



Video Call (or Zoom) Fatigue

Welcome to this week's discussion.

The focus this week is on video conferencing and how using it excessively can cause fatigue.

Many of us are using technology to stay in touch while working from home. Video conferencing on software like MS Teams and Zoom helps us feel more connected with our colleagues, friends and family than a normal phone call would.

But now we're attending more meetings (and social get togethers) on video calls than ever before, some are starting to discover there are some unexpected consequences to being on camera so regularly.

Professor Gianpiero Petriglieri (who's research area is sustainable learning and development in the workplace) and Professor Marissa Shuffler (who's research is focused on workplace wellbeing and teamwork effectiveness) provided some insights on this in a recent interview with BBH Worklife.

Why are video calls so exhausting?

"Being on a video call requires more focus than a face-to-face chat." "Video chats mean we need to work harder to process non-verbal cues like facial expressions, the tone and pitch of the voice, and body language; paying more attention to these consumes a lot of energy." "You cannot relax into the conversation naturally."

"Silence creates a natural rhythm in a real-life conversation. However, when it happens in a video call, you became anxious about the technology." this might be because the delays on conferencing systems have been shown to change how people are perceived. A study has shown that delays of just 1.2 seconds can make the responder appear less friendly or focused.

"When you're on a video conference, you know everybody's looking at you; you are on stage, so there comes the social pressure and feeling like you need to perform. Being performative is nerve-wracking and more stressful." Being able to see yourself doesn't help with this.

"The video call is our reminder of the people we have lost temporarily. It is the distress that every time you see someone online, such as your colleagues, that reminds you we should really be in the workplace together."

"Most of our social roles happen in different places, but now the context has collapsed," "Imagine if you go to a bar, and in the same bar you talk with your professors, meet your parents or date someone, isn't it weird? That's what we're doing now... We are confined in our own space, in the context of a very anxiety-provoking crisis, and our only space for interaction is a computer window."

Source: BBC Worklife: The reason Zoom calls drain your energy, by Manyu Jiang



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Tips for reducing 'Zoom' Fatigue.

- Limit video calls to those that are necessary.
 - Remember the telephone is still there and working.
- Make turning the camera 'on' optional.
 - This will reduce the feeling of 'performance' for many.
- Spend time at the beginning of a video call to just 'catch up'
 - This helps us reconnect with the world, maintain trust and reduce fatigue and concern.
- Pledge to introduce time boundaries for your call.
 - Any more than an hour without a break can be very tiring.
- Shift to 20 and 45 minute meetings in place of the normal 30 minutes and 1 hour meetings.
- If a call has to be longer make sure breaks are built in every 60 minutes.
 - Breaks should be long enough to stand up, stretch and move around.
- Try to limit unnatural, unexpected and annoying sounds.
 - These sounds are amplified and can be annoying for others.
- Acknowledge the technical limits of video chats. (i.e delays etc)
 - Mute microphones after saying hello.
 - Use the text chat to raise questions.
 - Speak clearly and slowly to help the system keep up.
- Is your environment acoustically friendly?
 - Can you keep your workspace door shut.
 - Do you have to have your pets running around
 - Bookcases do make good acoustic baffles.
- Do not feel obliged to participate in social video calls.
- Respect that work days begin and work days end.
 - Shut your PC off at the end of the day.
- Finally, discuss how you are feeling openly and be mindful of how others are feeling.

Discuss in your teams:

- Have you experienced the increased use of video calls tiring? Have you discussed this with colleagues?
- Do you and your team have a 'video call' agreement? What type of things are/could be included in this?
- How can your team support those working from home? Can you set up an internal team support group?
- Think about and discuss all of the items above and think of how we can all CARE for each other.