



Help employees “zoom-out” to support their physical and mental health.

No one can argue that, over the last couple of years, the introduction of video platforms such as Zoom, Skype, FaceTime, WebEx and Google Hangouts, to name a few, have been a boon to businesses and families alike, particularly as travel all but ground to a halt.

It is no surprise, however, that relying on social media platforms to connect with colleagues and others has many of us experiencing something called “zoom fatigue.”

We are social beings and there is ample evidence to support that staying connected is important for our mental health, but having multiple video calls a day instead of typical face-to-face interactions can take an unexpected toll on our at-home workforce.

During typical face-to-face conversations or in-person meetings, we make eye contact with only a couple of people at a time; we listen, observe and subconsciously take note of individual non-verbal cues such as hand-gestures, breathing rate, facial expressions and other movements taking place around us. This all happens without being distracted by our own image.

Meanwhile, the Brady-bunch format of videoconferencing forces us to face a wall of people where non-verbal cues are largely absent or obscured. Our brains need to switch to overdrive to find and decipher subtle messages from multiple attendees, and there is little opportunity for personal asides or comments that can help participants relax. Throw in the added pressure of seeing yourself in the gallery – the feeling of always being “on,” worrying about appearance and managing our surroundings, including pets and children – and it’s no wonder that we can feel depleted after several daily video meetings.



What tips can you provide for your employees so they can stay connected while minimizing zoom fatigue? Here are a few suggestions:

- 1. Schedule a phone call.** This allows you to move around, look away from your screen and not be faced with your onscreen image. Phone meetings are also more conducive to listening and taking notes. Putting pen to paper helps to organize and retain your thoughts.
- 2. Schedule breaks between video meetings.** Do a different activity that takes you away from your screen and allows your brain to switch gears: a change is as good as a rest.
- 3. Avoid multitasking.** This is not the time to be checking emails, texting others and preparing your grocery list. Stay present so that you don't miss a key point that someone has made.
- 4. Step away from your screen.** Go for a walk around the block, drink some water or do some [stretches](#) throughout the day.
- 5. Set boundaries.** Create household rules around meetings. Close the door to your office or post a "STOP – in a meeting" sign near your workstation to indicate you do not want to be disturbed. If you have children, ask them to make you a sign. They are more likely to adhere to the rules if they have helped establish them.
- 6. Expect the unexpected.** Acknowledge that you have pets and children at home, and recognize that many people are in the same situation as you. Interruptions are inevitable.
- 7. If video meetings cause anxiety.** [meditate](#) or perform deep-breathing exercises before you join.
- 8.** If you are presenting, **give attendees permission to join by audio only** Or switch video off periodically.
- 9. Give your eyes a break** using the 20/20/20 rule: every 20 minutes, look 20 feet away for 20 seconds.
- 10. Adjust your screen brightness** to match the lighting of the room to help avoid eye strain.
- 11. If possible, separate your work area from your personal space.** At the end of the day, turn off your computer and leave your workspace.

It is likely that working at home will be the norm for months or years to come, at least on a part-time basis and for a portion of the workforce, so it is important to establish and respect rules around videoconferencing to help ensure we can reap the mental health benefits of connecting with others, virtually or in-person.

