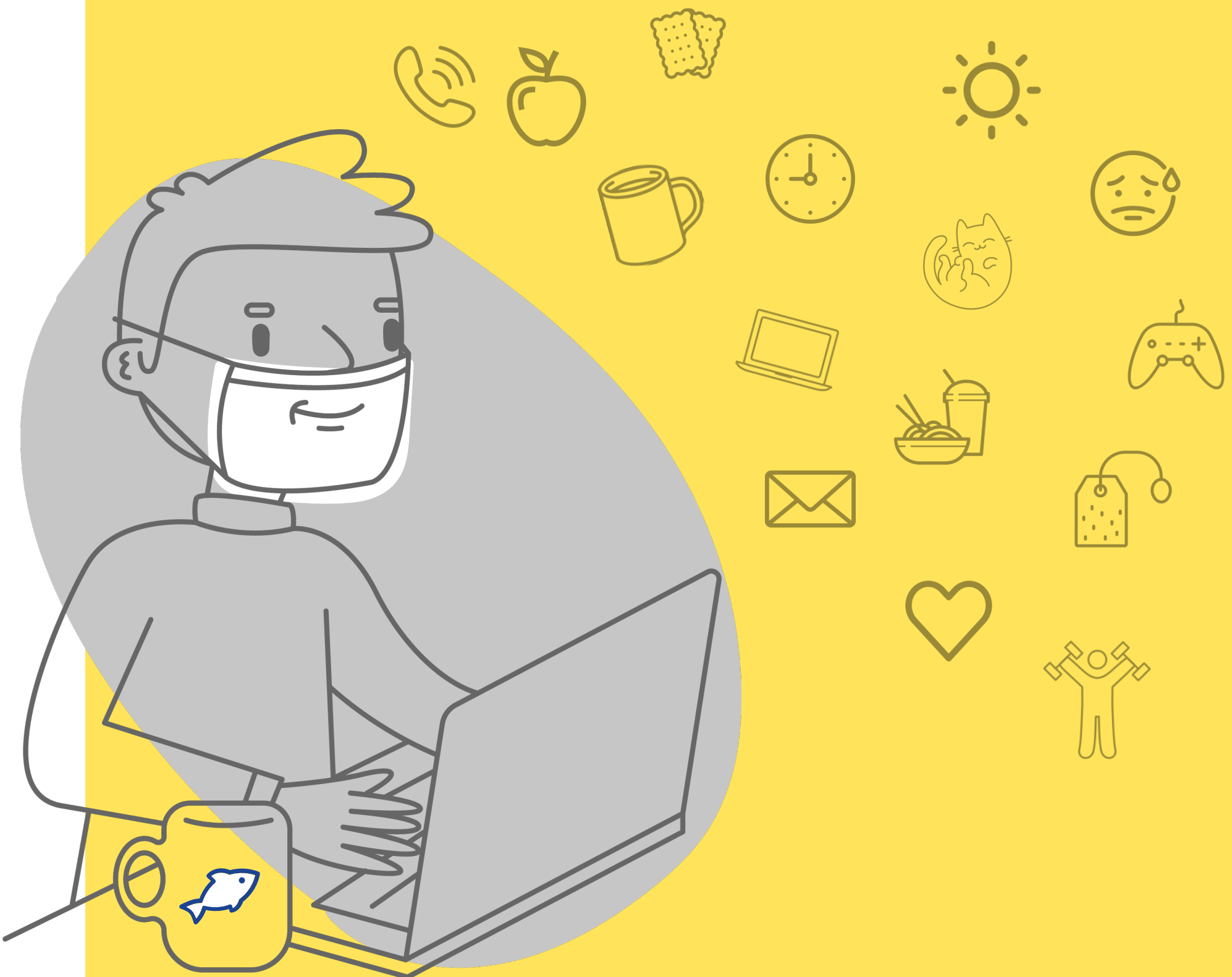


The **Leapers** Little Guide to...

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# Working well from home under lockdown.

The Calm Edition.



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Support and advice from  
**Leapers.co**

# Working from home and coronavirus.

**Let's be clear... right now, we're not "working from home" - we are being "forced to stay at home and trying to continue to work".**

This is very different to choosing to work remotely.

We have been sent home without the essential planning for how to work well from home - businesses have rapidly deployed new technology, commentators are writing guides to "being productive working from home", all against a backdrop of high anxiety and stress.

Many of us may also be taking on homeschooling duties, and naturally we are all worried about many things, such as our income, food and health.

It's a lot.

**So, let's see what we can do to help you lighten the load a little.**



# If you need urgent help

**If you're feeling at immediate risk emotionally or physically:**

**Call NHS on 999  
or Samaritans on 116 123**

If you have already been given a Crisis Line number from a health professional, please call it.

If you're under the care of a mental health team and have a specific care plan that states who to contact when you need urgent care, follow this plan.

Samaritans has a free to call service 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, if you want to talk to someone in confidence. Call them on 116 123.

You can contact NHS 111 if you need urgent care but it's not life threatening.

In a medical emergency call 999 if you are seriously ill or injured and your life is at risk.

A mental health emergency should be taken as seriously as a physical health emergency.

# Essentials.

## Chapter one.

# Give yourself a break.

**We are being bombarded with messages, articles, content, advice and more on what we should and shouldn't be doing.**

100 ways to stay productive working from home. 45 tips for juggling homeschooling and work. Don't work in your PJs. Put a schedule in place.

Do this. Do that.

Right now, all you need to do is look after yourself.

We are likely to be working in this way for a few months, so we don't have to get it right, right away.

Don't expect to be 100% productive.

You've never been 100% productive when you weren't working from home - you won't be now.

There's so much going on.

It's okay to not have a handle on everything.

If you read no further in this booklet, please take this one piece of advice.

Give yourself a break.



# Take a breath.

**With so many rapidly changing situations, it feels like we're all just stepping from minute to minute, day to day at the moment.**

Literally and metaphorically, we're holding our breath.

Stop.  
Take a moment.

Breathe in slowly for 4 seconds.  
Hold the breath for 7 seconds.  
Exhale slowly for 8 seconds.

Do this a few times if you're feeling things are getting too much.



Focusing on your breathing to create some calm is an underlying principle of meditation.

Meditation doesn't have to be 30 minutes of cross-legged monk-like trance - it is accessible, effective, and easy to get started.

There are lots of wonderful guided meditation tools which can help us just slow down a little, and give our minds some space.

Read more at [leapers.co/go/breathe](https://leapers.co/go/breathe)

# Manage your media intake.

**There's so much going on, that a constant stream of updates, rumours and commentary can be overwhelming.**

Consider where you're reading your sources of news, and how often you're reading them.

Ask people to tone down the gossip if you're finding it too much, or mute the whatsapp groups if the notifications get too much.

Don't isolate yourself from communications and information, but carefully consider how much and how often you're dipping in to the updates.



# Eat, drink, sleep, exercise.

**Physical health and mental health are absolutely intertwined - so keeping on top of the absolute basics helps.**

Eat well (lots of green leafy veg, lots of Vitamin D rich foods), drink lots of fluids (ideally not as much caffeine, less alcohol and lots of water) and make use of your daily exercise allowance outdoors.

Make use of the many free resources for indoor exercises, such as Joe Wicks 9am workout for families, or have a search on Youtube.

Sleep is being disrupted for many - try and focus on regularity of sleep, the same time going to bed, the same time getting up.

Get some fresh air and natural light into your home - open a few windows, get a breeze flowing.

And if you're taking medication, don't forget to keep taking the regular dosage. Set an alarm to remind you if you're losing track of the days.





# Healthy boundaries.

**Now you're at home - the boundaries between work and ... not work, are really hard to manage.**

We often had a commute which was the mental switch between the two states, but that has been taken away - so putting in some visceral, emotional and behavioural boundaries really help to allow you to switch off.

**Set a working day:** It can be useful to keep to your normal routine, for example starting at 9am and finishing at 5pm, and not touching your email or slack out of hours.

**Take a commute:** even if you're not allowed to leave the house, find an activity which is your 'journey to/from work'. It might be writing a todo list, listening to a podcast, reading a book - set aside a time to 'switch' between states.

**Take breaks:** schedule in times to step away from work, and have a screen break, stand-up, walk around, shake your legs, call a friend, make a drink. You don't have others who prompt you to take a break right now ("Fancy a cuppa?"), so find a way to remind yourself to do so.

**Respect others:** It is so easy to just do another email, reply to that text, check up on something. Even if you are happy to work all hours, others might not be, so be mindful of what impact your behaviours might have on others.



# How are you doing?

## **Most importantly - listen and share.**

Take time to ask "how are you?" to your colleagues - and listen for the answer.

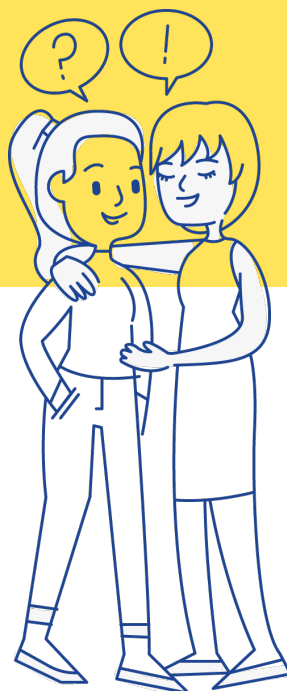
If it's "fine", ask again and listen to the answer. Give people an opportunity to share if they're struggling, and talk it through.

Lead by example and share how you're feeling, so when someone asks you, be honest. If you're struggling, say so.

Often, just the simple act of saying it out loud helps, and helps others know they can be honest if they're struggling too.

If you don't feel comfortable sharing with your team - find others to connect with, non-judgemental online communities like Leapers.

If you are really feeling low or struggling with feelings of isolation, anxiety or panic, there are people who can help - see the end of this guide.



# **Ideas for working well.**

**Chapter two.**

# Do your commute.

OK - this one seems really odd, bear with me.

The commute actually has huge benefits for us - it's a solid block of time where we can just be. Many use it for reading, listening, staying in touch with others, snoozing, daydreaming.

When you work from home - you lose the positive benefits of commuting (but of course gain from not being on a crowded train).

When under isolation - building a 'commute' is really useful - perhaps just a 30 minute window where you give yourself time to do something for you.

Read that magazine. Stare out of the window. Plan a holiday. Play Candy Crush. Text a friend. Listen to a podcast.

Additionally - it creates a create mental switch: from home to work, and from work to home. Putting an activity inbetween helps to create boundaries between working and not-working.

Embrace the mental commute.



# Make some lists.

**The cognitive load (that's a fancy term meaning how much you're dealing with right now) of everything at the moment is higher than usual.**

Even if you're not a "list type of person", getting stuff out of your head and on to paper makes things easier to manage.

**Firstly** - it keeps track of what you want, need and must do, so things don't get forgotten.

**Secondly** - it helps you to prioritise the essential things, including looking after yourself and breaks, rather than just doing the most recently added thing first.

**Thirdly** - when you have a new thing to do, you can add it to the list, but don't have to act upon it straight away, giving yourself space to process.

**Fourthly** - crossing things off a list is pure satisfaction, and you can see the tangible achievements you're making - even when it feels like you're not getting much done.

**Finally** - you can set yourself some limits - just the top few things is probably enough, the rest can wait for another day - or even share the load with others.

**A list about lists. Tick!**



# Get to know each other.

It's going to be strange for a little while - working remotely means there's less likelihood of 'bumping into someone', offers of a cup of tea, or uncovering random facts about your colleagues.

Whether you're a new starter, an established team member, or working as a freelancer - getting to know your fellow humans beyond the task at hand helps reduce feelings of isolation.

Book in some one-on-one chats with teammates, that aren't work focused, but just hanging out.

Use a tool like **Manual of Me** to kickoff a conversation and discover things about your fellow workers that you might not have know about.

Some of these questions are fun (Who would play you in an the movie of your life? What is your nerdiest hobby?), some are important (What else are you juggling at home which you'd like us to be aware of? How can we help in times of stress?), some are useful (How do you like getting feedback? What times of day would you prefer us to let you focus?).

**There's a free weekly question available at [manualof.me/at/home](https://manualof.me/at/home)**



# Actually do some work.

**Yes, we get it - you zoom.**

Just because you're all working remotely does NOT mean you need to be constantly communicating and chatting and running conference calls and status updates and ... oh my gosh.

There's a risk that we're all feeling like we need to over-communicate and see each other all of the time, slack is open constantly, email traffic has increased ten-fold, there are calls, texts, voice messages, video chats, google docs a plenty.



You're allowed to switch it all off and actually get down to doing some work.

If it means blocking out time in a schedule where you're focusing, or telling people you're going to be offline for a while - that's fine. You're being paid to do a job, not being paid to tell people what you're doing.

Managers: let your people breathe and trust them to do the work.

Don't swap presenteeism for over-communication.

They are juggling way more than ever before, and possibly a whole load of things you don't know behind the laptop.

# Slack off and schedule in socials.

## Don't make it all about work.

We are not robots - but beings with emotional needs and fluctuating energy levels.

Taking breaks helps us to be more productive, more creative, more healthy.

Switch the slack off, and slack off.

Read a book, catchup on some training, walk around a little bit.

There's also plenty of time during the working day where your interactions with others are not work related.

Making a cup of tea for someone else, waiting at the printer, standing at the lifts - all of these small microinteractions are essential for a sense of belonging, but are lacking when we're remote. So put them back in.

Schedule at time in the morning for a team catchup - that first bit of banter you have in the morning, before you get stuck in to work; put something in mid-afternoon over a cup of tea to just chat about nothing; spend lunch breaks with others over skype or google hangouts.





# Rethink realtime.

**We're going to need to rethink what our tools are used for.**

Not all tasks we need to undertake right now are best suited to typing and texting.

If you need to have a conversation about how you're feeling, consider a phone call.

If you're not feeling up to video, that's fine, you're allowed to keep it switched off.

Realtime tools are amazing, but sometimes you need to consider your thoughts and writing might be better.

Ask to submit a written response to a request if you find it easier, or offer that others can take their time to write, rather than jump on a video call.



Open a window. Both physically and virtually. Getting some fresh air in to your home can really help with the feeling of being stuck indoors. But you can also share your view with others. Find someone on the other side of the world, and ask them to show you out of their window.

Think about how digital can unlock different ways of interacting, beyond the obvious.

# Advice for Parents

We know that right now, juggling homeschooling and work is, well, lets admit it, not possible.

Some things have to give.

**Talk to your boss** - explain your home situation, and discuss a way which allows you to balance time with family, and time with work. Perhaps this is reduced hours, or a flexible working pattern, or simply just respecting that you cannot work all day.

**Create a routine** - find a new schedule where you're creating space for family, space for work, and space for you. We know this isn't easy, but a routine can help everyone understand.

**Tasks to engage** - there are so many amazing resources and activities which have been shared for kids to spend time doing. Make full use of them, and let your kids play.

**Use the community** - lean on wonderful supportive communities like **Doing it for the kids**, for advice, resources and connecting with other parents.

**Don't aim for superparent** - give yourself a break, and be kind to yourself. You're already doing an amazing job under hard circumstances. Bravo.

Visit <https://doingitforthekids.net> for more.



# **Longer term.**

## **Chapter three.**

# Pause, then plan.

**Once we've worked through the initial disruption and change that coronavirus is creating, once things have calmed down a little, we'll need to start putting longer term plans in place.**

Maybe not now - right now, you might feel like you just need to press pause - that's okay.

But when you feel ready and able, start to think longer term about how you can continue to work well from home.

What changes will you need to make?  
What impact could it long term?  
Will you need to redesign what you do and how you do it?

Regardless of how you work, whether self-employed or under employment, we all will need to think ahead about what changes we might need to make.

If you're self-employed, you will need to return to your business plan, and may need to build a new approach sustaining your business.

Having a plan place in helps put your mind rest, so if you're spinning out of control a little, you can return to your plan, and look at what needs doing next.



# Manage your money.

**Don't panic** - don't make significant changes immediately. Take some time to understand what your options are, and look ahead to act with a calm head.

**Look at your situation** - get a clear understanding of what your current financial situation is - are you able to cover income for a day, a week, a month? Review your accounts and get the real picture.

**Reduce your outgoings** - do what you can to reduce any unnecessary spending, chuck out any subscriptions or put pauses on non-essential purchases.

**Diversify your offering** - if you're self-employed, look to add tangible offerings which extend what you can sell, and move your business where possible online. There's no shame in marketing your services right now.

**Understand what's available** - read up on what financial support is available to you, Money Saving Expert is reliably the most simple and up to date source for what support government is providing.

<http://moneysavingexpert.com/>



# Build new behaviours.

**You're in control of your work environment now - which means you'll need to think carefully about your workplace and your behaviours.**

Not only where you work, but how you work and how you engage with work.

Lots of the normal 'routines' and external nudges on how you behave will no longer be present, so you need to put routines back in place.

But don't just think about productive working, try and focus on working well.

This means:

- + being mentally and physically fit
- + being supported
- + being connected
- + being motivated
- + being developed
- + being productive

We'll be publishing additional content to support working well over the coming months for both individuals, employers and the self-employed.



# Keep track of how you're doing.

**Most importantly - don't forget to keep looking after yourself.**

Keep a journal in a notebook on your mental form, or use an online tool.

Join a community where you can share how you're doing.

Reflect on what's causing lower mood, and what improves things.

Build behaviours to maintain positive mental health.



No matter how you're employed, where you work, what you do - your mental health is an essential foundation that enables you to work well.

If you're employed, your employer has, under law, a responsibility to support you and your mental health, and not do things to negatively impact upon it.

If you're self-employed, you have to take that responsibility on yourself - but you don't have to do it alone.

We're here to support you too.

**And  
finally...**

**Chapter four.**



# Remember, it's not forever.

Whilst quarantine can be challenging, remember this is not forever.

Whilst it isn't clear yet when we'll be able to return to work, reminding yourself that this is temporary is really important.

We'll get through this together.

## **Additional Helpful Resources:**

We're compiling useful links and resources which you may find useful at:

**<http://leapers.co/go/coronavirus>**



## About the Author

Matthew Knight is a community host at Leapers, and advocate for the mental health of the self-employed. Based in London, Matthew is a father of two, and drinks an inordinate amount of coffee.

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Matthew Knight hereby asserts his right to be identified as the author of "The Leapers little guide to working well from home under self-isolation - second edition"

[www.leapers.co/go/coronavirus](http://www.leapers.co/go/coronavirus)

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for anyone who wants to work differently.

Founded in 2017, we've welcomed over 2800  
members, and supported over 30,000 visitors.

We offer a **community of peer-support, create  
tangible things that help, and guide those who  
hire freelancers** to help us all work well together.

We're the team for people without a team - if  
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