

# Stay the f\*\*\* at Home: Does your boss insist you come to work?



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**Imagine** the following scenario. You recognise the importance of physical distancing in these times (I prefer physical distancing even though it is referred to as social distancing as we all need social connections to survive) to stem the spread of the virus. You are a responsible citizen and would like to do the right thing and stay home. Yet, your reporting manager insists on you being at work. This could be due to a combination of reasons - face time culture, micromanagement or other reasons. Staying at home does not mean any loss of productivity, at least from your perspective. You are certain that your work can be accomplished efficiently and effectively at home. How would you handle this situation?

**Reframe** the problem. Think of you practicing physical distancing as an altruistic act. You are protecting others by not going to work. This is especially true if your

workplace design makes distancing hard. You do not want to be the vector of transmission especially because you may be a carrier even if you have mild to no symptoms. You are acting responsibly by staying home. Such a reframing will allow you to see alternatives of how you could approach and convince your manager to allow you to work from home.

**Here are some alternatives to consider:**

1. Ask them if you can work from home for a few days to begin with and demonstrate that your productivity is not going down and you are meeting all expectations.
2. Tell them that you do not feel safe coming in to work and you work better when you do
3. Even if you have very mild symptoms, let them know you do. Then tell them that you want to make sure you protect them from any possible transmission

**Here are some more options that are more aggressive in nature:**

1. Speak with the Human Resources in your organization and ask them what their policy is. They may still be grappling with the new emerging situation. See if you can get them to provide directives that employees can work from home as long as their productivity is not going to suffer
2. Consider having a skip-level conversation with your boss' supervisor. Maybe they are more reasonable and may use some means to persuade your boss
3. If these fail, consider getting a medical certificate if you are feeling even mildly unwell with an online medical service provider (Going to see them in person may stress the system if your symptoms are mild). You can use this to let your boss and Human Resources know that you are not feeling well and may infect others if you come in to work.

Remember that your first identity in these times is to be a responsible human being by not being a vector of transmission. Productivity, business goals all of these come later. We have come to accept these terms as the holy grail of our existence. Your humanity comes first. Business can wait for a bit.