

Video Meetings Self-Coaching Guide

How can I have good video meetings?

These days many of our meetings are held via virtual platforms apps (e.g. Zoom, Google Meet, Teams). Many people, however, find these types of meetings draining and regularly complain of 'Zoom fatigue'. Understanding what makes video meetings different from in-person meetings can help us reduce what makes video meetings exhausting. Academic researchers are now beginning to discover that what makes video meetings tiring has a lot to do with how we process our conversations.

During in-person meetings, we quickly and effortlessly pick up nonverbal cues, such as facial expressions and body language. This helps to guide our conversation in very subtle and complex ways. Video meetings provide few nonverbal cues, which is stressful. Also, there is a very slight delay when speaking to someone, and therefore our brain works hard at filling in the details that we would normally get from speaking face to face. Using these different skills, and the extra workload from needing to handle the constant uncertainty about what is going on, is very tiring.

In face-to-face meetings, we look around (at our notes, out of the window) and typically move around. We know who is looking at us and can choose who we look at; usually the person we are speaking to. In video meetings, everyone is sat in front of a fixed camera, looking at everyone else all of the time, unable to move very much. This is unnatural. It makes it hard for us to concentrate as we tend to either look away, or tense up our bodies as we try not to look away so as not to appear distracted or uninterested. Not being able to move around naturally, turn our gaze to avoid the continuous eye contact, or focus on one person at a time, is really challenging for us; it is highly stressful and very tiring. And on top of all that, there is the influence of seeing oneself on screen all the time, which is also unnatural, and can cause us to self-evaluate and experience negative emotions.

So, how can we tackle the above issues and attempt to reduce 'Zoom fatigue'?

- **Reduce your stress and workload** by limiting the number of video meetings you attend each week. Use 'audio only' meetings more often or take 'audio only' breaks in a meeting.
- **Reduce the time spent in video meetings** by staying only to discuss your topic and then leaving. Be creative and suggest ways to get information from meetings without having to attend (including meeting notes, or recording the meeting and listening to it later).
- **Reduce your constrained physical mobility** by remembering to move around, and relieve the tension that could be building up in your body. Listen to your body and if you notice that you are tense in your back, shoulders, or digestive systems, take a break, get up, and stretch.
- **Reduce the amount of continuous, direct eye contact from faces seen close up** by shrinking the app window and distancing yourself from the screen. This relieves the discomfort you have from not maintaining enough interpersonal distance from people you are not intimate with.
- **Reduce the self-evaluation from seeing yourself on the screen** by hiding the 'self-view' video window. Turn your camera off when a meeting is not particularly important or when you won't be required to speak much. This takes down the mirror that is being held up constantly in front of you.

"The longer the meeting, the less is accomplished." Tim Cook

More Information

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