

# Thriving through tough times

January 6, 2021



COVID-19 hasn't exactly made life easy for a lot of people. While many are enjoying the benefits that have come with these uncertain and rapidly changing times, most are battling challenges or overcoming complexities they now face.

Feeling overwhelmed, anxious, stressed, tired, isolated, lonely, and generally lacking in energy are common impacts of this pandemic. As an executive assistant you're likely to be stretched thin to support your boss and colleagues. For most leaders, they're not only needing to adapt to new ways of working themselves, but also their business and teams to enable sustainability through these times. The impact that has on the role of many EAs is significant. Long hours, tight deadlines, and stressful processes are common.

Whether you are struggling to work effectively at home, to juggle your role and family responsibilities, or even just feel motivated to work when getting out of your pyjamas has become a challenge, know that you are far from alone. Most people are living a version of reality right now that is far from ideal.

Sadly, Beyond Blue and Lifeline are reporting a dramatic increase in the number of people who reach out to them for help. Given an alarming 60% of people do not ask for help when they need it, contemplate just how many more people are struggling alone or in silence.

Irrespective of how tough life gets, there are steps we can take to give ourselves the best possible chance of getting through with our mental and physical health intact. Priority number one is making our wellbeing matter. Reflect for a moment on how well you perform your job when tired or stressed. And to what extent are you able to focus and deal with frustrations when energised? Once you have decided thriving is your intention, you need to sign up to making that happen.

Avoiding unmanageable levels of stress, anxiety, and ultimately a burnout, comes down to the choices you make about what you focus on and invest your time, energy, and resources in. So, don't just say to yourself a daily walk would make a big difference, hold yourself accountable to making that consistently happen. Be aware of how your thinking is impacting your ability to maintain a healthy mind and body. Do you tell yourself you don't have time to take a break from your computer screen because deadlines are looming? You're actually more likely to meet tight deadlines if you give yourself the opportunity to recharge. Even if it's just for 10 minutes—take the time to stop, get outside, get a glass of water, or have a laugh with someone.

Another common cause of stress is perfectionism. Are the benchmarks you're setting or accepting for yourself reasonable? There is only so much you can do when faced with an overwhelming workload. Keep communicating with your manager about their priorities and have the courage to talk to them about your own priorities and the support you need. Focus on what you can control. If your manager is highly strung, avoid buying into their emotions and placing further pressure on yourself. If you are used to getting everything done ahead of the deadline, accept that may not be possible and adjust the expectations you have of yourself and those around you. Be creative about how you can find the time to do some of the things that help you unwind and de-stress.

While social distancing and lockdown laws have limited many of our options, don't allow that to be a barrier to doing what gives you energy. For example, you may not have the opportunity to be surrounded by the colleagues you find energising if you're working from home, so make the effort to pick up the phone or jump onto a Zoom call to have a casual chat about how life is treating them.

---

Karen Gately, founder of Corporate Dojo, is a leadership and people-management specialist. Karen works with leaders and HR teams to drive business results through the talent and energy of people. She is the author of *The People Manager's Toolkit: A Practical guide to getting the best from people* (Wiley) and the host of TickerTV's *Black Belt Leader*. For more information visit <http://www.corporatedojo.com> or contact [info@corporatedojo.com](mailto:info@corporatedojo.com).