

# ComfortZone

By Rachel Raczk  
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

A joke that emerged in 2020 among the work-from-home crowd goes like this: “We should stop calling it working from home and start calling it living at work.” For many, 2020 marked a year of learning to adjust to working-at-home routines, while handling child care and remote schooling, cabin fever, and the daily stressors of an ongoing global pandemic. Even with social lives on hold, time to get it all done could feel in short supply, and though the vaccines are slowly rolling out now, a definitive end to this routine is still hazy for many. If finding ways to be more efficient and productive deserves a place on your 2021 to do list, here are some strategies that might help.

## Innovate your schedule

If your job doesn't require strict hours, Liz Fosslien, coauthor of “No Hard Feelings: The Secret Power of Embracing Emotions at Work,” recommends restructuring your working hours outside the 9-to-5 standard. “My job involves a lot of writing and I'm way better at [working] early in the morning or late at night,” said Fosslien. “If I want to go for a run in the afternoon or read a book, I will, because I know I will work again from 7 until 10, and I know I'll do my best work and work the fastest.”

Fosslien, who is head of content at Humu, a human resources consultancy, reminds us that we may have lost natural breaks in our day, like before or after meetings or a daily commute. “It's the ‘in between time’ that I loved,” Fosslien says. “That's when you're not actively doing work and your brain can synthesize everything [you've] heard and come up with ways to connect or present those.” Fosslien recommends anyone fortunate to work from home add in a “false commute” at some point (or points) during the day, “Get out of bed and walk around the block twice.”

Or, take a nap. Studies have shown brief naps during the workday can help cognitive performance — brief meaning anywhere from six to 90 minutes. In her 2013 TEDx talk, sleep scientist and author of “Take a Nap! Change Your Life,” Dr. Sara Mednick argues for a midday nap between noon and 4 p.m. Her experiments with both poor and average sleepers found that a 60-minute nap improved work performances as much as a full night's sleep.

## Know your work style

A September Harvard Business School study polled more than 3 million remote workers and found the average workday had increased by 48.5 minutes since the start of pandemic. The study also found an uptick in meetings, and in e-mails sent after hours. So, the workday isn't just longer — it's more taxing.

ON THE JOB

# How to be more efficient and productive working from home

With the boundaries between home and office blurred, here are four tips for working smarter.

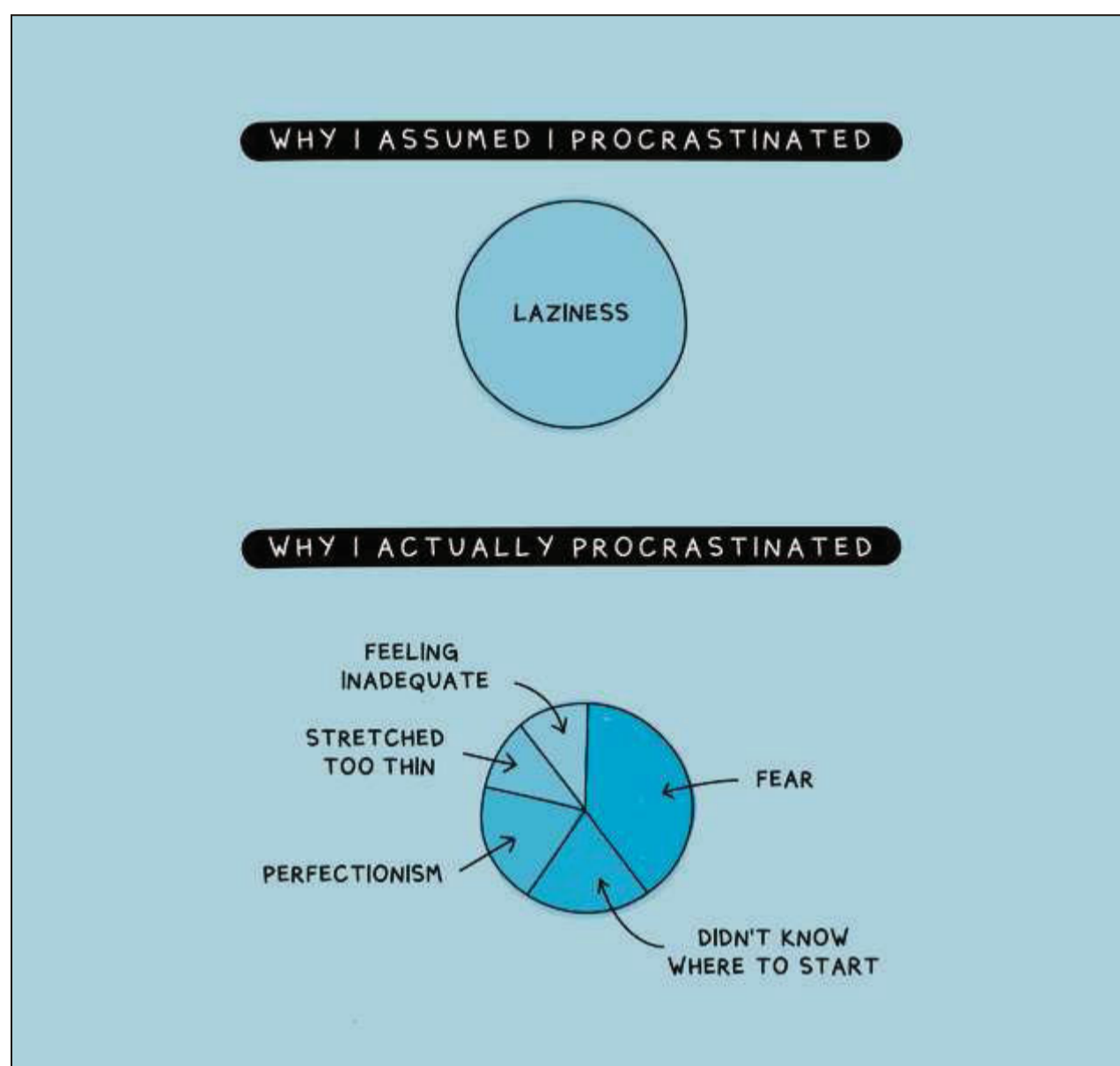


ILLUSTRATION BY LIZ FOSSLIE OF @LIZANDMOLLIE

Mollie West Duffy, Liz Fosslien's coauthor and cofounder of their popular Liz + Mollie social media account (@lizandmollie), says boundary setting around notifications and availability— using the “in a meeting” status on Slack for example — is important. “If people are more OK with doing that and not expecting replies so quickly, there will be more forgiveness.”

Duffy and Fosslien create humor-

ous (and all-too-relatable) illustrations of common workplace stressors. They also host workshops that coach corporate teams on feelings-focused practices, such as “How to be an emotionally fluent leader” and “Combating burnout and building resilience.” “Understanding differences in work styles” was a popular one at the start of the pandemic, says Duffy, who worked in organizational design at global innovation firm IDEO.

Duffy believes defining your work style cultivates productivity. Are you a data-driven introvert with a dislike for large meetings? Or someone who thrives on a team but struggles to focus when working alone? Or a big picture ideator who just can't get organized?

Recognizing work style helps you build in productivity-encouraging habits, like committing to brief but consistent screen breaks to provide

relief from a Zoom-heavy schedule. For Duffy, it's keeping social media off her phone, reading the news only twice a day, and keeping short-term, long-term, and daily to-do lists.

“It's OK if your productivity looks different than other people's,” said Duffy. “But it's not OK not to figure it out.”

## E-mail like an editor

Leadership consultant Nancy Halpern — whose client roster includes Condé Nast and Dow Jones — cites traditional newspaper editor mentality when composing an important e-mail. “The standard rule: cut it in half,” she says.

“When people write too much it's usually with good intent,” Halpern explains. “They think, ‘If I tell them everything I know, then they'll have all the answers and they'll be all set.’ But what they'll really have is a tsunami of information, not knowing what information is critical and what is just an extra detail.”

She says using bullet points, sequencing by importance, and bolding key dates and information can help get your message through in few words. (“Two sentences per point, max.”) Then use a one-sentence summary or takeaway as your subject line. Remember, if recipients need more information, they'll ask.

“Their goal is to extract what they need to know as quickly and painlessly as possible so they can get on with it,” Halpern says.

## Brush up on your Zoom etiquette

While some of us may now consider ourselves Zoom experts, Halpern says a refresher on best practices can help. Small changes can make a video conference more effective, engaging, and, of course, productive.

“When you're on Zoom, you're communicating even when you're not saying anything,” she says. “Are you well-lit? Is your camera cutting off your chin? Do you have a virtual background you think is cool but is actually distracting?” Halpern recommends using Zoom to replicate as close to an in-person interaction as possible, showing your full face in a professional environment. Also, sit up straight — “Posture matters, you can hear it in your voice when you are opening your chest. You sound more confident and clearer.”

Halpern reminds speakers to always use full sentences and break at the end of sentences or commas, allowing colleagues to process information, while consciously adding other voices into the conversation. “Pause and say, ‘I've said a lot, do you have thoughts or questions?’” she says. “Mention people by name, highlight and acknowledge others. It creates that connection and community that we're all longing for right now.”

Rachel Raczk can be reached at [rachel.raczk@globe.com](mailto:rachel.raczk@globe.com).

## NAMES

# Tom Hanks brings star power to inauguration day special

By Diti Kohli  
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

If one person has the power to bring Americans together, it might be . . . Tom Hanks?

The beloved actor will host the prime-time television special Jan. 20, capping off presidential inauguration day for Joe Biden and Kamala Harris. Titled “Celebrating America,” the 90-minute program is poised to feature musical guests Justin Timberlake, Demi Lovato, Ant Clemons, and longtime Democratic supporters Bon Jovi. Additional acts and details will be announced soon.

Produced by Emmy winner Ricky Kirshner, the special is slated for 8:30-10 p.m., hours after the Biden and Harris swearing in ceremony, set to take place on the steps of the Capitol Building. The show will also be streamed live on YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, Twitch, Amazon Prime Video, Microsoft Bing, NewsNOW from Fox, and AT&T DirectTV and U-verse.

The virtual inauguration itself will highlight the strength of democracy, applaud national unity in times of crisis, and celebrate American heroes who emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic, according to a statement from the inaugural committee.

“We have witnessed countless



Tom Hanks, among the first public figures reported to have contracted COVID-19, will host “Celebrating America” on Jan. 20.

heroes this past year step up to the front lines and serve their fellow Americans, so we are telling their stories, spreading their collective light, and celebrating the best of our country and its people with this prime-time program,” inaugural committee CEO Tony Allen said in a statement.

In March, Hanks and his wife, Rita Wilson, were among the first public figures reported to have contracted COVID-19, as the pandemic spread rapidly through the world. Since then, the couple have become champions for front-line workers and encouraged safe practices such as mask wearing and social distancing.

“There's really only three things we can do in order to get to tomorrow: Wear a mask, social distance, wash our hands,” Hanks told People in June. “Those things are so simple, so easy, if anybody cannot find it in themselves to practice those three very basic things — I just think shame on you.”

Earlier in the day, Biden and Harris will take part in a military ceremony, and the new president will attend a wreath-laying with former presidents.

Diti Kohli can be reached at [diti.kohli@globe.com](mailto:diti.kohli@globe.com). Follow her on Twitter @ditikohli.

# Wahlbergs set to serve their burgers down under

By Diti Kohli  
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

The Wahlbergs are carving out an empire down under.

Wahlburgers founders and brothers Mark and Paul Wahlberg announced this week that the fast food franchise would be opening locations in Australia and New Zealand. The chain plans to launch 20 restaurants across the two countries, according to multiple outlets. In fact, Sydney residents could be feasting on Wahlburgers by the city's harbor — Circular Quay — as early as this spring.

“We're starting off the first Monday of 2021 with some exciting news,” the chain wrote on Instagram. “Wahlburgers is making its way to Australia this year! We can't wait to meet our Wahl Family in the land down under.”

It's the newest expansion for the Dorchester natives, Oscar-nominated actor Mark Wahlberg, and his chef brother, Paul, who launched the burger chain in Hingham in 2011.

Some of the new Australian Wahlburgers locations will be movie-themed, propelled by a partnership with United Cinema. Those locations are slated for Sydney, Melbourne, Perth, and Brisbane deal is worth more than \$50 million and



Mark Wahlberg told “A Current Affair” he would consider adding canned beetroot to the menu as Wahlburgers opens Australia and New Zealand locations.

will employ 500 staff members, according to news.com and Daily Mail.

United Cinemas CEO Sam Mustaca told an Australian news site that the partnership is a “perfect fit.”

“We had been following the concept for years,” Mustaca said. “With really great food, beers and a fun atmosphere, we think it's going to be a big hit.”

Hungry customers in Australia will be able to munch on beloved favorites: burgers, shakes, beers, and bunless bowls known as Wahlbowls. But some additions may also be coming. Mark Wahlberg told “A Current Affair” host Leila McKinnon he would consider adding canned beetroot, an Aussie favorite, to the menu. “If that's what people want,” he said.

“My palate has grown a bit,” Wahlberg continued. “I didn't think I liked Vegemite, either, and I had quite a bit of it while I was there.”

As of now, there are more than 50 Wahlburgers locations in the United States, Germany, and Canada.

The Wahlberg brothers made an impact locally ahead of Christmas when they teamed up with Call to Action Clothing and donated 100 meals and 800 hospital gowns to Dorchester's Carney Hospital. Last spring, the family donated almost 30,000 meals to frontline health care workers through their “Whatever-YouNeed” campaign.