *Academy of management journal*, 52(4), 704-730. Link: <https://journals.aom.org/doi/abs/10.5465/AMJ.2009.43669916>

LEARNING UNIT 3: ACHIEVING WORK LIFE BALANCE IN REMOTE WORKING SETTINGS THROUGH BOUNDARY MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES.

Defining Work Life Balance

Ellen Ernst Kossek is a renowned researcher in the field of work-life balance. Kossek's et al., (1998) work often emphasizes the idea that work-life balance is a **dynamic and multifaceted concept that involves achieving harmony and satisfaction in both work and personal life.**

Reflection question: What does work-life balance mean to you?

Research shows remote workers are working longer, spending time in more meetings and having to keep up with more communication channels (Bloomberg, 2021).

Nearly 70% of professionals who transitioned to remote work because of the pandemic say they now work on the weekends, and 45% say they regularly work more hours during the week than they did before.

As such, many remote workers find it **difficult to switch-off from work** as the boundaries between personal and work life can become blurry when working remotely.

Control over boundaries is key to successful work-life balance.

Kreiner et al., (2009) has introduced four tactics that can help employees manage effectively their boundaries between work and personal life. **The four tactics are presented below:**

1. Temporal (Control Time):

- **Definition:** Temporal boundary management involves controlling and managing your time to create a clear separation between work and personal life.

- **Purpose:** Temporal control allows individuals to ensure that work doesn't invade on personal time and vice versa. It helps in maintaining a structured daily routine.

Examples:

- Setting strict work hours and sticking to them to ensure a defined end to the workday.
- Using scheduling tools or apps to allocate specific time blocks for work tasks and personal activities.
- Prioritizing and allocating time for self-care, family, and leisure activities to maintain a balanced schedule.

2. Physical (Physical Boundaries):

- **Definition:** Physical boundary management involves using physical cues or settings to create a separation between work and personal spaces.
- **Purpose:** Physical boundaries help individuals physically distance themselves from work-related stimuli when they need to focus on personal matters.

Examples:

- Designating a specific room or area in your home as a dedicated workspace for work-related tasks.
- Setting up physical boundaries like a separate desk or office space to signal the start and end of the workday.
- Using physical objects or symbols (e.g., closing a laptop, turning off work-related devices) to visually disconnect from work.

3. Communicative (Managing Expectations):

- **Definition:** Communicative boundary management involves effectively communicating and managing expectations with colleagues, supervisors, and family members to set clear boundaries.
- **Purpose:** Communicative tactics ensure that others are aware of your boundaries and can respect your need for work-life balance.

Examples:

- Discussing and negotiating work hours and expectations with supervisors to ensure alignment with personal commitments.
- Setting up automatic email responses during non-work hours to manage expectations about response times.
- Communicating with family members about the importance of uninterrupted work time during specific hours.

4. Behavioral (Negotiate Boundaries):

- **Definition:** Behavioral boundary management involves actively negotiating and adjusting boundaries as needed based on changing circumstances or personal preferences.
- **Purpose:** Behavioral tactics allow individuals to remain adaptable and responsive to evolving work and personal demands while preserving overall balance.

Examples:

- Flexibly adapting work hours to accommodate personal responsibilities or family needs.
- Discussing and renegotiating boundaries with colleagues or supervisors when workload or personal circumstances change.
- Being open to adjustments in boundary management strategies to maintain a dynamic balance.



Practical Activity 1.

Instructions: Note down 3 actions for each boundary management tactic (use the table below).

For example, you can experiment with dedicating specific hours strictly to work. That means letting colleagues know to not expect a response to any late emails out of office hours.

Tactics	Actions
Temporal	1. 2. 3.
Physical	1. 2. 3.
Communicative	1. 2. 3.
Behavioural	1. 2. 3.



To complete this learning unit you have to:

Read the following article: Kreiner, G. E., Hollensbe, E. C., & Sheep, M. L. (2009). Balancing borders and bridges: Negotiating the work-home interface via boundary work tactics. *Academy of management journal*, 52(4), 704-730. Link: <https://journals.aom.org/doi/abs/10.5465/AMJ.2009.43669916>

Watch the following video: Work-life research - Professor Ellen Kossek. Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dp7pYUWw_Y

Complete the Practical Activity 1

LEARNING UNIT 4: CASE STUDY; THE CHALLENGES OF REMOTE WORKING

Instructions:

Below you are presented with a case study of a remote worker, Sarah Golding. Read the case study carefully and answer the following questions:

1. What challenges is Sarah currently facing as a remote worker?
2. How are these challenges affecting her professional and personal life?
3. What suggestions would you give to Sarah? What changes could she make for a better work life balance?

Sarah Golding, a dedicated marketing manager for a global tech company. Working remotely seemed like a dream come true for Sarah—a chance to eliminate her daily commute, work in her comfortable home office, and enjoy more time with her family. However, as her story unfolds, it becomes evident that remote work has brought its unique set of challenges.

With no clear separation between her home and workspace, Sarah found herself working longer hours than before. Sarah's workdays often extended into evenings and weekends as she struggled to set clear boundaries between her professional and personal life. The accessibility of her work devices and the constant flow of emails and messages made it difficult for her to detach. She found herself checking emails during dinner, responding to urgent requests late into the night, and feeling guilty whenever she tried to disconnect.

Her home environment, filled with household chores and family members, presented constant distractions. Her productivity suffered, and she struggled to stay focused. The psychological impact on Sarah was noticeable. Her stress levels soared as she grappled with a persistent sense of being "on-call" 24/7. Burnout loomed large as she juggled the demands of work and her family. She began experiencing physical symptoms such as headaches and insomnia.

Sarah's relationships also suffered. The time she spent with her husband and children was often distracted by work-related worries. Her family began to feel neglected, leading to conflicts and strained bonds. Sarah realized that she was caught in a cycle that was eroding both her personal life and professional well-being.



References

- Charalampous, M., Grant, C. A., Tramontano, C., & Michailidis, E. (2019). Systematically reviewing remote e-workers' well-being at work: A multidimensional approach. *European journal of work and organizational psychology, 28*(1), 51-73.
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- Ernst Kossek, E., & Ozeki, C. (1998). Work-family conflict, policies, and the job-life satisfaction relationship: A review and directions for organizational behavior-human resources research. *Journal of applied psychology, 83*(2), 139

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