

## Work, relationships, isolation: how to navigate new normal

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Living and working at home can create a unique set of problems for couples.

HOMES across the Northern Rivers are becoming mini-offices as people work remotely during the coronavirus pandemic.

It's a unique situation which comes with a unique set of challenges; working from home can blur a personal and professional boundary and affect relationships.

Steve Marriott, a counsellor who works with Northern Rivers couples, said this time can differ for couples depending on their personality.

"If one person prefers more togetherness and the other more separateness, being forced together may amplify tensions and can lead to an unhealthy pursue/distance pattern," Mr Marriott said.

Mr Marriott said the lack of barriers created by the isolation can be a testing time for couples and families combined.

"Without the everyday stress buffers we all have like time alone, time with friends, our separate work lives, exercising and kids at school, home and relationships can start to feel like a pressure cooker," Mr Marriott said.

However, Mr Marriott said life does not have to be a pressure cooker as long as you employ some simple strategies to ease the load.

"Couples can start an ongoing dialogue about how to pre-empt and address individual and relationship challenges before they arise, to reflect on their own needs for individuality and togetherness and how they can collaboratively support each others needs," Mr Marriott said.

"They can develop daily structures to find a work/home balance, and schedule regular meetings to make decisions together and get on the same page.

"These proactive communication ideas can reduce misunderstandings, you can feel more united, and generally reduces conflict.

"And with less conflict, that can create more space for connection and positivity."

For those in need of counselling services during this time, Steve Marriott can be contacted on 0429 190210.

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