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WOMEN@WORK

If you had told me in March 2020 that I'd still be working from home today, I'd have thought you were crazy. I clearly remember walking out of my office thinking I'd probably be away for just a few weeks, so I took only a few files with me.

This winter, some of us in the legal profession have already returned to the office, while many others are in the process of getting ready to return. Some are excited, while others are experiencing trepidation. We have suffered tragedies during the pandemic, both individually and collectively. Against this backdrop, it is normal to have mixed feelings about what lies ahead.

As I prepared to return to the office, I reflected on what I learned while working 100% remotely. I remember telling my daughters in the early days of the pandemic that while things looked bleak, one day we would look back and realize the time was unique. I told them, to the extent we could, we should make our time memorable and focus on the silver linings.

For me, there were many silver linings. There was spending time with my daughters. All three of them were able to take their classes remotely for most of the pandemic. That meant that we had endless game nights and made and ate dinner together almost every night. (As my youngest daughter joked, the family time the pandemic provided was my "greatest dream come true.")

During the pandemic my father became ill, and working remotely allowed me to stay with and help the family. It also meant that when one of my daughters needed help moving back to college, I was able to stay with her for a few extra days. I became so proficient at working remotely I found myself able to work almost anywhere.

Working remotely allowed me to take walks in the middle of the day, wear yoga pants regularly, and even throw in a load of laundry between conference calls.

And while I'm grateful for all of these things, I also see the silver linings in returning to the office.

I'm looking forward to more connection and collaboration. I missed being around people outside



BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

Reflect on pandemic knowledge as you return to the office

By CAMILLE KHODADAD

of my family. As humans, we are social beings who crave connection. While I knew I could call my colleagues anytime, I missed seeing them pass by my office and spontaneously starting a conversation to solve difficult client issues. I also missed keeping up with what's going on in their lives. Let's be honest, Zoom meetings and phone calls are convenient, but they can't replace the feeling of being face-to-face with other people.

Restoring the boundary between work and home also is a benefit. Rolling out of bed and immediately logging into my computer and not having a transition between work and personal time took its toll. Days and nights, as well as weekdays and weekends, all became blurred. Getting ready for work and taking the train were always good buffers between work and home (not to suggest that we didn't all work from home in the evenings and on weekends pre-pandemic).

I even missed the walks from the train station to the office. While I always told myself that if I worked from home I would exercise every day, that did not exactly happen. Many days, I found myself glued to my screen the entire day and never even left the house.

The past 20-plus months have been complex. We have collectively experienced moments of anguish and moments of joy. As businesses and employees navigate the return to the office, I believe we'll continue to see those complexities, but I expect we'll also keep finding the silver linings peeking through. CL

Camille Khodadad is a principal in the labor and employment and litigation and dispute resolution practice groups at Much Shelist. She is a frequent speaker on current trends in employment law and issues pertaining to women in the workplace.
ckhodadad@muchshelist.com