



Timely Information for Personal Success

Zoom Exhaustion is Real

Strategies in Finding Balance

By Steven Hickman

There is a different quality to our attention when we are online. We are hyper-focused on the few available visual cues that we normally gather from a full range of available body language. With many of us experiencing an increasing number of Zoom meetings, the following are six strategies in finding balance while staying connected.

❖ **Take a few moments before clicking “Start” to settle and ground your attention.** Take a few breaths, feel your body on the chair, notice whatever is present in your mind and allow yourself to arrive fully to the moment at hand. If you’re feeling unsettled or preoccupied, you might place your hand on your heart in a supportive and comforting way as if to say “I’m here for you. It’s ok to feel how you feel at this moment.”

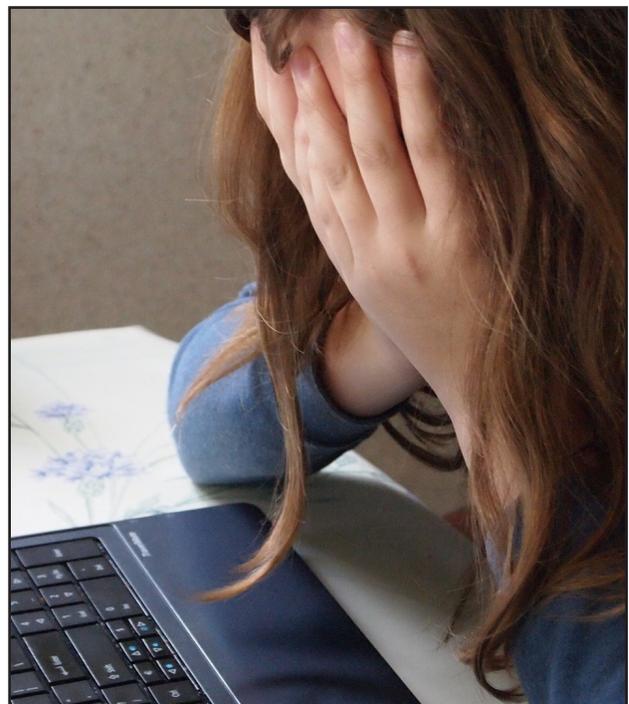
❖ **Take the time to truly greet whoever is in the room with your full attention**—offer your attention to each face that appears (if the group is not too big). Give yourself a moment for each person to make an impression on you, and “take in the good” as Rick Hanson would say. Give yourself an opportunity to feel what it feels like to be in the presence of another.

❖ **Choose “speaker view.”** In Zoom, one can choose Speaker View or Gallery View, and I think I prefer Speaker View so that the one person who is

speaking has more of my attention and the others are more peripheral. This seems to be more like sitting around a conference table where we are aware of everyone there, but we direct our attention primarily to whoever is speaking. Tracking an array of 24 (or more) faces on the screen can be a challenge!

❖ **Resist the urge to multitask.** I sheepishly have to admit that I am a multi-tasker on Zoom many times and have been known to read and fire off several emails while also sitting in a meeting.

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CLIP-N-SAVE!

Super Busy? Try this New Cooking Method

One of the latest cooking crazes sweeping the nation is *sous vide*, a method of cooking in which food is placed in a plastic pouch or a glass jar and cooked in a hot water bath at a precise temperature.

Until now, *sous vide* machines have been seen as upscale products for advanced cooks, but that changes with the announcement of Figo, an all-in-one *sous vide* machine that seals, stores, cooks, and cools. This new cooking device is positioned to bring *sous vide* cooking to the masses.

The idea is to have flawlessly cooked, restaurant-quality meals in 3 easy steps:

Season and seal food: A built-in vacuum sealer mean delicious meal prep takes no time.

Place food inside: To start cooking, place the sealed food inside the machine to cook food to the perfect temperature immediately, or use the app to schedule a cook to finish later.

Cook: Once limited to the pros, *sous vide* provides precise cooking temperature for high-quality results, without feeling the anxiety of overcooking

A video can be viewed at:
https://youtu.be/b_1dxBaOIwE. ■

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This has got to stop. Not because I need to hyper-focus on just what is happening in the meeting, but because I can't put additional effort into anything else.

I can periodically ease up my focus and look out the window behind my screen, or at the knick-knacks on the shelves in my office, or just soften my gaze to take in the array of faces on my screen (to see without looking) without having to analyze or scrutinize any of them.

❖ **Try to take measured breaks between sessions.** As a clinical psychologist, when I used to do psychotherapy, I was fairly good at enforcing a 50-minute hour. That gave me ten minutes to write notes, run to the restroom, get a drink of water and generally settle and decompress.

Quite often my Zoom meetings run back to back and I find that sometimes my Zoom room becomes a kind of random encounter anteroom where people from various aspects of my personal and professional life bump into each other for a few moments on their way in and out of a meeting with me. Fun as these moments are sometimes, I need to take better care of my precious attention and energy and take a refreshing pause. Why not give that a try yourself?

❖ **And finally, remind yourself periodically that this is a new place** between presence and absence that we will have to learn how to

accommodate as we go forward into the uncertain future. It is both better than absence (imagine life in a pandemic without FaceTime, Zoom, Skype and the rest) and not quite as resonant as presence (do we know if mirror neurons still function over the internet like they do in person?). Let's see if we can simultaneously refrain from high expectations without dismissing the clear benefits of online communication.

Summary

And let's not forget those benefits. We can have important meetings while only dressed appropriately from the waist up. Our beloved pets can be perched lovingly in our laps while we review our colleague's budget projections.

But on a serious note, let's not dismiss this amazing technology, but instead learn to find a way to assimilate it into a full spectrum of interpersonal experiences that our new lives include. Let's be present to absence, without becoming absent to presence. It won't be easy, but it will be worth it to develop this new capacity. ■

Steven Hickman, Psy.D., is a Licensed Clinical Psychologist and an Associate Clinical Professor in the UC San Diego Department of Family Medicine & Public Health. Adapted with permission from "Zoom Exhaustion is Real. Here are Six Ways to Find Balance and Stay Connected," Mindful newsletter, <https://www.mindful.org/> To download the entire article, visit <https://archive.hshsl.umaryland.edu/handle/10713/13776>