

# Work From Home? 6 Ways to Stay Focused and Avoid Burnout; Lonely and monotonous, remote workdays are leaving us with wandering attention spans and productivity slumps. Here, tips to regain your WFH focus.

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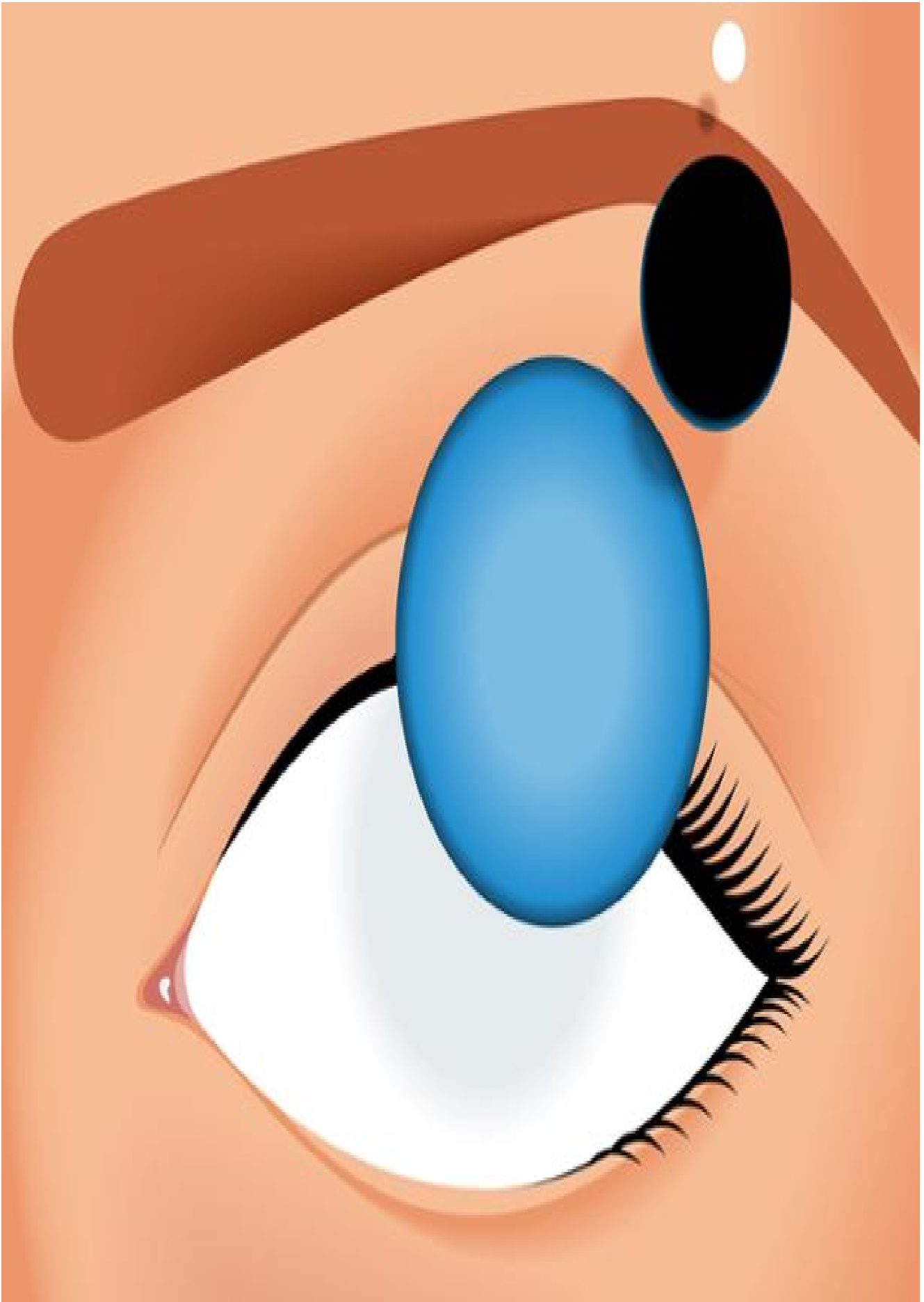
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## FULL TEXT

AT FIRST, the work-from-home life had the elemental thrills of a snow day, with its languid commutes from bed to sofa. But with Covid-19 variants snuffing out the light at the end of the tunnel and companies postponing returns to the workplace, W.F.H. is becoming W.T.F. for many.

As we edge toward remote-work burnout, it's getting harder to stay focused and productive. Even our diversions are digital—"breaks" to play phone games bloat into 30-minute lapses—exacerbating our lack of human connection and our minds' tendencies to wander. Eugene Kim, the Los Angeles-based founder of design brand Dims., is deeply Zoom fatigued. "There's so many little physical and visual things that we communicate to each other non-verbally that are just lost," he said. Atlanta-based Eric Heyward, COO of watch brand Talley & Twine, similarly longs for water-cooler conversations that let him gauge his colleagues' moods and adjust "the tone of my next Slack message."

According to Kirsten Clacey, a remote-work expert who co-founded the Remote Coaches, spontaneous interactions can help combat the unfocused WFH malaise some folks are feeling. To create "playful moments," she recommends beginning each meeting with five minutes spent "connecting as humans." But you also have to carve out a personal life within your work life. Here, other expert advice.



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**WHEN THE EYE'S NOT ON THE PRIZE** One possible symptom of WFH burnout is an increasing sense that you can't concentrate on your work. PHOTO: John W. Tomac

1. To dodge the feeling your entire life is "condensed into the computer," Ms. Clacey suggests getting into nature daily. A walk along the ocean would be ideal, because "awe and wonder have neurological benefits." But even a few trees will do.
2. Create a separate, Pavlovian space for work mode—possible even if you have no spare room, said Liam Martin, co-organizer and CMO of remote-work conference Running Remote. No door to close? "I've even seen people...have a different set of 'work' headphones," he said.
3. Try to spend no more than 25% of your workday in meetings to maximize your productivity, said Mr. Martin, who also co-founded the productivity app Time Doctor.
4. Clearly defined work hours are a key burnout barrier. Delete work email and IM apps from your phone so you "don't turn working at home into living at work," Mr. Martin said.
5. Plan weekly adventures (e.g., gallery hopping one night), said Laura Vanderkam, author of "The New Corner Office: How the Most Successful People Work from Home." "A lot of burnout is about feeling there is nothing to look forward to."
6. Avoid miring yourself entirely in banal tasks. Spend 30 to 60 minutes a day doing the work that first drew you to your career, Ms. Vanderkam said—the "cool part you'd tell people about at cocktail parties, if anyone was still going to cocktail parties."

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Credit: By Kathryn O'Shea-Evans

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