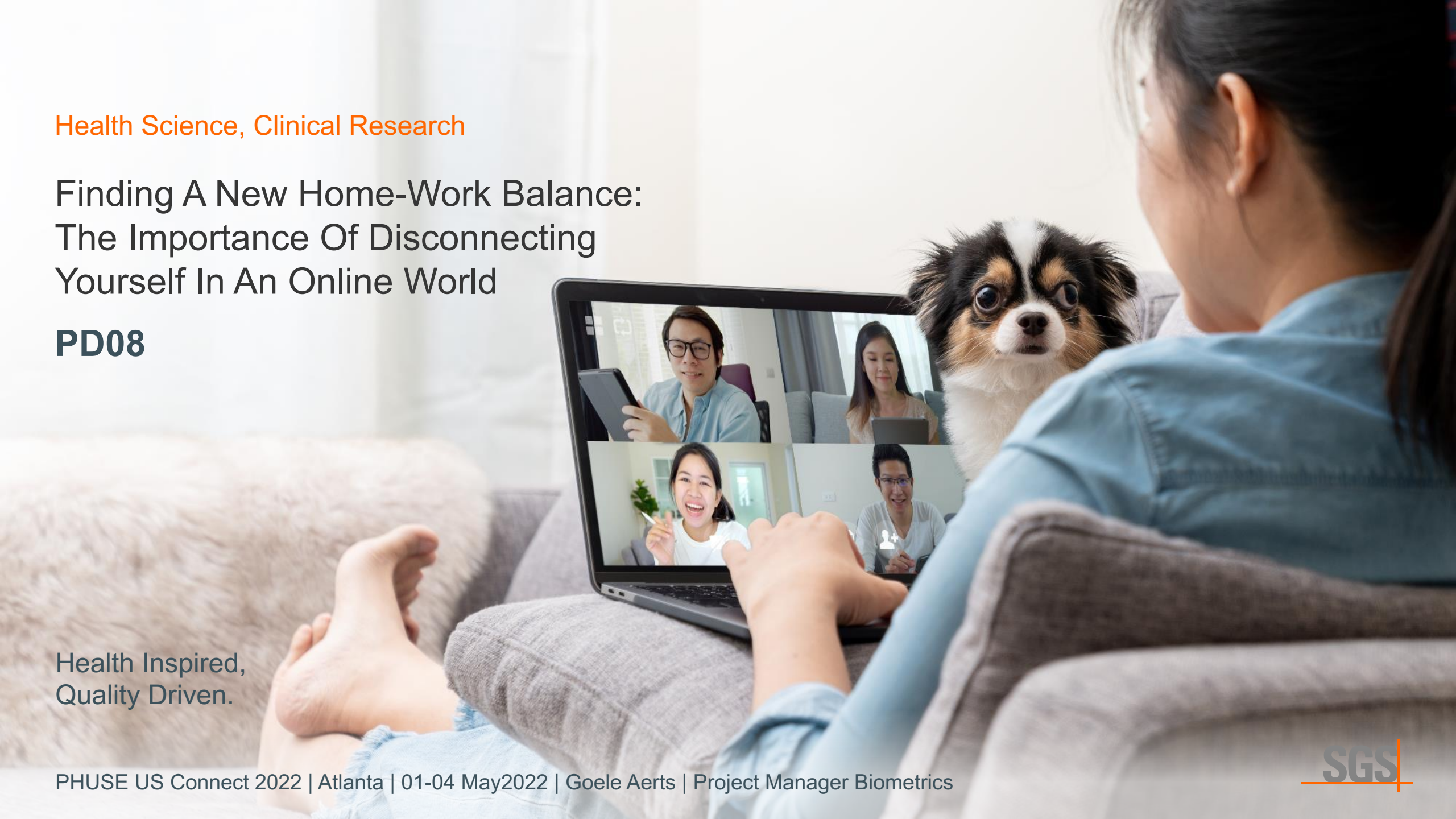


Health Science, Clinical Research

Finding A New Home-Work Balance: The Importance Of Disconnecting Yourself In An Online World

PD08

Health Inspired,
Quality Driven.





Disclaimer and disclosures

The views and opinions expressed in this presentation are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of PHUSE members, respective companies or organizations.

Overview



- Introduction
- My story
- Challenges
- Solutions
- Conclusion
- Future perspective



Introduction

■ **Work-life balance**

- >500K web pages on work-life balance
- No agreed-upon definition
- Workplace/job stress* (US)
 - #1 source of stress
 - #employees sick tripled from 1996 - 2000
 - 1 million employees absent every day
- Even more important since COVID-19

**The American Institute of Stress*



Introduction

■ Disconnecting from work

- 'Right to disconnect' (France – 2001)
- Concept evolved due to digital technologies
- Law in 2017, since essential for health
- Other European countries followed as well

- European study*: employees working long hours doubles when working remotely!

**Eurofound (2020), Telework and ICT-based mobile work: Flexible working in the digital age, New forms of employment series, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg*

Introduction



- **Disconnecting from work and COVID-19**
 - Constant connection:
 - more pressure to continue work after hours
 - more pressure to be available after hours
 - fatigue, anxiety, depression, burnout
 - Canada (COVID-19)*:
Tips on the importance of disconnection from work
 - Ireland (COVID-19)**:
Code of practice on the right to disconnect

*Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety

**Workplace Relations Commission (Ireland)

Introduction

■ Burnout

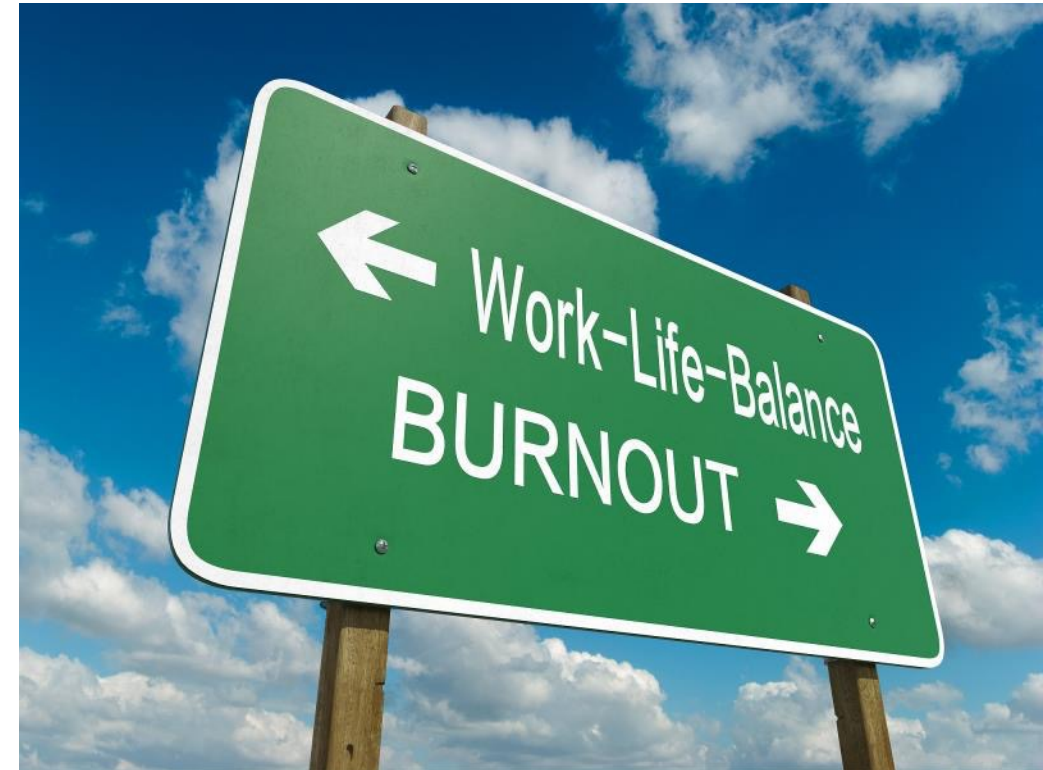
- State of physical and emotional exhaustion
- Recognized as occupational phenomenon (WHO – 2019)

■ Work from home (WFH) burnout

- New reality since COVID-19 pandemic
- 2/3 of US employees experience burnout symptoms due to WFH*
- 1/2 of UK employees experience higher stress levels during COVID-19**

**Study by employment website Indeed (2021)*

**Mentalhealth-uk.org*



My story

Pre COVID-19 situation:

- Project Manager Biometrics (PM BIOM)
- SGS Clinical Research Organisation (BE)
- All biometrics services under one roof
 - DM (including EDC)
 - STAT and PK
 - MW
 - PM BIOM
- Office-based working – exceptionally WFH
- All internal meetings F2F in the office
- Spontaneous *ad hoc* F2F interactions



My story

Situation during COVID-19:

- All SGS functions working from home full time
- All meetings virtual
- No F2F discussions anymore
- No F2F moments
- No workplace routine anymore
 - Kids at home
 - Less social contact





Challenge – Digital Era

- Consumed with endless information – 24/7
- Continuous alerts (cell phone, laptop, smartwatch)

COVID-19 – WFH impact:

- Continuous use of digital tools
 - More work-related apps on non-work devices
 - All meetings online
 - Contacts with friends / family online
- More tempted to check work emails
- Always alerted about work, mind cannot switch 'off'

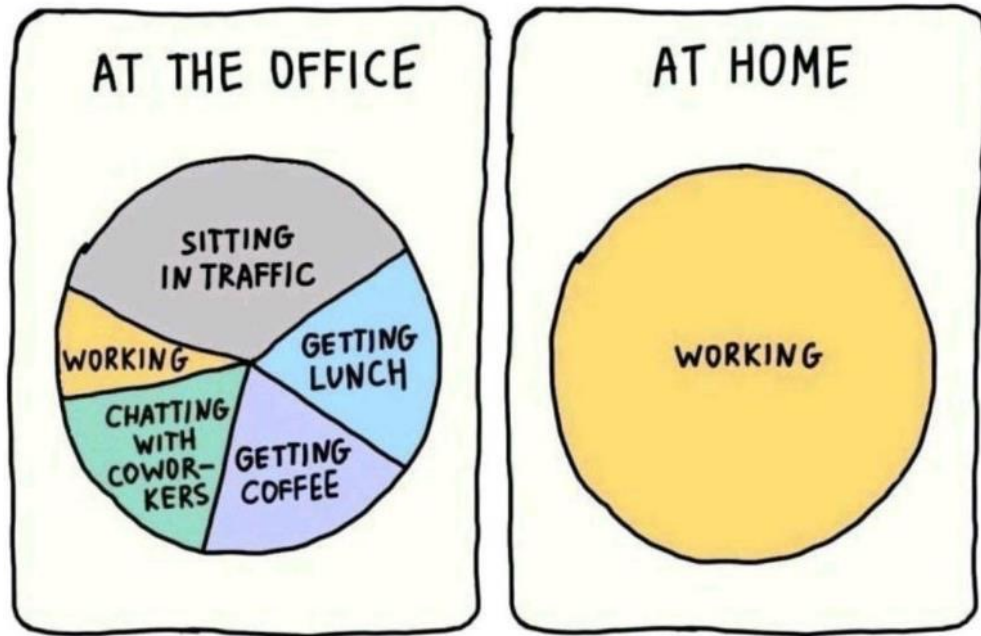
Solutions – Digital Era

- Ban the cell phone from the bedroom
- Use separate devices for work
 - Don't use work laptop after work hours
 - Keep work cell phone solely for work
- If not possible to use separate devices
 - Do not install work related apps on cell phone
- Turn off all alerts related to work emails
 - Email pop-ups in Outlook
 - No email alerts on cell phone / smartwatch



Challenge – Boundaries

working



COVID-19 – WFH impact:

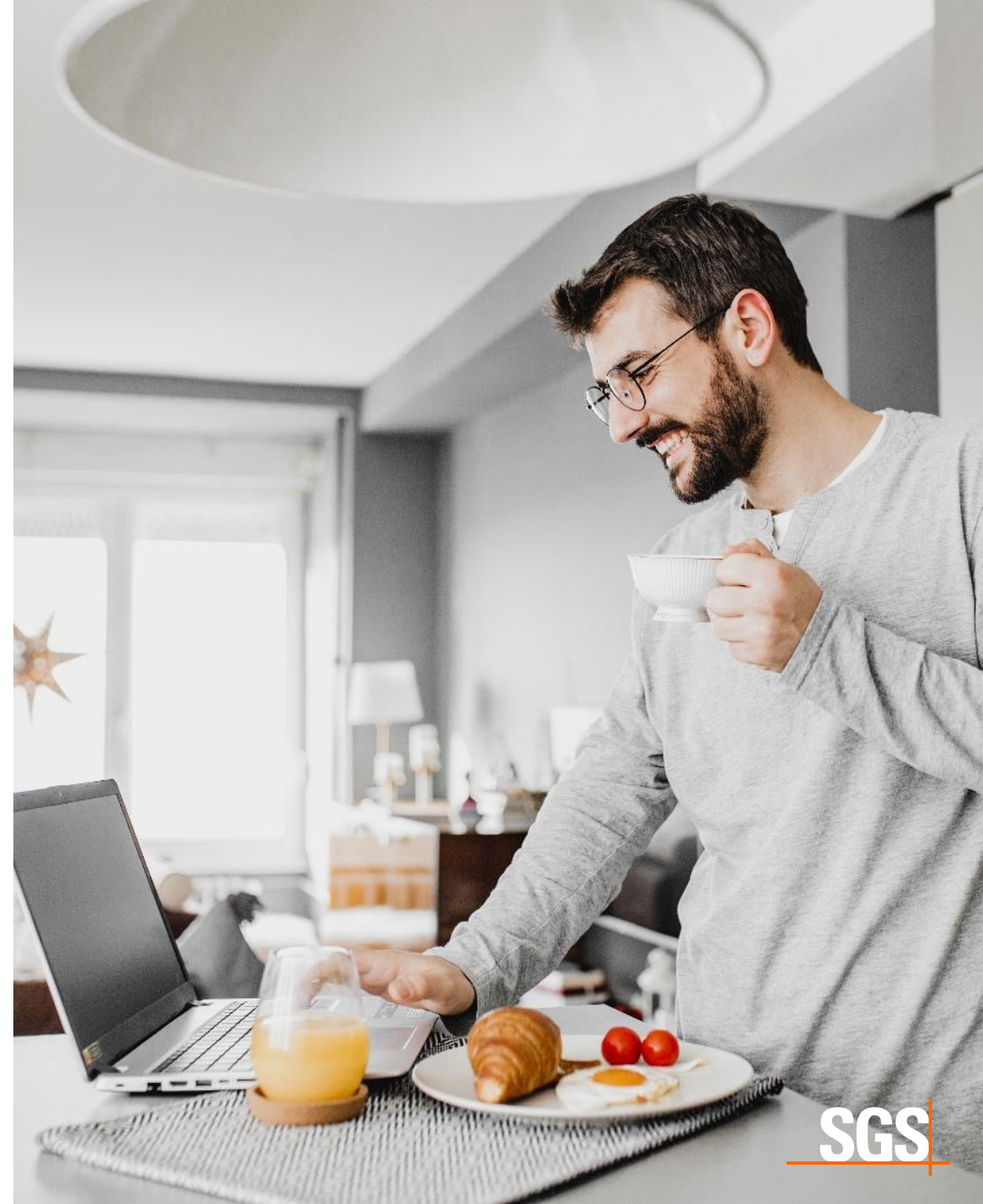
- No '9 to 5' work anymore
- No physical separation between home and work anymore
- No commute anymore
- International CRO → clients/sites across the world

→ Tempted to work longer and during off hours

→ Overcommitment

Solutions – Boundaries

- Create a separate office in your home
- Distinguish between a 'work you' and a 'home you'
- Keep your normal work hours
 - In the evening, shut off your laptop
 - Close the door to your home office
 - No meetings outside working hours
- Use the flexibility to your advantage



Challenge – Moments to disconnect

COVID-19 – WFH impact:

- No short breaks at the coffee machine anymore
- No social interaction with colleagues anymore
- Exercise limited from laptop to kitchen / bathroom

- Less productive, focused and happy
- More stress, anxiety and exhaustion
- Disconnecting moments are crucial to unwind





Solutions – Moments to disconnect

- Build in small moments to disconnect
 - Small breaks every hour
 - At lunch time, go outside
 - After work, exercise to decompress
 - Build up to create a routine
 - Prioritize these disconnecting moments
 - ✓ Decline/reschedule meetings during lunch
 - ✓ Essential to improve problem solving
 - ✓ Essential to improve creative thinking
 - ✓ Essential to minimize burnout

Conclusion

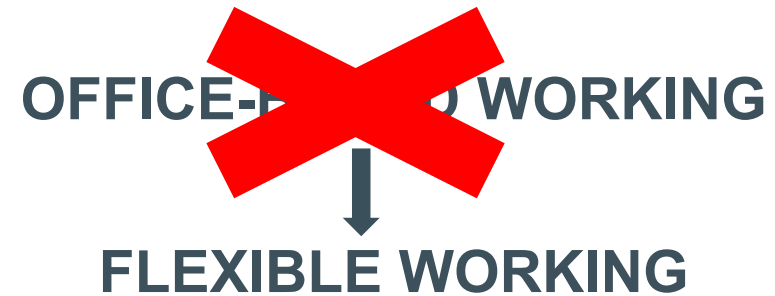
- COVID-19: drastic switch to WFH full-time
 - Challenging in an office-based culture
 - Finding new work routines
 - Creating boundaries and moments to disconnect
 - SGS, an office-based culture, with a strong focus on F2F communication:
 - Employees handled it very well
 - No impact on daily work / quality of deliverables
 - Different reasons attributed to this success

→ Game-changer for the way we work





Future perspective



- Implementation of working from home policy in several companies, incl. SGS
- More productivity
- More flexibility
 - Different working hours
 - Ability of having more focus time at home
- Better work-life balance



Questions?

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