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Zoom Burnout – It's a Thing!

How to avoid being a Zoombie!

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Session Description: Do you feel that you are literally in a Zoom meeting all day, every day? Have you felt overwhelmed and exhausted due to Zoom Burnout? This webinar will discuss how the new remote meeting world affects the brain and the body unlike face to face events. Practical strategies will be shared to assist you in combating Zoom fatigue and exhaustion.

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Introduction

Participants will learn:

1. How the remote meeting world affects the brain and the body
2. Practical strategies for combating Zoom fatigue and exhaustion

So much of life can happen in the months while we've been Zooming.

What is Zoom Fatigue?

Zoom versus Face to Face - What's the big deal? It's 10AM but you are already mentally drained and reaching for your umpteenth cup of coffee. Why are you so tired? More than 300 million people use Zoom daily which along with all the other stressors can affect mental health and stress levels.

It's more than JUST Zoom...

...it's the onslaught of converging events - major events.

The onslaught of converging events - a pandemic, severe economic downturn, social unrest, anger and bitter feuding in political arenas - have left us feeling unmoored from the "normal" in every area of life. And then we have to get onboard with new technology we NEVER thought we would "have" to use. On the upside, it has allowed us to keep our jobs. Hard decisions about schooling, elderly parents, etc.

Activity: Type in the chat pod topics and issues that you have had to face in the past 6 months.

The Lawless Wild, Wild West...

Our new social and work lives are lawless, with few guidelines and new unwritten rules! Have you ever felt like everyone knew the rules but you? Have you ever thought that there were unwritten rules that others knew about except you are in the dark? There are assumptions that others make as well such as:

- People just assume you have more time for meetings.
- Your after work social group wants to meet and they may not understand why you aren't up to it.
- All aspects of our lives that used to be separate are now happening in the same space.

Brain Drain

Zooming causes new stress on our brains for a variety of reasons:

- Visual cues are hard to read especially for those with social anxiety
- May be hard to read facial expressions and body language correctly
- May be hard to read when to end the meeting and draw boundaries
- Wearing the "happy girl or boy" mask is very wearing
- People worry more how they are perceived - am I paying enough attention? Did I smile in all the right places? Did they see that I was rolling my eyes?

Here's another issue for those with social anxiety -

"For those with social anxiety, Zoom or FaceTime makes it harder to draw boundaries. People get to see into your environmental context, it becomes unclear when 'socializing' should end, and certain social cues that are easily read in real life can be harder to read virtually." Psychologist Jamie Aten

Are they really listening to me or reading email?

You never know because the eyes are looking away in both scenarios. Video fails to accurately recreate the in-person experience and with no direct eye

contact, your brain is working overtime to interpret others. We also may get distracted and think, “when was the last time they took a shower or combed their hair?”

Brains on Overdrive

“Video chats mean we need to work hard 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. Our minds are together when our bodies feel we’re not. You cannot relax into the conversation naturally.”- Gianpiero Petriglieri

To sum it up, our brains have to work overtime to process all the information coming in and that is all besides the work and purpose of the meeting!
Gianpiero Petriglieri, an associate professor at Insead.

The Stress of Silence

- Delays on phone or conferencing systems of 1.2 seconds made people perceive the responder as less friendly or focused.
- Silence on a video conferencing call creates anxiety but in person there is a natural rhythm to a conversation.

Who remembers the song the Sounds of Silence? Well, this song should make a comeback labeled, the Stress of Silence. A 2014 study found that delays on phone or conferencing systems shaped our views of people negatively. Instead of judging someone at first sight as we might do in person, we now judge someone by their Zoom acuity (ability to use zoom accurately). Tell me you don’t do this - even though we know better!

Physical and Emotional Effects

Health issues:

- Headache
- Backache
- Carpal tunnel
- Eye strain from computer usage
- Too much sitting
- Back strain
- Frozen shoulders

Burnout:

- Exhaustion
- Depression
- Stress

Can You Relate?



To Tell the Truth

Time for a Mentimeter Activity! Link to mentimeter activity:

<https://www.menti.com/a7ux7bacai>

Mentimeter Activity – Create Word Cloud What are some of the physical/mental effects/symptoms you've experienced?

Find Your Happy Place

Feeling mentally drained? The constant stress and uncertainty the Coronavirus has placed on us is exhausting. Trying to figure out how to do what we used to do but in the new conditions is overwhelming.

Overwhelmed

- Feeling burden of learning and using new technology - feeling like our skills are inadequate,
- Trying to maintain boundaries between work and personal time
- Working from home with our families present
- Managing child or elder care
- Worrying about the future, finances, jobs, health,
- Feeling compelled to perform at the same level or greater of pre-covid

We all want to do our best and be exemplary employees. Give yourself and others some grace. We will share a few strategies that will help as you navigate this new normal.

Strategies to Avoid Being a 'Zoombie'

Reduce Stimuli

- Reduce use of videos
- Manage your image
- Look away
- Be your own advocate

According to BBC, video calls are more tiring because it requires more focus to process non-verbal cues like body language. Our brains are working overtime.

Zoom requires you to look at so many things and process:

- 20+ other people
- hundreds of things going on in their backgrounds.
- Plus - Looking at yourself complicates communication

Minimize use of videos: (sometimes videos are required but take advantage of times when you can turn them off)

- Put your own video out of view - who wants to look at our own every expression and start to focus on wrinkles, lines, ruffled hair
- Ask that everyone use plain backgrounds
- Enable 'speaker view' instead of 'gallery view' to focus on one person and not all in mtg
- Make your own Memoji or Animoji so that you aren't seeing yourself

Turn off Videos (if possible):

- stressful to always have to watch and be watched
- movement behind participant, unusual sounds or silence (are they intentional?)
- Turn your camera on when joining the meeting, turn it off until it's your turn to speak

Look away from the screen:

- Often don't blink as much when watching screen
- Eyes become dry and tired

Take care of YOU

Large meeting

- turn off your camera and give yourself a break from the constant eye contact
- close your eyes or look away from the screen for a moment.
- Stand up
- Stretch/wiggle/dance

Smaller meeting

- there is no harm in letting your coworkers know that you won't be showing your camera. Everyone is zoom-ed out at this point, and they will understand that you just need a break.

Create an Alter Ego

Bitmoji: [Link to the bitmoji webpage](#)

Jib Jab: [Link to jibjab webpage](#)

Avoid Multitasking

Full attention to the meeting - polite, respectful

It may seem harmless, but **studies have shown** that people who multitask have a harder time remembering things.

- Close unrelated tabs
- Close social media sites
- put your phone away
- avoid doing other work

If you need to do something during the meeting, consider taking notes. While it may seem like a good time to get small tasks done, by not giving your full attention you may be missing critical information. Texting, responding to emails is disrespectful to presenter or other person with whom you are meeting.

It's not all Zoom or Doom

Challenge yourself to say 'no' to meetings - it's tough, but effective and liberating. You can't possibly attend everything – business/social/family.

Recognize there is a feeling of obligation, pressure, to attend all requested meetings. Prioritize your time, energy, and efforts.

Schedule non-negotiable "Zoom time"

- Block out a couple of hours a week to do other work so not to get overloaded

- Propose that meetings be held between 10:00 am and 3:00 pm (accommodates time zones and allows time before and after to work)
- Avoid Zoom clashes – two zooms at the same time or overlapping zoom meetings

Suggest Alternate methods of Communication:

- Text-based communication - Send an email or quick chat
- Use polls to collect information
- Google docs, and other G Suite offerings that allow collaborative work - great for brainstorming, planning etc.
- Phone call
- Replace call w/ recorded asynchronous video

Breaks

- Built in breaks (it feels uncomfortable for people to leave a virtual mtg) Make yourself take breaks - back to back zoom calls don't give you a mental, visual, or physical break. In-person meetings, - you usually go to different room, take a bio break, grab a snack/something to drink.
- Stretch or snack break

Importance of Zoom Meetings...

This is our reality and how we will continue for a while:

- we can communicate
- stay connected

- see one another
- we can still reach, test, and teach our students
- still employed

Calling all Zoomers

Determine if your message can be communicated another way. Is it really necessary? Can you display the materials on shared document platforms like google, include details comments to reduce the need to meet? How about a phone call? an email? <https://ideas.ted.com/zoom-fatigue-is-real-heres-why-video-calls-are-so-draining/>¹

If not, plan your Zoom meetings carefully: Treat your Zoom appointment like a face to face - get dressed, be ready to lead your meeting or be an active participant.

Agenda - communicate the purpose of the meeting; Focus on what we NEED to know - not Nice to know items. Start on time and stick to the schedule.

Build in breaks (it feels uncomfortable for people to leave a virtual mtg)

- Stretch or snack break
- bio break
- longer meeting - allow longer meeting so participants can attend to immediate business

Facilitation: Paint pictures with your words

- Tell when there will be silence and assure them it is expected

¹ This article is republished from The Conversation under a Creative Commons license.

- Switching from one shared screen to another -
- will be showing a video
- going to breakout room - what to expect. Pop up box; unmute/turn on video; What to expect when inside and then return to main room

Speedy Meeting

Meetings don't always have to be 30 min or an hour long. Could you provide a video update prior to the meeting? One great way to shorten meetings is to provide an asynchronous video update ahead of time. Run through your slides, provide an update, or ask for feedback in advance of the meeting in video form. Aim to do this at least a day ahead, though giving more time is always better. <https://www.vidyard.com/blog/zoom-fatigue-tips/>

Speedy meeting - 50 instead of 60 min; 25 instead of 30

Energizers - can be physical or mental activity (at this time, facilitator plays Deep in the Heart of Texas and asks participants to sing along and clap)

Remember - A Zoom Host should remind participants to:

- stand up from time to time
- sit up straight; shoulders back
- stretch legs, arms, rotate shoulders,
- vary their posture
- look away from screen from time to time
- Try Desk yoga
- jazz hands
- go retrieve something from another room

Consider Quick Check in meetings:

Break up video call w/ regular check-ins during mid and end of mtg. NY Times - online article: *Remote Working isn't Working* recognized many workers report feeling isolated and lonely during these times. They crave interaction - 1:1 - be mindful of this. Ask quick, controlled questions but allow for additional time if participants want to speak longer after meeting (after talk) - Short answer: What helped you get thru the week? Plans for weekend? Last movie watched? New TV series? Etc.

Burnout

"People are burned out on recurring conference calls that don't feel productive. Being connected doesn't mean video streaming all day with your colleagues; it means understanding your role on the project, or in the business, and having clarity around your contribution to the team goal."

- Hayes Drumwright

Zoom burnout, however, you may want to consider whether the prospect of jumping onto another online work meeting conjures up negative feelings. If that's the case, it may be because your past meetings weren't as productive as you may have hoped. "A lack of key decisions or clear deliverables following team meetings results in employees feeling like the meeting was a waste of time and could have been handled in email or other communications," said Drumwright. "These early signs point to larger failures as projects stall out or encounter problems the team has difficulty overcoming. When I hear things like 'I need time to do my work,' it signals a leader who is desperate to keep the team 'connected' through Zoom."

The Mayo Clinic also suggests that some possible causes for job burnout include some external factors, including things like a general lack of control, workplace dysfunction, extremes of activity, and a work-life imbalance. All of those indicators can point back to the general upheaval that the COVID-19 pandemic has brought upon the world, as well as the massive changes we're all feeling while working from home.

Helpful - to check in w/ everyone - have a specific question to answer - creates personal connection

Avoid Burnout

- Unplug
- Relax
- Recharge

Working all the time isn't the answer. Those who feel 'on' all the time are at a higher risk of burnout. Frequently checking emails, sending quick work texts on the weekend or during the evening or reading an article to get ahead for the week is not only counterproductive but can be detrimental to our well-being.

Give yourself permission to take a day off, unplug and recharge. You will be a better employee, family member, friend - a better you.

Resilience

It's time to cultivate resilience and it starts in your head.

"Resilience is not about bouncing back.
It's about growing through."

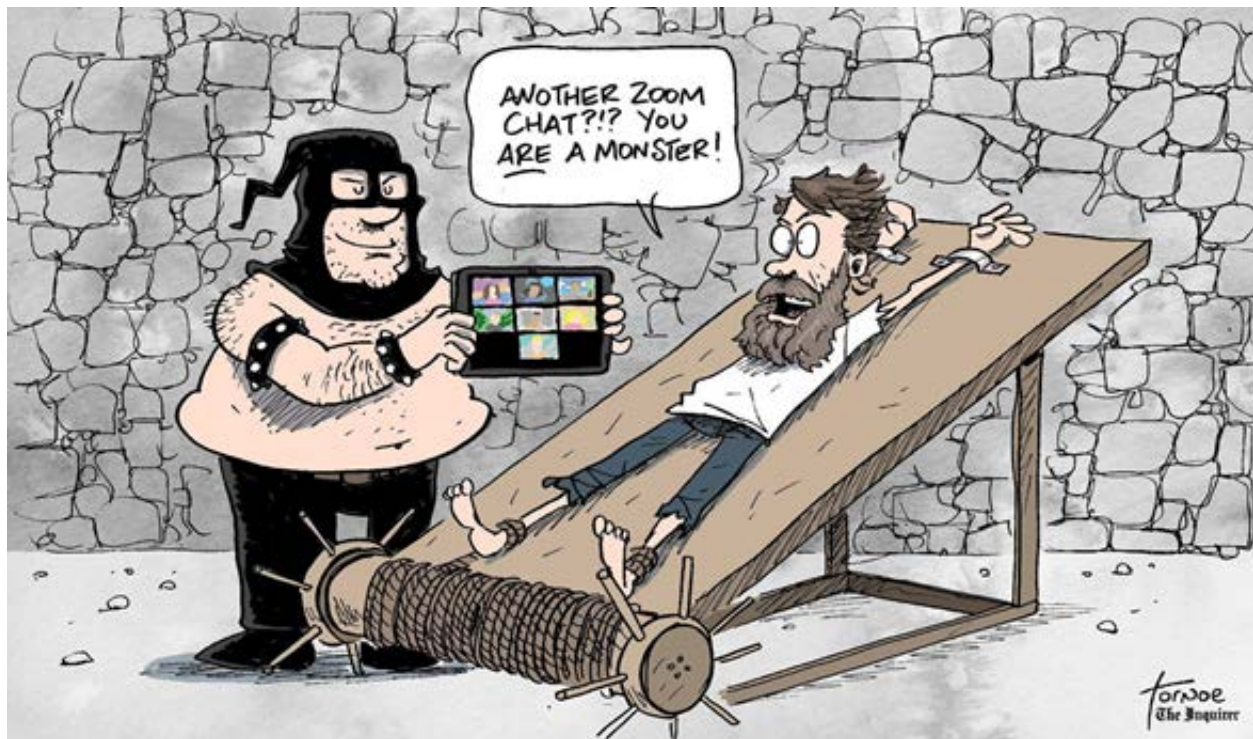
Same Storms, Different Boats

We are all in the same storm but in different boats trying to navigate our way. Let's look at some ways to develop resilience...

Developing Resilience

1. **Stop, look and listen:** Denial is not a river in Egypt. Listen to your body. Self-talk that insists on constant motion, production, and performance does no one any good. Constant exhaustion is not only dangerous but counter-productive, leading to error and rework.
2. **Set boundaries or be de-fenceless:** The courage to say "no" or "not now" is the hallmark of good self-leadership.
3. **Know your energy drainers and maintainers:** You are like a battery. If you discharge the battery, there's no forward momentum. What renews your energy? Exercise? Playing? Talking (not griping) to a friend? Meditation?
4. **Routine can bring comfort:** When the world is upside down and frightening, the creation of a routine offers a sense of stability.
5. **Set limits between work and home.** Create a routine that takes your mind off work and instead creates a space for calm. Whether it's an aromatherapy shower or taking the dog to the park, whether it's gardening or ironing—the activity is calming. Ironing?! Sandra Bullock does this as a way of creating order in her life. My daughter in law keeps her ironing board out and she's much younger than me!

Laughter Lightens the Load



Distress and Eustress

Distress - extreme anxiety, sorrow, pain. Eustress - (yoo-stress) moderate or normal psychological stress, interpreted as being beneficial for the experiencer. (Dictionary.com) "Eustress helps us stay motivated, work toward goals, and feel good about life." Dr. Michael Genovese

Stress can make life worthwhile and cause meaningful growth. As my 6-year-old granddaughter says, "No thank you very much". Stress precedes growth and we can choose how we respond. It's all about attitude and how we choose to soldier through these very difficult and emotional times.

Choose well, friends. As Wolstenholme says, "Never waste a good crisis." We can't choose many of the challenges we face in this life, but we can choose how we address them.

Gratitude unlocks the fullness of life. It turns what we have into enough, and more. It turns denial into acceptance, chaos to order, confusion to clarity. It can turn a meal into a feast, a house into a home, a stranger into a friend ...

Gratitude makes sense of our past, brings peace for today, and creates a vision for tomorrow.

"Our emotions are our least dependable, and often most deceptive, sensing devices. What the wise old masters have told us in a thousand ways boils down to this: it is easier to act your way into feeling the way you want than it is to feel your way into acting the way you want.

*In other words, master your feelings;
don't let them master you."*

-Nido Qubein in DAILY MOTIVATION

What resilience practices help you navigate burnout?

Time for a Mentimeter Activity! Link to mentimeter activity:

<https://www.menti.com/a7ux7bacai>

Mentimeter Activity – Let's finish strong and positive, it is what it is - we need to adjust to new normal. Share one or two words on the Mentimeter cloud that help you navigate burnout...
