5 Ways to Beat Zoom Fatigue



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Have you ever felt that satisfying relief when you finish the last Zoom call of the day, then suddenly wonder: *why am I so exhausted?* What you're experiencing is not anything out of the ordinary or different from what millions of other people within the WFH (work from home) workforce are also feeling; it's called Zoom fatigue, and no one is immune to it. With the introduction of virtual tools to assist with telecommuting, Zoom fatigue is something many are currently fighting during the COVID-19 crisis.

Zoom fatigue is sneaky and can be triggered in people just like you who spend copious amounts of time on virtual meetings, trying to compensate for the loss of face to face interaction. But don’t let this information discourage you about the future of your telecommuting career- Zoom fatigue can be beaten to help you enjoy a remote working routine that isn’t draining.

Although the world of Zoom meetings must go on, here are some tips to help prevent Zoom fatigue and have a more productive WFH day.

1. Block the self-view feature.

It’s Monday, and you actually spent the time today to look presentable for your daily team Zoom meeting. That’s fantastic (even if it does include pajamas in some form). However, one of the biggest contributors to Zoom fatigue is keeping the self-view feature open during meetings- no matter how wonderful your look turned out. As humans, we’re not used to staring at ourselves as we talk to other people unless you carry a mirror everywhere you go to do so- and that’s some real dedication. Regardless of how you feel about your quarantine look, self-view induces a feeling of anxiety associated with Zoom fatigue; worried about how we look, sound, or what’s going on with the lighting.

To prevent any Zoom fatigue from self-view, simply turn off the camera feature whenever you’re able to. If you’re worried about how you’ll look on camera, open up your camera app before a meeting to make any last-minute adjustments, test the lighting, or make a quick location change. If closing the self-view isn’t possible on the platform you’re using, you can block it off by taping a piece of paper or post-it note. Without the distraction of watching yourself, any worries or post-meeting Zoom fatigue will be a thing of the past.

2. Take a break.

As WFH continues, many people within the workforce are noticing the blurred lines between work and home since they now belong in the same space. Zoom fatigue can worsen this effect as seemingly every work-related interaction is virtual and easily accessible. Between quick calls to coworkers and larger department meetings, a daily meeting schedule quickly starts to overflow with Zoom appointments. It can be tempting to schedule back-to-back meetings to get through the day quicker, but doing so could cause Zoom fatigue to appear earlier than expected. While caffeine is a great thing, it can only do so much when up against the consistent use of virtual meetings.

To combat the Zoom fatigue that comes with a busy virtual meeting schedule, the cure is as simple as scheduling breaks during the day. Taking time in-between meetings will help you to recharge before the next Zoom appointment and allow for extra planning so the next interaction goes as smoothly as the last one. And your break doesn’t have to involve sitting at a desk! Need a quick caffeinated pick-me-up? Give yourself a few minutes to enjoy it; an effective break should include moving around to get your blood flowing and introduce a change of scenery. As much as I love a beautiful desktop view, stepping outside for a few minutes or simply looking out the window can do wonders with preventing Zoom fatigue.

3. Explore other options.

I love virtual meetings as much as the next person; there’s something wonderful about connecting with coworkers from the comfort of the couch that makes it so delightful. However, in the midst of changing to a WFH style and managing your Zoom fatigue, you may have forgotten that other modes of communication exist in the world. Yes, I’m talking about our lovely old friends: email, instant messaging, and phone calls.

Remember them? These channels of communication may just save you (and your tired eyes) from hours of screentime, and the harmful effects Zoom fatigue can have on your productivity.

Have you ever left a meeting feeling that the items covered could have easily been sent in an email, instead of the half an hour just spent crammed into a small conference room? Your "conference room" may now be your home office, but the same still applies to unnecessary meetings. If you're in charge of scheduling meetings, try to give your co-workers a chance to avoid the dreaded Zoom fatigue and compile the information into an email. If you absolutely must have a discussion with your team, schedule a conference call that won't force your coworkers to crack open their laptops and scramble to create a professional look.

By utilizing communication options beyond Zoom, you'll save yourself, and your coworkers, any unnecessary extra time behind the camera- earning all of the brownie points and none of the Zoom fatigue.

4. Create an itinerary.

We've all been there before: one co-worker begins the meeting by asking how everyone is doing, and before you know it, 45 minutes have gone by without any discussion of the true topic at hand—but you could easily repeat Sharon's busy weekend plans! As much as everyone loves to hear all about each other's quarantine life, too much chatter can cause meetings to go longer than planned. Zoom fatigue thrives off prolonged virtual meetings and as humans, we tend to go off-topic making meetings more likely to go over the scheduled time. The best way to prevent Zoom fatigue induced by oversharing? Have a plan.

To prevent meetings from infringing on your chance to make another pot of coffee (I see you taking those much-needed breaks), create an itinerary ahead of time. By scheduling

minutes and other talking points, your meetings will run smoothly while also limiting everyone’s virtual time to prevent Zoom fatigue. Don’t worry- even with an itinerary, time can be scheduled to catch up and exchange WFH stories with coworkers; just be sure to specifically set aside time for this and create a limit to avoid going overboard on sharing. Sharon will appreciate it, and as a result, you’ll save yourself from any Zoom fatigue.

5. Switch it up.

After being inside of your home for weeks on end, the back-right-corner of the kitchen sounds far less exotic than it used to. However, as we touched on with point #2, a change of scenery can help you feel refreshed; even if you’re just moving to that sunny spot by the window that’s great for people-watching (just don’t get too distracted). Changing your typical setup can help to beat Zoom fatigue by giving a fresher home-office feeling. If your current spot tends to have lower lighting, this can exacerbate any Zoom fatigue you’re already feeling. Try moving your home office into a spot with better lighting, preferably natural as that will help you to feel more awake and focused.

Although Zoom meetings are a tough task right now, one day you’ll be missing the times where you could fight Zoom fatigue while wearing your half-professional, half-pajama outfit. Telecommuting is a challenge, but one that we’re going to get through together by working smarter and utilizing the many resources that exist outside of virtual tools when needed. By simply paying attention to your body and mind feel, you’ll be able to spot Zoom fatigue quickly and prevent it from happening in the future.

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