

# Home-based Loneliness, is there a cure?

By Teena Rose

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One of the drawbacks of operating a small, home-based business is the continuous loneliness caused from operating the business alone. It can be difficult being the only instrument player in a marching band, but since more and more individuals are seeking the freedom of working from home, solitude is becoming a deeper problem for some.

It's sometimes recommended that individuals who will find it difficult working from home should avoid such a set up; but knowing ways to avoid "home-alone blues" can certainly deter them and give you an atmosphere that you can prosper in.

A common error that home-based professionals make is to avoid taking breaks and downtime. Remember the reasons you gave your family for starting a home business; one was probably to have a more flexible schedule that allowed you to attend school functions or take an afternoon off. Prospering small businesses experience a large degree of burden, so operators can find it difficult to take much-needed R and R within such a demanding daily schedule. Make the time to step away from your desk, even if just for a few minutes several times throughout the day, or turn on the television to relieve your brain from thinking. Taking short or impulsive breaks throughout the day will give you time to rest and regroup before starting your workday again.

Find another small business professional who you can talk to on the phone, by instant message, and can solicit advice from when the occasion arises. Having an ally — a person who is also in the trenches dealing with everyday business — can provide a great support system. Family members and friends can be a good cheering section on the sideline, but they generally lack the information needed to advise on topics such as handling returned checks or advertising. It's better to seek the assistance of someone who has dealt with these problems and can give solid guidance.

Stepping away from your desk can be great, but getting in your car and driving can be much greater. When you reported to a boss, how often were you able to stop and browse at the local department store or pick up a gallon of milk before returning to the office? Working for yourself means that you should have certain freedoms. If your current home business schedule doesn't allow for such luxuries, consider making some structural changes to your business. You started your business so you could work less and make more money, right?

Scheduling meetings or lunch appointments will help break up your week and keep it from being monotonous and boring. Take the initiative by inviting a family member, business acquaintance, or prospect to a nice lunch that will give you face-to-face interaction. Don't be afraid to ask a business associate for feedback on handling select problems or to get how-to advice. Remember, free advice

can go a long way with the objective of freeing up for time for more important things like goofing off.

Taking breaks, seeking a business friend and mentor, or splitting up your days with meetings and appointments can be a perfect cure for home-based loneliness. Incorporate personal time whenever possible, and don't be afraid to let an answering machine do its job. Think of it as "me time" that will make you more productive and avoid that dreaded burnout.

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