Personal Care for a Woman Working from Home during COVID-19

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Its now 13 weeks since many of us have been working from home during the COVID-19 crisis (it all started I believe on March 13, 2020). Staying at home almost 24x7 means eating more and exercising less and not taking care of our personal needs that will have a huge impact on our lives for a very long time and this could also mean decreasing our lifespan. So, what we need is a routine both for our mental and physical wellbeing. After struggling to cope the first 2-3 weeks overeating with no exercise and wearing my night clothes all day and not sleeping well and then working night and day hosting virtual ICDE 2020, then around the week of May 4th I started following a much better routine - eating less, exercising more, sleeping better, meditating daily and taking care of personal hygiene. So here is my typical day Monday - Sunday.

I try to wake up between 7 - 8am. After a short morning routine, brushing my teeth, washing my face I drink my tea and read a magazine in my tiny bistro kitchen table. This is a very peaceful time for me. Then I start my meditation 20 mins (sometimes add Yoga which is another 20 mins), then go on the exercise bike for about 20mins I have a sponge bath (my shower is before bedtime) and then dress in casual clothes (not work clothes - more my home or travel clothes). But I also take the time to cleanse and moisturize my face (including usimg sunscreen) and also apply light makeup and so now its almost 9am (or10am if I wake up at 8am). I work from 9-12 and again from 1-4 M-Th (including work meetings). Lunch at noon with a walk in the balcony and tea at 4pm followed by a second walk and I also listen to music and memorize song lyrics or poems to keep my memory sharp. Talk to my husband, watch a bit of news and catch up with web news, facetime with my son and his family and I watch Wheel of Fortune at 6:30pm while having dinner. Then back to work from 7-9pm. After that remove my makeup, cleanse my face, brush my teeth and then shower, change into my night clothes and apply night-time moisturizer, read a technical paper, and then read motivational articles or Harvard Business Review - something that is not taxing to the brain – so it's now 11:30pm. Then I do meditation (but this time its body relaxation listening to the video sound) and that makes me fall asleep by midnight.

This routine is pretty much set from M-Th. Fridays I follow the same routine in the morning, but work from 9-11am. Then I dress up just like I would be going to work – business suits, makeup and do my hair, spray a bit of my favorite Chanel No. 5 perfume, and then teach from 1-5pm for the summer session (with a 30 min break in-between). After changing into my home clothes after teaching, walk on the balcony, facetime, and Wheel of Fortune (while having dinner), I watch British comedies on DVD – my favorites are Coupling and Keeping up Appearances (7-9pm). Then after 9pm my routine is the same as during M-Th. Saturdays also I do the same in the morning, then in the afternoons I catch up on social media, Facebook, twitter, Instagram etc. read magazines, then the usual evening routine and after Wheel of Fortune I watch a movie from 7-9pm (mostly Bond movies), and after that the routine is the same as during M-Th. Sunday mornings the sane routine, then in the afternoon I watch some TV, read a technical paper, and then dress up again in work clothes and tape videos for conferences or some presentations from around 6-8pm. The from 8-9pm watch a play (e.g., Pride and Prejudice or Mill on the Floss) and then the night-time routine is the same. Also, the extensive travel I have done for the past 25 yrs. (since 1995) has affected my sleep a lot. It got so erratic before COVID-19. There are days I used to sleep from

8pm to 3am and then there are days from 3am to 10am. COVID-19 work from home has given me the opportunity to regulate the sleep and that is crucial. I do hope I can maintain this sleep routine from around midnight to 7am.

Now that I have been following a decent routine for most days (I do slip a day or two here and there and then try my best to get back into the routine), I am really enjoying my day working from home. And I am worried I may not want to go back to face to face work. That's why I try and dress up every day to some extent, and then wear business suits Friday afternoon and Sunday evening for teaching and for video recordings. This way it will not be a huge adjustment when I do get back to face to face work. Dressing up in business suits with matching handbags, earrings and scarfs and shoes and makeup when I go to face to face work is very important to me. But its not easy if you are not used to it and can be stifling. That's why I try to make the distinction between relaxing at home and working at home. One thing I have not done during working from home is color my hair. I want to see how gray I have become during these past 25 years (I started coloring in August 1995 as I turned 40 almost forced by my oldest sister). However, I do use loreal hair color spray before I teach on Fridays and before I make my videos on Sunday. Its now 4 months since I colored my hair (February 12, 2020 last) and may take another 8 months before I find out how gray I am. I don't think I will have the courage to take a photo at that time and post on Facebook.

While I am enjoying my life right now, I am also looking forward to getting back to face to face work and hoping and praying that we have a handle on COVID-19 so that we can get to the new normal as soon as possible. So, what is the lesson I have learned? While COVID has given us the opportunity to do the stuff at work that we have always wanted to do (e.g., reading a text book), it has also given us the opportunity to regulate our life and take care of our health. As I have always said this opportunity may never come again and I hope it never comes again as we do not want another dreadful pandemic.