



Easy Suggestions to Reduce "Zoom" Stress and Fatigue among Faculty and Staff

Proposed Causes

In [this recent article](#), the founding director of Stanford's Virtual Human Interaction Lab shared a theoretical explanation of "Zoom fatigue" and suggested some changes to mitigate it. His four proposed causes were:

1. Excessive close-up eye contact is highly intense (in a natural setting we would only be looking at a few faces for intermittent intervals).
2. Seeing yourself constantly in video chats is fatiguing and totally alien to our in-person experience.
3. Video chats dramatically reduce our usual mobility.
4. The cognitive load is much higher in virtual chats (interpreting facial gestures is more difficult and participants are constantly distracted by situating themselves in the frame, etc.).

Solutions we can implement

The authors suggest solutions such as:

1. Adjusting settings to turn off one's view of self
2. Turning away from the screen periodically and relying on audio only,
3. Turning off one's camera from time to time,
4. Moving further away from the camera to allow more movement.

The Charge

In our current situation, some of these ideas could implicitly or explicitly be considered rude in a formal meeting. One fairly simple action we as a community could take to reduce our shared stress and fatigue is to allow adjustments to expectations in virtual meetings that recognize human psychological and physiological needs in this relatively new format.

By Linda C. Hodges, Associate Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs & Director of the UMBC Faculty Development Center adapted from Bailenson, J. N. (2021). Nonverbal overload: A theoretical argument for the causes of Zoom fatigue. *Technology, Mind, and Behavior*, 2(1). <https://doi.org/10.1037/tmb0000030>.

“As a community, we can lessen our stress and fatigue by changing our implicit etiquette for virtual meetings to accommodate our human needs.”