



Teleworking 101: Finding the Balance for Productivity

Episode 1: From September Gerety of The Pyramid Model Consortium

Let's start with one important word: routine. Most of you have probably lost yours. Let's start by finding a new one. I am NOT telling you to make a complicated, rigid schedule for yourselves or your children. There are plenty of those floating around on the internet right now, and 99.9% of them are going to fail.

Instead, make three lists:

- 1) Things that need to happen every day at your house
- 2) Things that you think will help you cope
- 3) Things that might help you enjoy this time.

List 1 might include things like:

- Be online for your job during a certain time window
- Eat
- Participate in mandatory video meetings
- Feed your pets

List 2 might include things like:

- Use a Clorox wipe on cabinets, door handles, and light switches
- Take a walk
- Take a shower
- Talk with family members in other places or reach out to someone who lives alone
- Shut down work email and turn off work phone at 6:00

List 3 might include things like:

- Light candles in the evening
- Read a book
- Play board games
- Watch old episodes of The Bachelor

Next, look at all three lists together and choose **NO MORE THAN FIVE** things to start to build your own routine. You are going to resist this. You will want to do all of the things. And you can, if it works out. But these five are going to be your non-negotiables, the things you do every single day no matter what.

Start there. It's fine to do more things. I am also making my bed, showering, working for several hours, and doing yoga most days! But don't beat yourself up if you only manage to do these five.

Make sure that your five things are not open-ended. "Keep the house clean" is not a good thing to have on your list, because that could take all day every day. "Wash, dry, and fold one load of laundry" works because it's clear when that's done. "Spend time with my kids" is too vague. "Spend 15 minutes working on a jigsaw puzzle with my kids" is much better. Instead of "Work" try, "Respond to all emails that came in yesterday." **Identify what *done* means for each item on your list.**

The purpose of this is to stop spinning and get out of survival mode. You are processing a lot, probably getting multiple conflicting directives from your supervisors, and feeling lots of big emotions. Do not even *think* about adding anything to your list of non-negotiables until you have done these five things every single day for several days in a row.

You'll notice that I didn't tell you to assign a time to each item on your list. That's because you shouldn't. Consider this a routine rather than a schedule.