



EXECUTIVE VITALITY™: DO YOU HAVE A LONELY OFFICE?

Now that the hybrid work model, which includes flexible work arrangements, has been adopted by many businesses—you and those with whom you work may be facing new challenges maintaining cohesive work relationships.

Many people are more than happy to blend their personal lives with their work lives, and the pandemic let the genie out of the bottle—in many cases, those who worked from home during the pandemic want to continue working from home. But not everybody. To the extent companies must offer flexible arrangements to retain top talent, employees' lives everywhere are affected in both positive and negative ways.

Do you dread going to work?

Many people are working what used to be considered regular hours, but their jobs aren't the same. Whereas coming to work used to be a place to connect with co-workers and engage in extemporaneous collaboration "around the water cooler" and otherwise experience work as distinct and separate from personal lives—that is something many people miss, and could affect job performance and job satisfaction.

HBR has published several articles about hybrid workplaces. [Three Tensions Leaders Need to Manage in the Hybrid Workplace \(hbr.org\)](https://hbr.org) states: "A policy or 'perk' that benefits some people and makes them feel included, can make others feel like they do not belong or cannot thrive."

In other words, to maintain your own vitality, you need to avoid any negative impact that could result from the loss of human contact and camaraderie at work. If your workplace seems eerily empty, here are five steps you can take to keep loneliness at bay:

1. Figure out opportunities when you can come face-to-face with your peers, direct reports, or boss, both one-on-one and in a group. Maybe it means setting up a lunch date or meeting a colleague on a day when you are in the office and they are working from home. Or vice versa. On a day that you are working from home and they are in the office, meet in their office, a conference room, or even a restaurant. Depending on the relationship, work out what seems appropriate and feels right.
2. Coordinate days in the office with contacts who are important to you.
3. Make sure you meet face-to-face with everyone on your team at least every other week, whether in a group or with each of them individually.
4. Some reorganization of the physical layout of the office could be helpful. If possible, consider consolidating the locations of people who are working onsite so nobody feels like they are working on an island.
5. If your human contact with colleagues is minimal, make up for it by spending time with friends and family on your own time. Don't sit home alone!!!

Have you been lonely at work? Is it possible you work with people who feel lonely at work? What strategies can you use to stay connected with others?