



Learning to Work,  
Live and BE..

# AT HOME

By LaKeisha Fleming

**H**ome is usually a place of comfort, a sanctuary. It can be your place to relax, let your hair down, and be ... you. It's logical, then, to think that working from home would provide a more relaxed and enjoyable environment. And it can. The thought of working in your pajamas, having a one-minute in-house commute, saving money on gas, and having more time with your family can seem appealing. That is, until the day you look up and realize you can't separate work from home, and home is no longer your place to escape the harsh work-world realities. Although working from home can be a dream, it's important to take steps to ensure it doesn't turn into a nightmare situation. If you reside in the same place where you work, you want a very "user-friendly" environment for both situations. The steps to make it a livable space all begin with you.

## Set Boundaries For Yourself

When you work from home, it's easy to check in online to see if that work email has come through after dinner, or even actively get some paperwork done while in front of the TV. Work life passively bleeds into your personal time. And it goes downhill from there. Instituting some structure into your work life at home can not only increase your productivity and the quality of your output, but can also help you achieve a healthier work-life balance.

To avoid having work tasks creep into personal activities, set office hours. While there can still be flexibility within those hours, it gives you a base from which to operate. You know that from the hours of 11am-7pm, you are in a work mindset, and handling those tasks. After 7pm, you unplug. And stick to it.

## Avoid company-issued devices

This also allows you to truly unplug from work. Although in this day and age most employers won't hesitate to dial your personal cell phone, not having a company-issued phone at least helps keep a level of separation. Try to avoid setting up your work email on your personal device as well. Nothing worse than being on a relaxing, much-needed vacation, and have the co-worker who seems to "forget" that you're out of the office, constantly sending emails.

You may find that for the sake of security or transmission of confidential information, your workplace must provide you with a computer or phone. In that case, manage your alerts for emails and messages that is not disruptive to your personal time.

## Set Boundaries For Your Family/Friends

I remember being so excited by the prospect of my husband and I both working from home together. I'd go to his office to say hello, to chat, or to have lunch. If I was out, I may call home to ask him to take out something for dinner, or throw a load of laundry into the washer. In other words, I acted as though he were just sitting at home. Not working. And therein lies the problem. He had to put rules in place for me and the household regarding his work time.

So now, whether he is on a conference call or doing paperwork, his work time is respected. I get that he's not just twiddling his thumbs with nothing to do, available for any and all tasks. He's hard at work. You can post your office hours on your door, or even have a buzzer family can use to request your presence. That allows you the opportunity to say you're not available.

Keep in mind, however, that you shouldn't be so rigid that there is not room for interruptions. In fact, build that time in. Know that it is possible that a delivery may come to the door. Give yourself space for that disruption to your flow. And of course, allow for family phone calls – just ensure they don't last too long.



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"Home is  
the nicest  
word  
there is."

— Laura Ingalls Wilder

### Organize your office space

It should go without saying, but you need to have a specific place in your home that is dedicated solely to work. When I try to write in various places in the house, it doesn't seem to flow as smoothly. But in my office ... I'm the most focused, and the most creative. I go in there and I'm in the mindset that I have to work.

Plus, it's set up in a way that's conducive to getting projects done.

That's another part of the organizational structure. Set up your office as a professional work space. Purchase a desk and office chair. Create folders to store important documents. Remove distractions that can waste time. While still comfortable, make it really feel like work.



All of this is not to say that you can't occasionally take a break when the kids are home to play outdoors, or take a coffee break in the kitchen. It doesn't mean there is no flexibility; that's the beauty of working outside of a conventional office. However, flexibility can only function successfully when there is an organized structure to begin with. Provide structure so that you can enjoy the freedom that it brings, and the true benefits of being able to work from home.



*LaKeisha Fleming is the founder and president of Vision 2:2 Productions, LLC, a multimedia production company creating content for television, film and the internet. She is also a prolific writer, and her company provides magazine article, blog, script and press release writing services, among others. She's a loving wife and a proud homeschooling mother. Follow her blog at [www.andthatsmyreality.com](http://www.andthatsmyreality.com).*



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