**Working from Home and Mental Health**

As winter draws near, the days are growing shorter and the weather is worsening, making it more difficult for us to be active on a regular basis. However, keeping active during these challenging times is more important than ever, for both our physical and mental wellbeing.

Many of us are now working from home, which means we are probably spending the majority of our time sat at our desks staring at a computer screen. Then, once the working day comes to an end, we are probably going to spend the evening staring at the TV screen. Not only is this increasing our sedentary behaviour, but it is also likely to be having a negative impact on our mental health. For example, you may not have been able to go running as often as you used to, which could explain why you are feeling more stressed.

However, now is the perfect time to get out of any bad habits you may have picked up during lockdown, and adapt how you go about your working day. The changes you make don’t have to be big; even small changes can hugely benefit how we feel!

Many people try to fit in as much as possible during the day, and often end up sitting through back to back meetings. Reviewing your schedule and arranging meetings with breaks in between allows you to get up and stretch your legs, which could help to boost your mood. I try to take a 5-10-minute break every hour if possible, so that I can walk around the house and make a cup of tea.

Another way to keep active during your working day is to make the most out of your lunch break; it may be your only chance to get some fresh air during daylight hours in the upcoming winter months. I like to use this time to walk my dogs, though of course you don’t need to have a dog to go for a walk!

Finally, adding exercise to your schedule can help you to fit some activity into your day. For example, adding a morning exercise class to your schedule twice a week before work could increase the chances of you completing the class. This could then increase your productivity that day, and your confidence over time. I added an early-morning run to my schedule twice a week, which has helped me feel more awake and allowed me to become more productive before lunch.

I have mentioned just a few examples of changes that I have made while I have been working from home, but there are countless other things that you can do increase your activity levels this winter. Get creative and come up with your own ideas, so you can see the benefits of physical activity on your mental wellbeing for yourself!