

Working Remotely: Tip of the Week

Why Do We Experience Zoom Drain?

2 of a 3-part series focusing on virtual meeting fatigue

You may have implemented a suggestion or more from the last Tip of the Week about how to manage your energy for Zoom and other virtual meetings. Today, learn why we feel the Zoom Drain more than when we participated in face-to-face meetings.

Why, oh Why?

On a video call the only way to show we're paying attention is to look at the camera. Having to engage in a "constant gaze" makes us uncomfortable — and tired. In person, we can use our peripheral vision to glance out the window or at our papers. On a video call, if we look out a window, it might seem like we're not paying attention. We make more emotional effort to appear interested, and in the absence of many non-verbal cues, the intense focus on words and sustained eye contact is exhausting.

Also, when you're sitting in a conference room, you can rely on whispered side exchanges to catch you up if you get distracted or answer questions. During a video call, however, it's impossible to do so unless you use the private chat feature or try to find a moment to unmute and ask a colleague to repeat themselves. The problem isn't helped by the fact that video calls make it easier than ever to lose focus. We've all done it: we think we can listen intently, check our email, text a friend, and post a smiley face on Instagram within the same thirty seconds. Except, of course, we don't end up doing much listening at all when we're distracted.

Interactions in virtual meetings are more intentional, less spontaneous, and more reliant on a "leader." Gaps in conversations can seem unnatural and may cause some people to feel that they have to speak, while others remain invisible. The gaps can cause stress either way.

Perhaps the most disorienting feature of virtual calls is that we see ourselves—every wrinkle, hair out of place, and expression. We also see everyone else in a lineup, which does not happen in a conference room. We do not see others who sit on the same side of the table and we never see ourselves (except if a mirror is in the room opposite us at viewing level!). Being on view to others and ourselves makes our brain fatigued and stressed after time.

Finally, we are not connecting only to one or two virtual meetings. We're also finding ways to ask our loved ones not to disturb us or tuning them out as they crawl across the floor to grab their headphones off the dining table. Or, they (and animals) don't mind being on screen and while that may be entertaining for a while, it becomes distracting over time. For those who don't have a private space to work, it can be challenging.

Whew! No wonder we are fatigued. Try using the tips listed in Part 1 of this series to help prepare for your day, reduce your fatigue, and aim for wellness and balance. And, watch for the November 2 Tip of the Week for a few ideas of how to capture the best of both modes.

Going further...

If you are interested to chat or have questions about today's tip, join in an informal gathering with

other MC colleagues. Register in MC Learns, choose the personal development learning category, and click on “**Zoom Room**” to obtain the Zoom link for Thursday, Oct. 22, 1:30-2:30 p.m., to continue learning about the Tip of the Week topic.

For more Tips on working remotely, please visit <https://bit.ly/mc-remote-working-e> and watch for the next tip on Monday, November 2.

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