



WRITING SAMPLE #1: Do The Hustle!

“‘On the side’ is a very big thing for you.” –Harry from When Harry Met Sally

And it should be for you, too! If ever there was a time to consider that future side hustle---THE. TIME. IS. NOW.

COVID-19 has us feeling all sorts of ways. There’s no right or wrong way to navigate these uncharted waters. We are all learning as we go. This crisis affects each person uniquely: from professional and financial well-being to emotional well-being. The financial fallout from COVID-19 is unprecedented in its own right. The financial stability of the average American was precarious enough prior to this pandemic. In an April 3, 2020 Opploans article by Lindsay Frankel, “according to the [Federal Reserve](#), most Americans are already living paycheck to paycheck, and 39 percent wouldn’t be able to weather a \$400 emergency expense without borrowing money or selling items.” Sobering data, indeed. Even more troubling is the fact that TransUnion reports that over half of the adults in the United States have experienced a loss of income due to the COVID-19 pandemic. On March 20, 2020, [CNBC.com](#) reported, “Within the next month, Americans financially impacted by the current pandemic estimate they’ll be short by roughly \$900, on average, on the payments they owe.”

But what if we had a way to supplement some of that money that’s been lost due to COVID-19? How many times have you said to yourself, even pre-pandemic, “If I only had a ‘X’ more dollars per month...” Everyone could benefit from a few more dollars in their pocket on a good day, never mind in the middle of a world-wide crisis. According to [Kim Miles, Founder & CEO of Miles in Heels Productions](#), there’s no time like the present to entertain that idea for a side hustle to help ourselves, and others, out.

She explains that even in the best of times, people come up with extraordinary ideas to supplement their income but they struggle with whether or not they have the time or wherewithal to execute their idea. However, in the middle of a pandemic, she explains, we are given the gift of time to be able to dedicate brain power and resources to explore these ideas and to see if they can blossom into legitimate businesses.

Here’s a list of things that Kim recommends considering before diving headfirst:

-CONSIDER YOUR SKILL SET: Ask yourself what your strongest skill is. Is it writing? Speaking? Baking? It doesn’t matter. The best side-hustles-turn-success stories usually come from a deep-rooted passion or extraordinary talent. It’s a matter of monetizing that talent, and the drive to pursue it, in order to launch a side hustle into a legit business.

-WHAT’S YOUR WHY?: Why do you love to do what you do? How does it make you feel? Are you helping others? Are you filling a personal void? Understanding your “why” behind the “what” is a big key to success.



-BUILD A BETTER MOUSETRAP: When considering your new big idea, be mindful of what else is out there. Don't shy away if a version of it already exists. Just be sure to know how to articulate how your idea is different, bolder, better.

Here's a list of things that Kim recommends testing out in the current environment:

-CONDUCT A FOCUS GROUP: You have a captive audience! With the stay-at-home order, you can easily conduct a focus group via Zoom or conference call to start brainstorming ideas. Cherry pick who you want "in the room where it happens" so that you get a strong cross section of ideas and opinions.

-SEND OUT AN ANONYMOUS SURVEY: To see if your idea has legs, why not conduct an anonymous survey to get the true skinny on how folks feel about your idea. You'll be surprised at how honest people will be behind the cloak of the internet.

-TRY IT OUT: If the current climate doesn't preclude you from executing...go for it! Try your idea out on a small test market. Make the mistakes. Get the feedback. Fix the bugs. Ask for input. This is a GREAT time to try...and fail...and try again!

Takeaway

These are trying times, there's no doubt. Perhaps the hardest part about all of this is the uncertainty and lack of control over the timeline and the outcome. But what if we shifted our perspective and we looked at this period as a small gift? A gift of time to look inward and really ask ourselves, "Why not?" Why not try to fire up that small kernel of an idea that's been swirling around in our brain for so long? We've been handed some extra time to slow down and truly let it simmer. Who knows, it might just be the perfect time for it to pop.

WRITING SAMPLE #2: Staying Sharp While Swimming In A Sea Of Uncertainty

Had enough Zoom calls to last a lifetime? Binged just about everything the internet has to offer? Hiding from your kids again until after their bedtime? Just about any coping strategy that helps us get through the day and juggle the chaotic UNBALANCE of work and life in these insane times is acceptable. The one thing that isn't acceptable? Giving up on ourselves.

Anxiety is a funny thing. In an overabundance in times such as these, anxiety can be a tricky feeling to navigate. According to the [Mayo Clinic](#), *"Anxiety quickly builds up energy so we can fight or run from danger, but it may cause uncomfortable physical symptoms, such as a racing heart, inability to concentrate, shakiness, sweating and difficulty swallowing. These symptoms may feel horrible, but they are not dangerous in the short term. In the current situation, anxiety can cause rumination, a sense of impending doom, helplessness and overfocusing on the news, which can provoke more anxiety...Other actions related to anxiety include pacing, spacing out and feeling like a spinning wheel without getting tasks done."*

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Aye, there's the rub. "Feeling like a spinning wheel without getting tasks done." Been there. Felt that. ON. THE. DAILY. This is a point in history like no other. And while some of us find ourselves with too much free time on our hands, many of us are so busy we can't keep our heads screwed on straight. For those of us who are control freaks,

the hardest thing to accept is that absolutely NONE of this is within our control. Aside from following the instructions of our scientists, doctors, and local leaders, we are at the mercy of both time and medicine before we'll have any say in the matter over our own schedules and beyond.

So, what can we do to stay sharp while swimming in a sea of uncertainty? That's where the concept of "organized chaos" comes in handy. According to [Kim Miles, Founder & CEO of Miles in Heels Productions](#), making small adjustments to help organize our minds and surroundings contributes to a more organized and productive environment which, in turn, can help slow our racing minds and ease our overall anxiety. She explains that when things get overwhelming, it's best to press pause, assess, reevaluate, and commit to not giving up on ourselves by keeping our head in the game.

Here's Kim's list of examples to help organize the chaos, both physically and mentally:

-CLEAN YOUR OFFICE! Sounds pedestrian, however, you'd be amazed at how a clean workspace can actively clean out the cobwebs in your head. Clean space, clean mind.

-EXERCISE FIRST: It's no secret that exercising is good for you. More importantly, in times of stress, [The Mayo Clinic](#) states that, "*Exercise in almost any form can act as a stress reliever. Being active can boost your feel-good endorphins and distract you from daily worries.*" Why not START the day with endorphins that can pave the way for good vibes throughout?

-CLEAN UP YOUR CONTACTS: Miss your Rolodex? WEED OUT YOUR CONTACT GARDEN! This is a great time to go through and either reconnect with old contacts or clean out names from 1987 whom you don't even recognize anymore. Again, organization of systems begets organization of thought resulting in more productivity.

-LEARN A NEW BUSINESS SKILL: While juggling home and work during a global crisis, it's still important to take time out for yourself. Whether that's indulging in a hobby or learning a new skill, forward progress as an individual can be therapeutic and even freeing. When we take time for ourselves to broaden our horizons and push our brains in new directions, we become better leaders, team players, family members, spouses, and friends.

-TAKE IT EASY ON YOURSELF: The ultimate way to stay sharp while swimming in a sea of uncertainty? Cut yourself some slack every once in a while. You are human. You are doing the best you can. We all are. Rome wasn't built in a day and a crisis wasn't solved in one either.



Takeaway

When things are uncertain, we have two choices: let the panic set in and take over or take action to right the ship, stay the course, and not give up on ourselves. A simple way to navigate this new environment we find ourselves in is to assess, reevaluate, and commit. ASSESS what may be working or not in your life. REEVALUATE if it still serves the purpose for which it was originally intended. COMMIT to it one way or the other. By bringing organization to the chaos, we can more clearly determine what works and what doesn't. It's okay to revamp your processes, both mentally and physically in order to stay sharp. It's healthy to reinvent different parts of your life in order to propel yourself forward. After all, you are not the same person you were yesterday, last week, or even last year. And in a sea of uncertainty, that could be just the life raft you're looking for.

WRITING SAMPLE #3: Zoom: Here For The Long Haul

"ALRIGHT MR. DEMILLE, I'M READY FOR MY CLOSE-UP." -Norma Desmond, Sunset Boulevard

Ugh. ANOTHER ZOOM CALL??

We've all had that thought at one point or another during this quarantine period. Depending on your level of "quarantine fatigue," Zoom has been either a blessing or a curse during this crazy cooped up crisis. However you feel about Zoom, the numbers don't lie. According to [CNBC](#), the company added 2.22 million monthly active users so far in 2020, while in 2019 it added 1.99 million. Now that's saying something.

Numbers aside, the real discussion is the fact that our reliance on this type of technology isn't going away anytime soon. Rather than try and avoid it, best to embrace it...and no time like the present! It's time for a little Zoom 101. There are several areas people tend to overlook when conducting a Zoom call. They may sound pedestrian, but they can actually contribute to making or breaking your credibility. Here are a few critical areas in which to focus to become a Zoom superstar.

-PRACTICE MAKE PERFECT!

Please, for the love of all things technological, PRACTICE BEFORE YOU GO LIVE! Get to know the app. Familiarize yourself with all its prompts and the critical components such as how to use the mute button, the chat feature, etc. There is nothing worse than being on a Zoom call and wasting your time staring at someone's chin because they don't know how to angle their camera. According to [CNET](#), "...if you're going to be doing something you haven't done before...do a trial run with a coworker or family member first, so you aren't fumbling and wasting time while on the call. This will help you look more professional and keep things running smoothly."

-TO SWEATPANT OR NOT TO SWEATPANT, THAT IS THE QUESTION

Hard to believe this needs to be addressed but SOME SORT OF PANTS, ALWAYS. All kidding aside, we've heard (and seen!) all the horror stories about folks not being, ahem, aware of the camera and its whereabouts. Remember to always be professional and presentable. If on a business call, treat it like a business meeting. How would your counterparts dress? What does the tone of the meeting dictate? This is not to say you need to show up in black tie



attire or even a suit and tie for that matter. According to a recent [Vogue Magazine](#) article, Professor Francis T. McAndrew, who teaches at Knox College in Illinois and specializes in environmental psychology, states, "If you look at how you are dressed, that signals something about what you are prepared to do. If you are dressed professionally and you're dressed up, in some ways that raises your own opinion of yourself, and you want your behavior and demeanor to match the clothes...and that spills over into your motivation and confidence." Amen.

-IS THAT A CAT CALENDAR IN THE BACKGROUND?

Your surroundings matter. That can't be stressed enough. It may be an unfortunate truth, but you're being judged by what people see in your camera's frame. Before you join the call, be sure to take a good look at your image on the screen, see how it's framed and what appears in the background. Be sure to remove any highly personal items, anything that would be embarrassing, or anything that is counterintuitive to the call itself. For example, if you are pitching a deal to Nike, best to remove that Adidas poster in the background.

-LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION!

Time to kill 'em with confidence. Now that you have done a practice run, checked yourself in the mirror and on the screen, and removed any unwanted paraphernalia in the background, you are ready to roll! The key is to never let them see you sweat. You can do this. Frankly, with today's state of affairs, you have to. So, take a deep breath and click, "Join Call!"

TAKEAWAY

Technology can be rough. And relying on technology can be even rougher if it doesn't come naturally to us. The most important thing to recognize about this new virtual landscape is that the choices we make through our screens in the way we act, speak, and present ourselves all reflect on our future career potential. A Zoom call should be thought of in the same vein as an in-person meeting. You are being judged on your professionalism on all levels; from the way you greet the virtual audience to the protocol you follow on the call to the way you sign off, and everything in between. Don't be intimidated. Do the research for your call just like you would prepare for an in-person meeting. And, yes, perhaps you might have to take a few extra steps and remove those pictures of you from Spring Break 19-something-or-other. But when you nail that call, client or account, you'll be glad you did.

WRITING SAMPLE #4: And The Award For The Savviest Remote Employee Goes To...

Did you win? What do you think? Do you deserve a mug that says, "Boss's Favorite (Remote) Employee?"

Standing out as a model employee while squirreled away in our home offices (or kitchens that double as offices for that matter) is no small feat. Not only are we expected to be rock stars on the home front 24/7 during a quarantine, now we need to make sure we're standing out as key employees from our remote surroundings with no end or timeline in sight.

According to [Forbes](#), the top 3 ways to impress your boss while working remotely have to do with communication and effort; namely by sending periodic updates, doing more than what's been asked, and by proactively proposing ideas.



Let's breakdown and explore these key areas of communication and effort:

COMMUNICATION CUBED:

-If the golden rule of real estate is "location, location, location," than the golden rule of being an effective remote employee is "communicate, communicate, communicate." Consider your boss's favorite mode of communication: is it email? Text? Voice Mail? Whatever it is, that's your new favorite now, too. (As far as communicating with your boss, that is.) Understanding and accepting the easiest and most effective way to communicate with your boss not only aids in efficiency of dialogue but shows you care enough to recognize that it's the preferred method by adopting it as your own.

-We're all bombarded with information while working remotely so why not help filter out the noise by clarifying your content? A simple "No need to respond to this but here's an update for you" or "I just read this online and thought you should be aware given our current merger" type of a heads-up helps organize thoughts and prioritize action items. Sometimes delivering the message is all that's needed, not a dialogue. Be clear as to what necessitates action vs. simply providing helpful information. And, of course, be judicious with the frequency of these communications.

-Keeping an open line of communication helps manage expectations, especially in a remote environment. Be sure to ask clearly and openly for what you need, whether that's flexibility in your work hours, a renegotiated deadline, support or insight on a particular project, or anything that's critical to you delivering when you say you're going to deliver. When expectations are managed, they are more often met. That's a win-win for all.

'A' FOR EFFORT:

-Help triage what's the most important issue for your boss right now and either a) free them up to do it by taking other things off their plate, or b) contribute to it with whatever data, process or support you can provide. Be thoughtfully helpful.

-Reporting is more important than ever. Whether it's quantitative for those quota-driven industries or qualitative for keeping those clients happy and on board, keeping all team members, especially the boss, informed is critical. Be realistic in your forecasting, especially in a challenging climate. Reach for the stars but make sure those stars are not in another stratosphere. Your boss will appreciate the honesty and it helps manage expectations all around.

TAKEAWAY

What's the risk of taking your foot off the gas or falling a bit behind while hidden behind closed doors at home? Most importantly, how do you want to position yourself in this remote climate? Ideally, you want to position yourself as someone who is up for the task and ready to take on the challenge of big things as new opportunities begin to open up. If you don't, you risk being on the layoff list if one comes. If you do, you may be in line for promotional opportunities, as well as a larger percentage of what's likely to be a meager pay raise pool this year.



Keep this in mind: Ellie Eckhoff, a vice president at ClearRock, a leadership development and executive coaching firm is quoted in [Money.com](#) as saying, "...if your boss doesn't see you every day, you may be missing out on opportunities to advance. When you're out of sight, you're not going to be top of top of mind when it comes to landing important assignments or even promotions. If you can't stop by your manager's office for an impromptu chat, you have to work harder to connect on a personal level and build up trust, and it's up to you to find ways to foster that connection." Bottom line? There's never been a better time to get creative, be proactive, and get in the driver's seat on that communication train. You'll be drinking out of that "Boss's Favorite" mug in no time.

WRITING SAMPLE #5: Knock, Knock? Who's There? A Random Connection On LinkedIn, That's Who.

How many times have you been excited to connect with someone on LinkedIn only to find that they are more than one level removed from your network? It reminds me of the game show, Press Your Luck, where the contestants would scream, "No Whammies! No Whammies!" as they pressed the button to land on a prize and tried to avoid the dreaded Whammy that would knock them out of the money. Connecting with someone who is closely related to your network is easy. It's networking with those levels beyond that poses the potential Whammy: it can be scary, random, and seemingly out of your control.

LinkedIn is a revelatory platform in its own right. It's the digitized version of playing "Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon." It's actually remarkable to see just how small the world is when you connect the dots. According to [Inc.com](#), "LinkedIn boasts more than 350 million members in over 200 countries and territories...and is simply continuing its plan for world domination." When used correctly, as Forbes outlines in their guide to ["7 Things You Must Do To Maximize The Value Of Your LinkedIn Profile"](#), your ability to advance your network and add value to that network is limitless.

So, how best to connect with people that are removed from your immediate circle? What about connecting with folks who are your senior? Or better yet, an industry influencer who could take your business or product to the next level? Let's break down a few templates to help consistently and confidently connect with people online.

SOMEONE YOU KNOW:

This is, without question, the easiest, most comfortable type of connection. Leading with how you met or your common connection are just a couple of ways to break the ice. When requesting to connect, think about a thoughtful, specific introduction such as:

"Hi, Sam, I'm so glad we bumped into each other at the Northeastern Networking Night last week. I look forward to staying connected and continuing our conversation about climate change. Feel free to call me when you are next in town."

SOMEONE AT A SENIOR LEVEL:

This type of connection can be a bit more intimidating, but it doesn't have to be. Keep this in mind: everyone started somewhere, just like you. And, most senior executives respect those who reach out because it shows that you exhibit initiative. Be hyper vigilant about your grammar and spelling (as always!) and be succinct and to the



point while being polite. These are busy people who are approached often. Your request to connect, if seen, needs to stand out and state a clear purpose:

“Dr. Watson, I attended your lecture at the Senior Center last night and was intrigued by the research you presented. As a medical student in the same field of study, I’d love the opportunity to interview you for our university’s medical journal. With whom may I connect to set up some time on your schedule?”

AN INDUSTRY INFLUENCER:

Connecting with industry influencers can make or break anyone’s business. If the connection is successful and leads to a productive relationship, that can lead to unparalleled access to multiple networks including those coveted industry specific networks that can be challenging to infiltrate. Try remembering “WIFM: What’s In It For Me?” which is likely what they’ll be thinking when you request to connect:

“Hi, Liam, I’m a lifelong subscriber to your newsletter and follow all of your social platforms. I notice your posts have been concentrating on the health and wellness sector as of late. I’d love to introduce you to my newest product which complements your latest online subscription model. I’d like to illustrate how we can collaborate and help boost our collective audiences. Could we set up a time to talk?”

TAKEAWAY

LinkedIn isn’t going anywhere. Best to embrace it and maximize its potential. When used correctly and effectively, it’s one of the most powerful tools there is in networking, hands down.

Just remember, it doesn’t matter if an introduction is online or in person. The same tenets apply:

- Be professional
- Be polite
- Be mindful of your “ask”

Most importantly? **BE YOURSELF**. Never pose as someone you aren’t. Authenticity goes a loooooong way. And don’t think that just because there is a screen between you and the other person that it absolves you of being truthful. In the gameshow of life, being yourself is a surefire way to avoid life’s Whammies.

WRITING SAMPLE #6: Give A Little. Get A Lot.

Carrie Fisher once said, “Everything is negotiable. Whether or not the negotiation is easy is another thing.” Touché, Princess Leia, touché.

Take negotiating with your boss. If you’ve ever had to do it, you know it can be fraught with an anxious lead up, hours of prep, some potential role playing, and occasionally many sleepless nights. Why is negotiating so challenging? It has to do with the fact that it’s hard to separate our emotions from the actual art of the negotiation. According to the [Harvard Business Review](#), “Over the past decade...researchers have begun examining how specific emotions—anger, sadness, disappointment, anxiety, envy, excitement, and regret—can affect the behavior of negotiators.” For example, “Bringing anger to a negotiation is like throwing a bomb into the process.” Checking your emotions at the door is not always so easy, especially when you’re asking for something that you’re passionate about. Let’s break down the example of negotiating a new summer schedule with your boss. Stay strong



as you read this, there's a pool chair with your name on it if you can approach this big "ask" with strength, clarity, and calm.

-UNDERSTAND THE WHY BEHIND YOUR WHAT

Before you even craft the email requesting an audience with your boss, be sure you understand the "why" behind your "what." Map out the reasons why you are asking for an alternative summer schedule. Is it necessitated because of childcare challenges? Travel plans? Or maybe you're just burnt out and need a break from the daily grind? It's not unusual for companies to be a bit more laid back in the summer months, but that doesn't mean you should ask for something "just because."

-CHECK THAT EMOTIONAL BAGGAGE AT THE DOOR

Breathe in, breathe out. Approach this conversation with a healthy dose of Namaste. Remember that all bosses are human, too. They have feelings, they're not robots (hopefully!) and their job is to lead other humans. If you present your case with calm and clarity, you'll get further in your negotiation than starting out on the defense or barreling in with pent up frustration and anger. Remember, you catch more flies with honey than you do vinegar.

-GIVE A LITTLE TO GET A LITTLE

This is KEY. What are you willing to give in exchange for your "ask"? If you propose working a 4-day work week, does that mean you'll adjust your hours during those 4 days? Maybe stay online 30 minutes later or hop online 30 minutes earlier in the day? If you're proposing taking every other Friday off, does that mean you'll deliver that weekly report to your boss's inbox no later than 5pm each Wednesday? You need to clearly identify that you're still able to successfully execute your responsibilities despite the change in schedule.

-STICK TO YOUR PROMISES

Working smarter and not harder is the promise to yourself. Sticking to the new parameters that you negotiated is the promise you are making to your boss. Once you have your new schedule agreed upon and both parties feel good about the negotiation...STICK TO IT! Don't give your boss any reason to regret that you asked and more importantly, regret that they agreed to your request. Staying true to your promise and knocking it out of the park is the best way to insure a healthy, communicative relationship. And, best of all, it provides a solid foundation for future "asks."

TAKEAWAY

The art of negotiation is exactly that: an art form. It needs to be approached with thoughtfulness and reason. I think this excerpt from Entrepreneur.com sums it up best:

"Focus on the win-win. Win-wins are the only way to go. If you approach a negotiation thinking only of yourself, you are a terrible negotiator. Understanding what all parties need and working for all concerned is vital. Keep in mind that seeing things in only black and white (win-lose) creates limited thinking; creativity is essential to good negotiation." How creative will you be in asking for your new summer schedule? If you feel your emotions creeping



in and need a little motivation to stay the course, try to envision that frosty Pina Colada sitting poolside. That always works for me.

WRITING SAMPLE #7: To Return Or Not To Return, That Is The Question.

We're running out of creative ways to say that this has been an unprecedented time in our history. In fact, things seem to be getting even more challenging as we continue to learn about the nature of this pandemic. However, in the midst of so much uncertainty, thankfully, we are slowly seeing progress in terms of areas opening up in our communities. One phase of re-opening poses the question of returning to physical offices.

This has a lot of folks, both on the employee and the employer side, grappling with new questions and feelings about returning to work. There's a lot to consider. The rabbit hole of concerns is endless, but at some point, folks might have to take a leap of faith. Of course, the safety, and health and well-being of everyone involved are of paramount importance but there is also the psychological factor that comes into play. The effects of this pandemic mean something different to everyone. According to [Time.com](https://www.time.com), in late April, "as the full weight of the COVID-19 crisis was settling on the country's shoulders, more than one in four American adults met the criteria that psychologists use to diagnose serious mental distress and illness. That represents a roughly 700% increase from pre-pandemic data collected in 2018." That's not something to be taken lightly.

And neither is the decision to go back to the office. So, what do you do if your boss wants you back in the office but you just aren't ready to take that leap of faith? Here are some helpful ways to navigate this crossroads:

-MAKE A PRO/CON LIST

When in doubt, list it out. It might sound pedestrian, but this is a simple, illustrative exercise to help make sense of all the thoughts and fears that might be swirling around in your head. It helps to see which side holds the most weight. It could be that you are making yourself more anxious than need be once you actually see what's on both sides of the list. Be honest with yourself. You might be surprised with how the list looks on paper vs. in your mind.

-BE REALISTIC

Make sure you start off with complete honesty while negotiating with yourself and your employer. The key to this decision is proving how effective can you be at home vs. returning to the office. It's not enough to say that you don't want to go back simply because you're frightened or prefer to work in yoga pants. It's important to come up with a tactical plan to show your boss all the progress you've made and can continue to make while working virtually. Quantitative data helps. Perhaps you can show how by eliminating your commute, that newfound free time can be spent on new initiatives. Or, maybe you have a cost analysis showing how much money the company is saving on supplies or utilities as a result of your working remotely. Proving your value while out of the office is critical. Approach this discussion with thoughtfulness and data.

-CONVERSATION IS KEY

An open dialogue between parties is of utmost importance. If you are one of the lucky ones to have a great working relationship with your superior, taking the time to state your case (complete with tips from the above



paragraph) is the best way to go. Be sure to have an open mind when engaging in this type of conversation. Listen to your boss's concerns or objections and work toward an amicable solution. You may have to give a little to get a little. For instance, you may have to acquiesce and consider a few days in the office versus working completely remotely. Think of the issues that are most important to you. Don't dig your feet in on issues that don't support your ultimate goals.

TAKEAWAY

Yes, it's true that we're far from the finish line in terms of leaving this epidemic behind us. It's not an exaggeration to say that things may never return to the world as we knew it prior to this pandemic. And, in some instances, that might be okay. According to a survey conducted by [USAToday](#), "working from home during the COVID-19 pandemic has had a positive effect on worker's productivity, according to 54% of respondents in a recent survey of professionals ages 18-74." As always there are two sides to every story. When it comes to your boss asking you to return to the office, the key is in the communication. The most important thing to remember is this: the best way to be heard is to make sure others feel that they are being heard as well. When both parties feel valued, it's easier to reach an amicable solution.

WRITING SAMPLE #8: Stress In One Of The Most Stressful Ages Ever

"IF YOU WIN THE RAT RACE, YOU'RE STILL A RAT." –Lily Tomlin

ER doctor, Darria Long, says that the phrase "crazy busy" is a phrase you'll never hear her use. And, in her [TEDxNaperville talk](#), she hopes you'll never use it again either. She discusses the different way that people react to chaos in their daily lives and says that the problem with busy people is that they are often treating EVERY crisis with the same level of importance. She talks about the process of changing our minds from "crazy mode" into "ready mode".

This practice of crazy busy self-sabotage can be exhausting. When it comes to work/life balance, it can be positively devastating. Add a global pandemic on top of these daily norms and it can be downright apocalyptic. Juggling working from home in addition to all the rest of our responsibilities is no small feat. As we embrace the "new normal" and it's still taking shape, many questions still loom and we have to find a healthier way to tackle our stress levels. What are some of the ways that we can streamline our processes in order to reduce added stress in our already stressful day-to-day?

-TRIAGE THE URGENCY

Repeat after me: not everything is a five-alarm fire. So, stop reacting to everything as such. The sooner we can assess the urgency of a situation and prioritize accordingly, the better we're able to react appropriately. A great example of this is the black hole of our email inbox. No matter how much we delete, it constantly replenishes. Something as simple as utilizing the VIP or flag feature to make sure the most critical emails get our attention throughout the day can help with prioritizing our time and where we need to focus our consideration.



-TAKE TIME TO PLAN AHEAD

An organized week is a productive week. Every Sunday, take the necessary steps to map out what projects and deadlines necessitate your time and attention, both in your personal and professional life. According to [PsychCentral.com](https://www.psychcentral.com), the key is to, “**Prepare rather than worry**. You can’t change the past or control the future so try to just deal with what is on your plate now and be realistic about what the outcomes will be. *Preparation* is when you take a realistic look at what is in your control and you create a plan of action.” And for all those control freaks out there? Planning makes perfect.

-ASK FOR HELP/OUTSOURCE YOUR WEAKNESSES

We can’t all be an expert at everything. In fact, a Jack or Jane of all trades is too often a master of none. Know your strengths and identify where you can knock it out of the park, for sure. But always be realistic in acknowledging areas in which you need help. Asking for help or seeking assistance is NOT an admission of failure or a signal of weakness. In fact, it’s the opposite. Those who are honest enough to reach out for help are often seen as great collaborators. Working with others can help you streamline your processes and up your productivity. Never be afraid to reach out for help; it can help mitigate your overall stress levels.

-LEARN HOW TO SAY NO

Saying “no” as a means of self-preservation or protection can be very empowering. If you are typically a “yes” person, take a moment to assess why you are so quick to agree so easily. Taking on extra tasks can increase your stress levels and as a result, potentially negatively affect your performance. Again, by triaging urgency, you can better determine if you have time to say yes to ancillary projects. It’s always great to be a team player, but don’t do it to the detriment of your sanity or your performance.

TAKEAWAY

Stress will likely always be a part of our daily routines and that is out of our control. What is in our control is how we respond to that stress. We can execute more effectively when we approach stress proactively versus reactively. And, when that simply isn’t possible, it helps to take a beat in order to gauge the severity of that particular stressor and react with an appropriate response. Working from home might be new for many of us. As we move forward, it might be part of our regular routines more than we originally imagined. Why not give ourselves the best possible chance to be set up for success? By approaching stress head-on (when possible) we are able to plan accordingly thereby reducing that “crazy busy” chaos. Busy is plenty to handle on its own without adding crazy on top of it.