



Grande Prairie Volunteer Services Bureau WEEKLY SANE-ITIZER

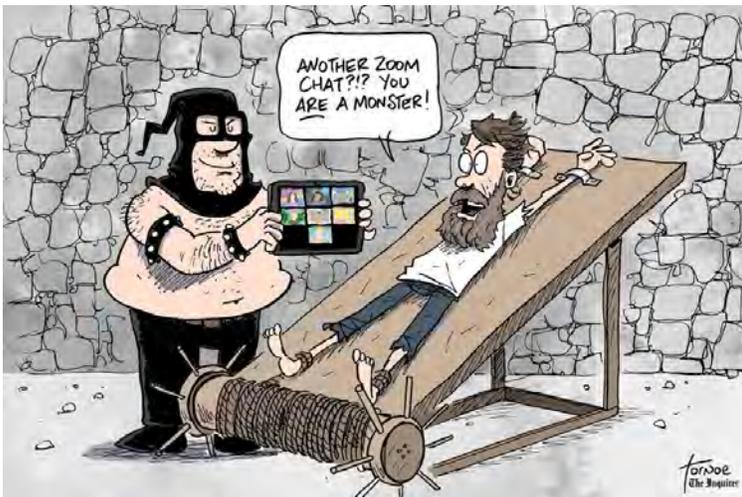


Helpful information for Not-for-Profits, Individuals and Businesses during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

The Employer's Kitchen - *creating ideas just for you!*



I have never been a fan of meetings. So much so that for several decades I simply have refused to attend meetings, conferences, workshops or any other gathering of groups outside of the community I work and live in unless it is mandatory: as in 'tied to funding.' I'm not going to lose even more time travelling just to attend a meeting that may or may not prove to be productive. So you would think then that virtual meetings would be the perfect solution for someone like me. Yeah, not so much!



Setting up for a 'virtual meeting' is like playing a mutant form of RISK. If you are from my generation you will totally understand this. It requires strategy, long-range thinking, firm resolve and a do or die attitude.

My long suffering, ever patient, admin assistant has the thankless task of setting up the electronic gizmos for whatever meeting that I have to be involved in, fortunately these are few. She plugs in things, tests things and stays in the room to trouble shoot. Ever notice how the mute and video button simply disappears off your screen when it is your turn to talk. "Hit the button" she says. What button, where? "Hover over it." Really, hover? Only hummingbirds and helicopters hover.

"Delays on phone or conferencing systems of 1.2 seconds made people perceive the responder as less friendly or focused" International Journal of Human-Computer Studies

With virtual in the mix now we have to worry about things including: invites, links, broken links, mute buttons, video buttons, how to make eye contact, buzzing sounds, echoing, background views, being hacked and a thing called ZOOM Fatigue. Most of the people I know, including myself have enough fatigue, why are we adding more?

Through out history meetings have played a part in building nations and civilizations. They are an integral part of how we manage our businesses, make decisions and a communication tool that is understood at every level of society across the world. Meetings have value when they work.

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Setting up a successful meeting entails planning:

- Have an agenda – be realistic
- Require Minutes – no point in having a meeting if you don't have written reminders of what was decided
- Limit the time - Studies show that participants have better focus and make better decisions if a meeting is limited to a maximum of two hours. After two hours, energy is drained and agendas can be sidetracked.
- Define the meeting's Purpose – nothing worse than sitting in a meeting and no-one is sure why they are there.
- Ensure Documents are previewed before starting – send out in advance and make it the responsibility of the participants to read them before the meeting. If people haven't read

them well they will have to catch up. If you haven't sent them out beforehand, then that's on you.

- Thank everyone for attending – common courtesy costs you nothing and means everything.
- Make sure it is chaired – keep the meeting on track, there's nothing worse than a meeting that meanders, remember that's time you will never get back. CAP

<https://blog.meetingpackage.com/breaking-down-meetings-change-throughout-history>

<https://hbr.org/2020/04/how-to-combat-zoom-fatigue>

<https://www.bbc.com/worklife/article/20200421-why-zoom-video-chats-are-so-exhausting>



Is your Organization prepared to meet the new health & safety regulations to protect your staff and clients?

Have a Hazard Assessment developed by a trained Occupational Health and Safety Consultant!

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For more information and to book your assessment call 780-538-2727 or email programs@volunteergp.com



"Obviously, we need to readjust to in-office meetings."

Source: Shannon Wheeler - cartooncollections.com

DAD JOKES!

What is brown and sticky? A Stick.

What's the difference between the bird flu and the swine flu?
One requires tweetment and the other an oinkment

If you can smile when things go wrong, you have someone in mind to blame.

The time I got a universal remote control I thought to myself,
"This changes everything."

A mushroom walks in a bar, he asks the bartender for a beer. The bartender says "why should I give you a bee?" The mushroom replies, "Because I'm a fungi."



How VR Makes Us More Collaborative

by Lyron Bentovim, CEO & Co-Founder of The Glimpse Group



Businesses can successfully make the remote transition, but moving online is just the beginning. While the first few months of remote work may seem normal, companies will feel long-term pains if they neglect to enhance their approach. Remote work involves more than having a laptop and an internet connection. By removing ourselves from a shared working environment, we miss out on the efforts to build a community that makes tough, strategic decisions. Rather than fostering a company culture, employees stay stagnant and work in separated silos.

Over the last 3 months my entire office has been remote and we're boosting our productivity levels. What's our secret? Virtual Reality.

While some may roll their eyes when I discuss the employee benefits of spending time in VR, executives need to leave their dispositions behind. Now is the time to focus on the long term. The future of remote work is here. By making the short-term investment now, companies will reap immense gains in the future. Tech Pro Research reports that 47% of businesses are considering adopting VR. Why? VR solves the collaboration and interconnectivity issues that traditional distance-based methods often encounter.

Issues with Traditional Distance-Based Methods

Many of our meetings are hosted through video-conferencing apps. This is definitely an improvement from only hearing each other's voices. Having that visual puts a face to our clients or teammates. But, as we spend countless hours in these "Brady Bunch style" meetings, distractions and fatigue prevent us from becoming fully engaged.

"Zoom fatigue" occurs when we're unable to adjust to

the difficulty in reading body language, non-verbal cues, and silences through a camera lens. This is much easier to read in real life.

How VR Solves Remote Connectivity Headaches

VR is immersive by nature, and it eliminates distraction by replacing the real world with a productivity optimized virtual environment. No longer are we awkwardly interrupting one another or staring mindlessly at a small sea of faces. VR reduces the fatigue from video conferencing because we don't have to focus extra hard on subtle cues only visible through a small, sometimes laggy 2D screen. When my employees are in VR, we are in a shared space. We feel present and focused.

New Realm of Collaborative Possibilities

The interactive nature of VR provides a platform for collaborative content creation. With 3D models, we can share realistic product renderings. We can also collaborate on virtual white boards or switch out the boardroom for any environment of our imagination.

Not only does VR offer these seamless tools, but it is also more engaging for people because it brings a sense of fun often missing in remote teams. This 3D environment allows us to become fully present because it generates the feeling of being in the same room with our peers—a feeling no video conference or phone call can emulate. Feeling present implies that our remote teams can now truly focus on collaborating within the space as it fosters more in-depth and serious discussions.

VR Creates Better Remote Work, Today

We live in 3D and we need to work in the same way. Hiding behind a laptop screen can only take people so far. Instead of staying stagnant, we need dynamic, attention-grabbing interactions. Companies—especially companies that plan to stay remote until 2021—need to add VR to their work arsenal. Those that fail to innovate will notice an uptick in lackluster ideas and disengaged employees.

[Source: <https://telecomreseller.com/2020/06/22/how-vr-makes-us-more-collaborative/>]



4 Signs You Have “Zoom Fatigue” (and What You Can Do About It)

by Matt Dodge



Have you begun to dread the start of another video call? You're not the only one. The dramatic increase in

video calls and virtual meetings as millions of people work from home seems like a great benefit for remote employees, but it is not without its drawbacks. “Zoom fatigue”, named for one of the most popular video call programs, is a real problem having negative effects on workplace communication. Managers and workers need to learn some of the signs of “Zoom fatigue” and what we can do about it in order to maintain a supportive and collaborative virtual workplace.

The Sign: Sore Eyes

Do you start to feel an irritated or painful sensation in your eyes after you're done with a video call? Or even before you finish the call? Sore eyes and vision problems have already been real issues for people who work on computers all day, and the sudden proliferation of video calls has only helped to exacerbate it. Our eyes simply were not designed to stare at screens all day everyday, and doing so can lead to unpleasant symptoms including:

- Headaches and migraines
- Eye irritation and pain
- Blurred and double vision
- Excessive tearing and blinking

The official term is Computer Vision Syndrome, caused by the hard-physical demands that too much screen time places on our eyes. If not taken seriously, this can lead to chronic discomfort and vision problems.

The Solution: The 20-20-20 Method (and Rest)

One simple method to combat this issue is to force our eyes to take a much-needed break, which can be accomplished using the 20-20-20 method. For every 20 minutes you stare at a screen, stare at something else 20 feet away, for a total of 20 seconds. This forces our eyes to re-adjust and relax, giving our vision a moment to recover before focusing back on the computer. Even while working from home, it's still important for our physical and mental well-being to take breaks throughout the workday. Before your next video call, try using the 20-20-20 method so that your eyes will be as rested as possible before getting started.

The Sign: A Lack of Focus

Another sign is finding it difficult to focus during a video call and keep track of what is being discussed. Issues with focus are common problems that must be addressed in all types of business meetings, not just those happening over video calls. Business meetings have long been cited as unproductive because they take away valuable time from employees, disrupting the thought process and causing unnecessary delays when they have to refocus after a meeting is over. A virtual meeting runs the same risk, leaving employees to scramble the moment the video call ends in order to get back in the correct headspace for work.

The Solution: Schedules and Itineraries

The best way to push back against unfocused meetings is to create a firm schedule and itinerary. It is up to managers to spend the time before a video call to determine what topics need to be brought up and how they will be addressed. A good schedule doesn't necessarily have to have things coordinated down to the minute, but it should provide an outline and structure. Once managers have completed the schedule, they should send it out to every employee participating in the video call before it starts, along with any important information. When employees have the time to review the itinerary and process info that will be discussed, it greatly reduces the chances of meetings going off track and using up too much time explaining the same points again and again.

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The Sign: Can't Get A Word In

Properly organized work meetings will also promote a strong workplace community. A strong and supportive work environment is one where every employee is free to speak their mind. If work meetings, via video calls or otherwise, are not conducive to employees having a chance to speak and be heard it will only lead to unhappy and unsatisfied workers. If an employee spends an entire video call waiting for a chance to talk, only to constantly see someone in another box on the screen jump in, they will become annoyed, frustrated, and fatigued.

The Solution: Smaller Meetings

An effective solution is to limit the size of video calls and online meetings. As anyone who has attended a large meeting or conference knows, it's far too easy to become just another face in the crowd. Research backs this up, with studies showing that the most effective meetings are those with fewer than 10 participants. Keeping meetings small is a way to give employees the opportunity to speak their mind and know that they have a voice. Of course, sometimes it is necessary to talk to a large number of employees at once, but many video calling programs offer the ability to create smaller groups during a meeting — Zoom's breakout rooms for example. Managers need to be proactive in breaking apart big virtual meetings into smaller groups because it makes it far easier for every employee to stay involved and engaged.

The Sign: Generally Exhausted with Video Calls

For millions of people now working from home, video calls and virtual meetings have become the new normal overnight, with all the difficulties that come with them. Computer glitches, dropped connections, spotty Wi-Fi, constant app, and software updates, and those are just the technical issues. Video calls make us communicate in different ways with prolonged eye contact, a lack of body gestures and an increased need for facial expressions, all while forcing us to stay in relatively the same spot. The result is that video calls do require more brain power because it is a different form of communication than what we are used to. Non-verbal cues and body

language make up a huge portion of communication, and video calls make it significantly more difficult to pick up on these things.



The Solution: Patience

Unfortunately, there is no easy solution for this problem, except for all of us to be patient with each other. Adapting to these new routines is an ongoing process. Our brains like patterns and finds comfort in them and having our familiar work routines upended will of course cause stress and anxiety. It's still important to have meetings, stay in contact with our colleagues and continue to collaborate, and it's a huge benefit that technology allows us to do this. We just have to remember that relearning to work together in this new way takes time, more than just a few weeks. There are clearly many people who find themselves exhausted after so many video calls and virtual meetings, so it is best that we all just be honest about the situation. If our colleagues seem to be having a tough time on a particular day during a video call, we have to support them and be patient, just as they would with us.

Video calls and virtual meetings can be a great help when employees are working from home. They can also be exhausting for the people taking part. If you find yourself dealing with "Zoom fatigue", you are not alone. Virtual meetings and video calls still need to be proactively managed so that people's time is put to good use, important information is communicated, everyone feels involved and things wrap up on a positive note. As we get more adjusted to using technology to remotely work with our colleagues, "Zoom fatigue" should become less of an issue, until then we'll continue to support our colleagues and communicate with them as best, we can.

[Source: <https://www.jobillico.com/blog/en/4-signs-you-have-zoom-fatigue-and-what-you-can-do-about-it/>]

15 Tips for Combating Zoom Fatigue

1. **Hide self-view** in your settings. That gives your brain one less weird thing to try to process.
2. Allow 15 minutes between meetings. Then start scheduling meetings for **45 minutes**. Your brain will appreciate the break.
3. During those 15 minutes, **get out of your chair**/off your screen. Seriously. Don't take your phone with you when you walk away.
4. Go outside at least once a day during this 15-minute break. **Breathe**.
5. Make at least one call each day "**video optional**" so you can take a walk, pet the cat, or fold laundry while listening.
6. What can you do **instead of Zoom**? Shared document on the drive? Circulated link for comments? Simple quick phone call?
7. Use green screen background if you can; this reduces distraction and protects your privacy. Allow **audio-only option** without guilt.
8. Block off **Zoom-free zones** in your calendar (e.g. noon-1:39 daily, or nothing on Friday or Monday after noon)
9. Take some **meetings off your calendar** by sending one person from a group to virtual webinars/webcasts and having them present back findings--maybe in writing rather than another Zoom meeting?
10. Have frequent but shorter - much shorter - **check-ins** with individuals.
11. Make more activities "**opt in**" - virtual cocktail hours should be fun, not another required event.
12. **Don't assume** that people are all at the same level of comfort with Zoom, and **don't mock** those who aren't up to speed yet.
13. Everything is new, and that's exhausting to our brains. Be conscious of your own exhaustion and **check in** with others about their energy level.
14. The intense and narrow focus on one thing that is **CLOSE UP** can feel like facing a threat to the brain. **Look away** from the screen every 10 minutes. Set a timer. Stretch your neck while you're looking away.
15. Monitor your exhaustion and give yourself a break and some **self-compassion**. Internet wisdom: We are not working from home. We are at home, during a crisis, trying to get some work done.



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