Workers' Comp

Adapting to life in quarantine

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3 MIN READ

Video options seem to be cropping up everywhere. More people are turning to video chat to stay in touch and provide some of the social interaction that many are missing. Zoom emerged as a de facto choice, booming from 10 million meeting participants a day in December 2019, to more than 300 million the following April, when everything ground to a halt from COVID-19.

As we've mentioned, telehealth has been around for a few years, making it easier for people to see a doctor or therapist from the privacy and convenience of home. Not surprisingly, these numbers have seen substantial growth. Remote tutoring and instructional videos are booming. Companies like TechSee are emerging with remote video options for technicians, allowing face-to-face support and instruction through customers' smartphones. Although these services exist primarily for business right now, their foray into the American home won't be far behind.

We miss our loved ones

Although we may have more people at home now, some people are feeling more isolated. Travel restrictions related to COVID-19 squashed summer plans for many, or their hopes to see family and friends over the holidays. Nursing homes and assisted living facilities across the country are locked down, making it hard for family members to visit and provide needed daily care and interaction. Missing loved ones is a major factor in the growing challenge of mental health, particularly chronic depression. As with work and school, many families are meeting virtually or even just looking in over security cameras.

We're shopping in new ways

Shopping for groceries is easier than ever with most major chains offering online ordering and scheduled pickups or delivery through third-party apps. The pandemic has hit restaurants hard, but food delivery sales are at an all-time high. Other industries are turning to third-party delivery services too, such as the recent partnership between DoorDash and CVS to deliver prescriptions and health products.

We're challenged to stay healthy

We're seeing the effects of quarantine on Americans' health even now. The term "COVID 15" refers to the weight gain collectively experienced as gyms closed and people newly working from home snacked more than they used to. Alcohol use is on the rise, especially during the workday. More time indoors means less vitamin D from sunlight, which affects our mood, immunity, weight — as well as our resistance to COVID-19.

But working from home can give people more options to stay active too. It’s easier to get up and stretch or take a quick walk. And 90 percent of Americans who exercise regularly don’t want to go back to the gym, at least not yet. They want to continue to do so at home, and gyms are scrambling to stay relevant (and solvent). Is the trend toward being more sedentary (or at least staying the same), due to the nature of desk jobs? Or does working from home encourage more moving around? We’ll see.

We’re staying put (for now)

It’s likely many of us will continue working from home, at least some of the time, when the pandemic ends. That’s a big change from just a few years ago. In 2017, a mere 3 percent of full-time workers said they primarily worked from home. In a more recent survey, 20 percent said they worked from home before the pandemic and nearly 75 percent were doing so by late 2020. More than half of these workers said they want to keep working from home even after the pandemic. Some companies are famously agreeing to this kind of flexibility while others may also plan to do so.

One thing seems certain: the pandemic is likely to bring lasting changes to how we live and work in the years ahead. We look forward to looking back at the end of 2021 and seeing what sticks.



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