



# COMMUNICATE LIKE A BOSS

DAILY TIPS FOR KEEPING YOUR REMOTE EMPLOYEES ENGAGED

# INTRODUCTION

Many more of us are working remotely these days. While some do just fine with less face-to-face interaction with colleagues, others may start to feel disconnected – even unhinged at times. Humans are social beings, and most of us miss the communication with co-workers, whether in the boardroom or at the water cooler.

At Arketi Group, we've been sending out a daily "Remote Working Tip-of-the-Day" as one way of helping our people feel connected and engaged. These tips have gone over so well we decided they're simply too good not to share.

The tips are ready to cut-and-paste into an email and send to your team. We've included suggestions for things you, as a manager, can do to promote the day's theme.

We divided the tips into five categories, one for each day of the work week:

**MONDAY – MIND** ways to stay connected and avoid feelings of isolation

**TUESDAY – VOICE** how to interact with others in a virtual business context

**WEDNESDAY – BODY** suggestions for keeping physically active and healthy

**THURSDAY – CULTURE** ideas for promoting your company's culture and esprit

**FRIDAY – SPIRIT** thoughts on connecting with and enriching one's inner life

But you don't have to stick to our way of doing things. Feel free to pick and choose or slice and dice your favorite tips and send them as the mood strikes you!



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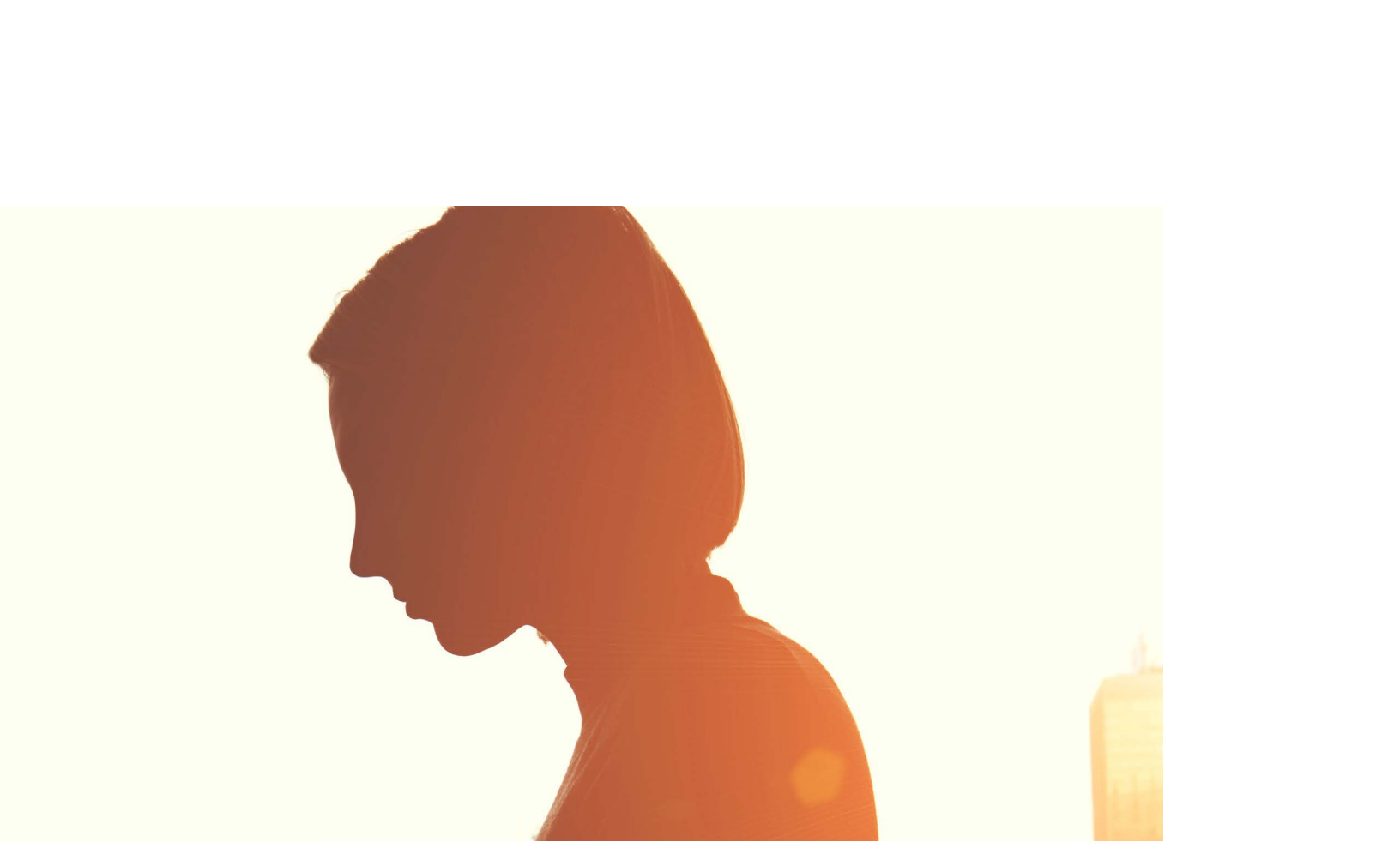
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# 01 MIND

It is a terrible thing to waste. And sometimes, our minds tend to wander into dark places, which can be especially true when we're working from home and lack daily face-to-face interaction with each other. But keeping our minds occupied in positive ways can contribute to our overall well-being.

Following are tips to pass on to anyone working remotely to help them (and us!) stay positive, upbeat and mindfully healthy...





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### **BEAT LONELINESS WITH WEB WATER COOLERS AND VIRTUAL COFFEE MEETUPS**

Loneliness is one of the biggest trials for those of us working remotely, according to a 2018 study cited by the Harvard Business Review. Not only are we removed from in-person business meetings, but we also miss out on everyday socializing moments with co-workers, such as passing each other in the hallway or chatting at the water cooler or coffee maker.

Harvard professor Prithwiraj Choudhury, who studies how remote working affects productivity, says that setting up video calls “with colleagues or friends to talk about work, life or other conversations you would normally have is imperative to minimize the feeling of social isolation and also helps with productivity.”

### **START A BOOK CLUB OR MOVIE GROUP**

Working from home certainly has its perks – no long commute, being able to take the dog outside for a quick five-minute walk, going shoeless, for instance.

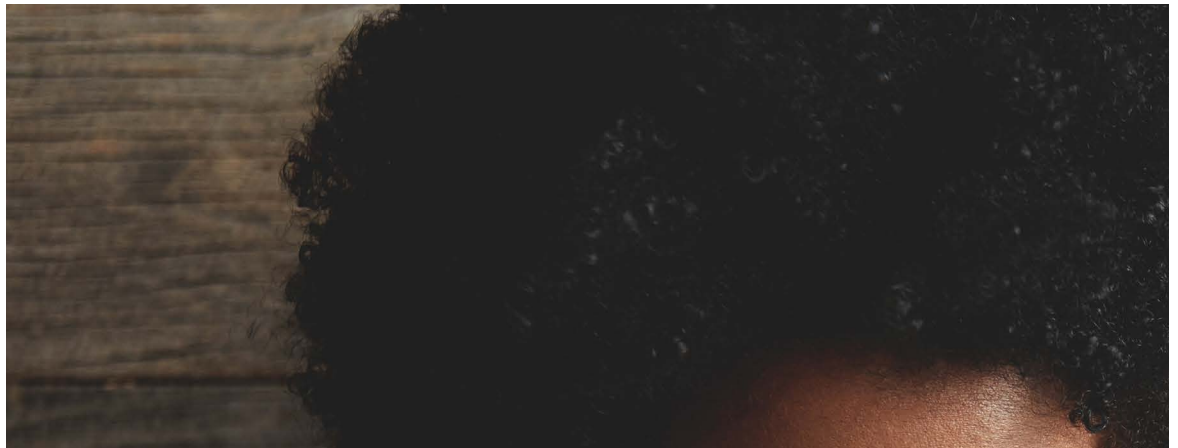
But it can also leave us feeling lonely and disconnected from our co-workers. If this sounds familiar, consider starting a virtual book club or movie-watching group! Keep it among colleagues or even pull in friends and family. Simply pick a book, movie(s) or TV show to enjoy together over the next month. Then chat face-to-face via video conferencing apps, or maybe start a Facebook group, to discuss favorite characters and plot twists!

### **WHAT WE CAN DO:**

Try and have virtual water cooler or coffee meetups with at least two co-workers a day. Let's not talk shop: instead, shoot the breeze about families, hobbies, pets, or anything else we would normally discuss during short breaks.

### **WHAT WE CAN DO:**

Let's try to engage with colleagues, friends and family outside of work when working remotely. Doing so will help us fight loneliness and boredom and help improve our mental and emotional well-being.



### **LIMIT TIME WATCHING NEWS AND READING SOCIAL MEDIA**

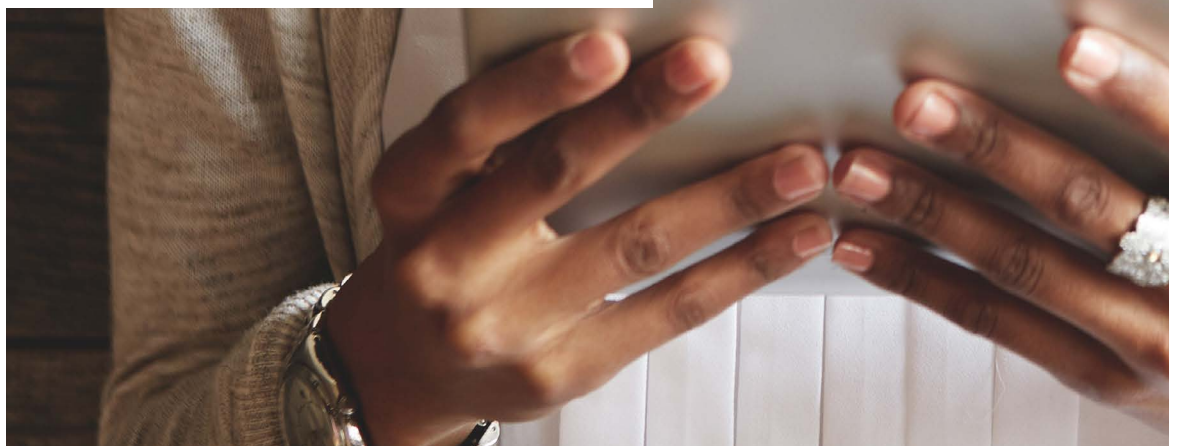
Sometimes, no news is good news, especially if reading or watching one negative news report after another causes stress. We all should put a limit on how much time we spend watching the news, reading articles on our smartphone and scrolling through social media.

Constant exposure to negative information can be harmful to our health and emotional well-being. Fear, worry and anxiety can lead to irritability and lashing out at loved ones or co-workers, as well as binge eating and difficulty with attention and concentration.

So, think, "Less stress is best!"

### **WHAT WE CAN DO:**

Let's take the bull by the horns and remove ourselves from most negative news and social media.



## **MIND YOUR MENTAL HEALTH**

When working remotely, we can easily feel disconnected from our co-workers. For some, this isolation from colleagues can strain us physically, mentally, spiritually and financially.

The Center for Workplace Mental Health suggests following a routine to help keep our mental health and well-being in check. This regular schedule might include the following:

**7:00 A.M.** Waking up, brushing our teeth and hair and getting the children and animals going.

**7:30 A.M.** Having a tech-free cup of coffee and breakfast with our loved-ones.

**8:30 A.M.** Checking emails and scheduling immediate work-related to-do's.

**12:00 P.M.** Getting away from our home workstations for a bit.

**1:00 P.M.** Resuming work, while taking small, frequent breaks.

**5:30 P.M.** Shutting down the computer for the night and spending time with family, calling a friend or loved-one or exercising.

**8:00 P.M.** Showering, shaving, painting our nails – or doing nothing!

## **WHAT WE CAN DO**

We should all consider following a schedule of sorts. And it's OK during these crazy times if that schedule needs a revamp every so often.



## **READ A GOOD BOOK TO CALM YOUR MIND**

There are times in everyone's life that things can get downright stressful. And if this stress isn't dealt with properly, it can lead to anxiety, depression and other mental health issues. The Anxiety and Depression Association of America reports that anxiety disorders are the most common mental challenges in the United States, affecting 40 million of the nation's adults age 18 and over.

But there's good news! A good book can help us relax and get rid of some anxiety, depending, of course, on what we decide to read. A quick Google search and stroll through Goodreads can provide lists of books to help us de-stress and relax. So, let's check out a good book and let the plot take us away!

## **WHAT WE CAN DO**

Suggest a book for all to read and then gather for a virtual book club to discuss.

## **TAKE A WELL-DESERVED BREAK**

Most remote employees are getting burned out while working from home, according to a recent Monster survey. And the majority of employees report that they aren't taking as much time off as they would normally.

While it is important to do our work and do it right, it is equally important to take off time to get away from our to-do lists and inboxes and decompress. Taking a break from work can help us reenergize, refocus and come back more productive.

Whether we choose an afternoon off for a picnic with family or days off for a longer vacation, we should all work with our managers to ensure we're striking a healthy balance of work and vacation.

## **WHAT WE CAN DO:**

If we know someone hasn't taken time off in a while and sense they may be getting burned out, suggest they take some time off soon.



Let's take a collective breath and realize that in this moment, we're OK. We must work to realize when a negative image pops up, we should replace it with a positive one.

### **AMID CHAOTIC TIMES, AVOID A NEGATIVE MINDSET**

We all have our share of unfamiliar and downright uncomfortable situations. And it's easy for the mind to get restless and unruly. When we're feeling anxious about what's going on in the outside world or when familiar routines are disrupted, our minds may wander into dark places.

Harvard Business Review suggests trying to calm ourselves by returning to the present. We could, for instance, start simple by naming and appreciating some of the things that surround us: a pet, a vase of fresh-cut flowers, a computer, and so on.

Let's take a collective breath and realize that in this moment, we're OK. We must work to realize when a negative image pops up, we should replace it with a positive one. We can't control what we can't control, so let's release those thoughts.

### **WHAT WE CAN DO**

We could all be better off if we reminded each other to take a step back whenever stress or anxiety threatens to overwhelm. Let's support each other and help alleviate worries whenever we can.

## TAKE TIME TO TAKE CARE OF YOU

We're all familiar with flight attendants instructing us to put an oxygen mask on ourselves during emergency situations before helping others. How well are all of us following that rule when life gets stressful? Are we taking time for ourselves or rushing headfirst into taking care of work, family and everything else?

Here are some tips curated from Inc. to remind us to take care of ourselves:

- Exercise for a healthier body and happier mind
- Start the day off right by meditating, even if only for a couple of minutes
- Jot down thoughts in a journal
- Escape realities by reading a good book or magazine
- Reach out and touch someone by telephone to help lift our mood
- Schedule time to do absolutely nothing

## SWITCH UP YOUR WORK SPOT

When feeling restless or uninspired sitting at our home desk, we should switch up our workspace location. If the desk currently faces a wall, rearrange things to face a window. And when feeling adventurous, we should take it up a notch and move to a completely different room or even the porch for a while!

A change in location can get us thinking a little differently than before. Plus, it can give us a reason to start over fresh with a new, clean tabletop, free of clutter.

## WHAT WE CAN DO

Let's all pick a tip and share with our co-workers how it made us feel better.

## WHAT WE CAN DO:

Let's share a before and after picture with our colleagues and explain how it changed (or didn't) our attitude and mindset.

## **MIND OUR MENTAL HEALTH**

Mental health is important because it affects all aspects of our life – jobs, relationships, parenting. And since humans are social creatures by nature, working remotely can lead to feeling cut off from co-workers.

Scientific American reported that 47% of Americans often felt alone, left out or lacking meaningful connections and that loneliness could even have negative impacts on our long-term physical health.

Therefore, it's important that we stay connected and plugged in by:

**ATTENDING VIRTUAL SOCIAL GATHERINGS.** We should all consider joining a special interest Facebook group to connect us with people who have similar interests.

**VOLUNTEERING VIRTUALLY.** We could pay it forward and get our minds off our own problems by helping out others.

**HOSTING A VIRTUAL HAPPY HOUR.** We should think about inviting friends, family members and neighbors to a happy hour via video conferencing. We could even send out a drink recipe beforehand so we can all share the same cocktail, or suggest everyone bring their drink of choice.

## **WHAT WE CAN DO**

Pick a suggestion and get to work staying connected!

## **PLAY A GAME TO IMPROVE BRAIN FUNCTION**

Harvard Medical School defines brain games as any activity that stimulates thinking: Sudoku, puzzles, chess, bridge, Scrabble, to name a few.

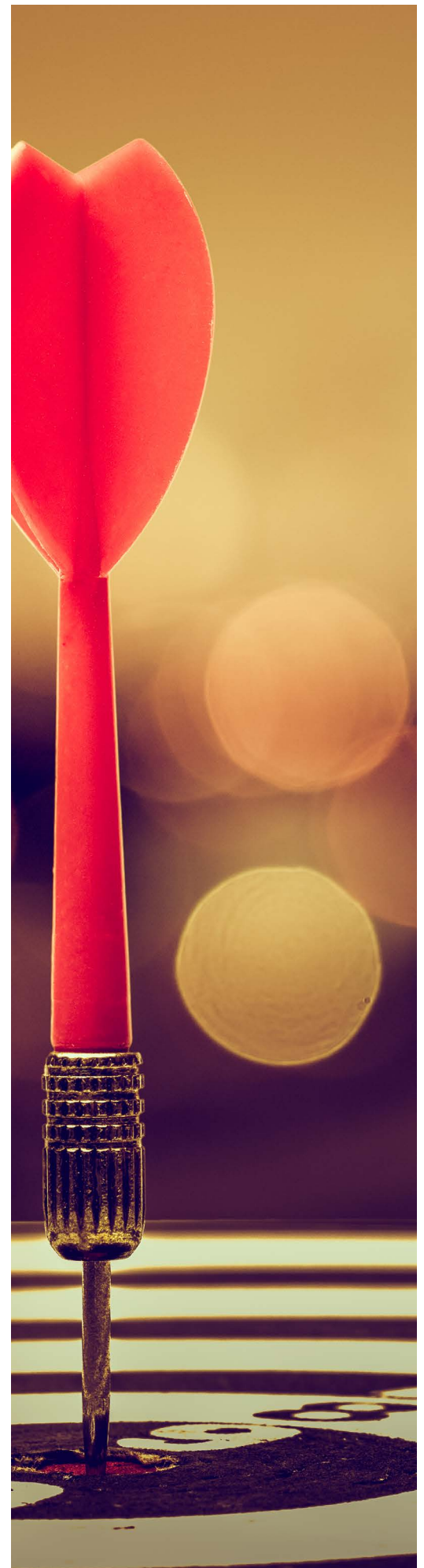
Our brains send electrical signals through neurons. And when consistently exercised, more of these neurological connections are established, which helps the speed and efficiency of brain function.

Throughout history, games have been used to teach us to creatively solve problems. Even if we've been beaten at chess 50 times, for instance, we learn strategy and perseverance.

Brain function aside, gaming – even online gaming – can help us feel less isolated and better connected. So, let's think about connecting to friends from afar. Browse the internet to find some of the best online games we can play with friends, family members and colleagues.

### **WHAT WE CAN DO**

Try to play an online game with a co-worker or suggest a game your entire team can play together, perhaps at the end of the work week.





## **ENSURE YOU GET ENOUGH REST**

According to The Good Body, many of us aren't getting enough sleep. In fact, more than one third (35%) of Americans fail to get the recommended seven hours of sleep each night. And sleep deprivation costs the United States nearly \$411 billion annually. Some of the adverse effects of not getting enough sleep are:

- Obesity
- Car crashes
- Sub-par work or academic performance
- Reliance on prescription sleeping pills, which could lead to addiction

Whatever the reason for foregoing sleep, here are some ways to improve the quality and quantity of our Z's. Healthline suggests we:

- Increase exposure to bright light during the day
- Reduce blue light exposure (emitted by electronics like smartphones and computers) before going to bed
- Avoid caffeine during late afternoons and evenings
- Stay away from daytime naps
- Keep a consistent sleep schedule
- Avoid drinking alcohol
- Exercise – but not before bed

Remember, better rest leads to a clearer mind. So, let's get some good shuteye tonight!

## **WHAT WE CAN DO**

Let's make a pact to try some (or all) of these tips and consider sharing one thing we do to get a better night's sleep.

## **EXPRESS YOURSELF THROUGH JOURNALING**

Some of us do well eliminating or reducing stressful feelings by putting our thoughts down on paper. Verywellmind suggests journaling to help us delve deeper into topics that might be plaguing our thoughts: Will I get that promotion I so badly want? What if a family member falls sick? How am I going to pay the mounting pile of bills?

Writing down our emotions allows us to brainstorm solutions and examine various ways to tackle our problems. It also helps us improve and organize our mindset.

## **WHAT WE CAN DO**

We should all share one thing we do – perhaps writing down our worries – to improve our mental well-being.

## **FOCUS ON WHAT YOU CAN CONTROL**

When life feels uncertain, it can be difficult and worrisome to think about what we don't have control over. But while we cannot control how others react to the current societal stress, we can control how we interact with our family members, co-workers, motorists, grocery store employees and so on. We can choose to be polite, respectful, courageous, cautious and encouraging every day.

Remember we can only control our actions. We cannot control other people, traffic, the weather or the stock market. Think serenity now!

## **WHAT WE CAN DO:**

Let's share one thing we've been unable to control throughout the past year – and one thing we could. It could be enlightening!

## COMMIT TO GROWING YOUR MIND

In her book, “Mindset: The New Psychology of Success,” psychologist Carol Dweck explains the difference between a fixed mindset and a growth mindset. Fixed mindset folks think personality traits like intelligence are fixed. They believe: “I’m good at something or I’m not, so why not give up when something is too challenging?” They take failure and setbacks personally and can be intimidated by the success of others.

Conversely, people with growth mindsets love challenges and keep going, even when frustrated. They believe: “I’ve never been asked to do anything like this before, but regardless how it turns out, I’ll learn something new by simply trying.” Recognizing the value of hard work and learning new skills, folks with a growth mindset tend to feel happier and calmer because they focus on things within their control.

So, those of us with more fixed mindsets should persevere through our next biggest challenge by thinking “Even if I fail, it’s OK because failure does not define me.” We should change the verbiage from “I can’t do this” to “I haven’t done this – yet.” We may be surprised how simply trying, regardless of the outcome, can make us happier and more creative.

## WHAT WE CAN DO

Let’s share one failure and what we learned from the experience. What changed afterward?



I’ve never been asked to do anything like this before, but regardless how it turns out, I’ll learn something new by simply trying.





### **TAKE ONE DAY AT A TIME**

If only we had a crystal ball that would help predict the future: unfortunately, that is not the case. We should try, however, to live for now and take it one day at a time.

All of us should close our eyes and dedicate a few minutes out of each day to think of happier moments. Let's think back to a favorite family vacation or an experience that left us feeling calm and warm inside.

Upon opening our eyes, we should come up with one positive thing about the day – perhaps working with our dog by our side or not having to battle rush-hour traffic. The time will come when today's challenges are in the rear-view mirror. But rather than try to figure out when that will be, we should live for right now.

### **STOP THE COMPARISON GAME**

Social media can be a great way to keep up with the goings-on of our friends, family and acquaintances. But it can also suck us into the comparison trap – their son was accepted into a superior college than mine; my family's camping vacation can't rival their African safari; her engagement ring is twice as big as the one on my finger, and so on.

But when we peek into other people's lives online, we only see the edited high points. We should stop comparing our behind-the-scenes daily occurrences with others' Instagram-perfect snapshots. We should also keep in mind that people rarely post about their failures – just their successes.

### **WHAT WE CAN DO:**

Let's all share a happy memory that helped us through crazy times with a feeling of peace and calm.

### **WHAT WE CAN DO:**

Let's all remember that every one of us has successes and failures. It's OK that not everything in our lives is Facebook- or Instagram-worthy.



## **SNAP OUT OF THE 'DOOMSCROLLING' RUT**

It's no secret that the news and our social media feeds are full of concerning and disheartening announcements. It can be easy to spend hours each day reading and absorbing bad news until we are thoroughly depressed. This constant consumption of bad news has a name – doomscrolling. Thankfully, there are ways to break this habit and bring more positivity and balance to our minds.

The New York Times has offered different tricks we can all use to modify our digital consumption behavior and resist doomscrolling. These include:

- Actively scheduling how much time we read the news each day.
- Practicing meditation to relax and re-center our emotions.
- Connecting with friends and family regularly (if virtually) to help distract and stimulate our minds.

## **STIMULATE YOUR GREY MATTER**

Harvard Medical School tells us we can keep our brains young by doing brainy activities that stimulate new connections between nerve cells. Doing so may even build up a reserve of new brain cells that provide a hedge against future cell loss.

So, how can we stimulate new connections? We can read, take online courses, do crossword or word search puzzles or even math problems. We should also consider drawing, painting, woodworking, jewelry-making or other crafts that teach our brains new things.

## **WHAT WE CAN DO:**

Let's take turns and share what we are doing to remain positive during difficult times.

## **WHAT WE CAN DO**

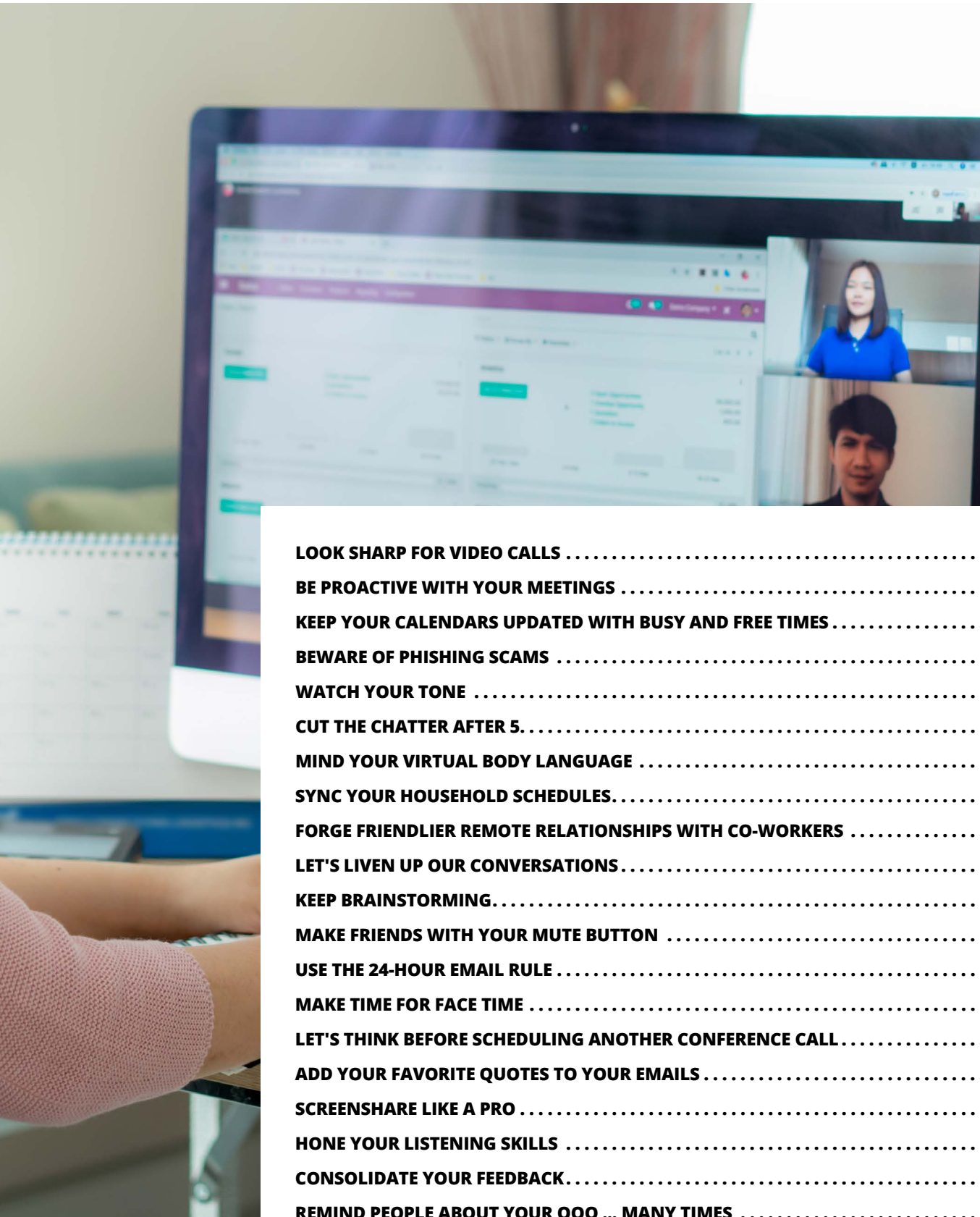
Let's all consider trying something new to stimulate our brains and improve our mental well-being.

# 02 VOICE

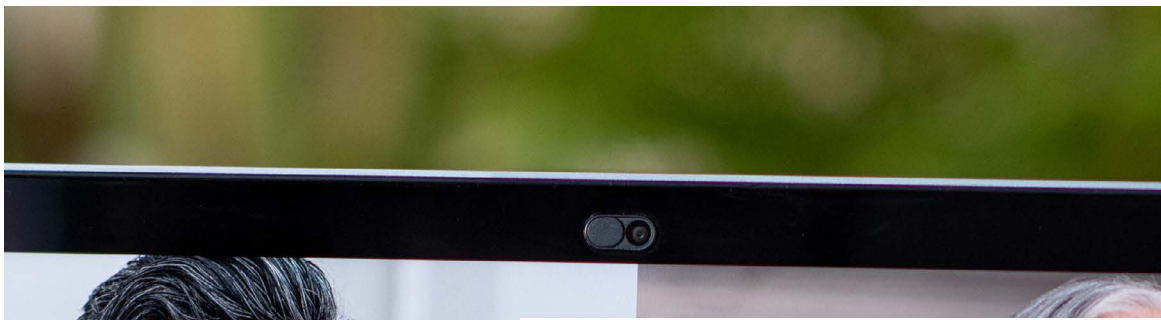
During the COVID-19 pandemic, working remotely has become a part of the normal routine of many people. As such, it's important we all remember that regardless of where we're working, we should always remain professional in our workplace communications and understand that business is business, whether conducted from the office or elsewhere.

Check out these tips for becoming a master communicator – in the office or from afar...





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## LOOK SHARP FOR VIDEO CALLS

The use of video conferencing platforms surged during the first half of 2020. Cisco CEO Chuck Robbins said that his company's video conferencing platform, WebEx, saw more than 5.5 billion meeting minutes of use in just the first 11 business days of March.

With so many people using webcams for work, here are five tips we should consider for looking sharp on video calls:

1. Elevate webcams to eye-level. No one wants to see up our noses.
2. Avoid sitting in front of windows or lamps. Bright light in the background can turn us into a silhouette.
3. Make sure no one else is in the background. Let's remind family or roommates when we'll be on a call, and let's lock office doors so no one can accidentally interrupt.
4. Let's make eye contact with our cameras – and fellow conference callers.
5. Lastly, we should dress appropriately for the job. We don't want clients or prospects to see if our hair is uncombed or shirt is wrinkled.

## WHAT WE CAN DO:

Let's make the best use of video conferencing by adopting these simple yet effective tips!



## **BE PROACTIVE WITH YOUR MEETINGS**

Out of sight is out of mind. It can be easy to let projects get off track without the visual reminders of seeing our colleagues around the office.

So, let's be proactive with our meetings. We should look at our to-do list and schedule regular touchpoints with co-workers to discuss project statuses and next steps. Regular check-ins, even if they are only a few minutes long, will help keep everyone on track.

## **WHAT WE CAN DO:**

Let's connect regularly to keep projects moving.

## **KEEP YOUR CALENDARS UPDATED WITH BUSY AND FREE TIMES**

Even though teams in some organizations are oftentimes scattered, it is important to remain accessible to our colleagues. When working remotely, we should try to maintain an "open door" policy for at least part of each day. Also, we should be available for phone calls and messages in the same way we would be if a co-worker stopped by our desk for a quick question.

And when we know we absolutely CANNOT be disturbed during a certain window – such as for an important meeting or to crank out a project – let's mark that time on our calendar so our colleagues can see. And we should check our co-workers' calendars before giving them a spontaneous call.

## **WHAT WE CAN DO:**

Let's do each other a solid and keep our calendars up to date.



## **BEWARE OF PHISHING SCAMS**

Cyber criminals are always upping their game and coming up with new ways to prey on potential victims by attempting to trick the unwary. During times of national anxiety, cyber attacks can surge. For instance there was a 667% increase in phishing emails in March 2020 when people, worldwide, were having to make lifestyle changes due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

As a reminder, “phishing” is when a cybercriminal sends an email while pretending to be a reputable contact. The email can try to trick the unsuspecting recipient into opening a link or attachment that includes malware or compromising sensitive information.

Key indicators of phishing scams include:

- Unusual timing
- Misspellings
- A sense of urgency – “Act now!” language
- Promises of cures or vaccines
- Requests for passwords, usernames or financial information

So, let’s all remember to think before clicking any links or opening any attachments. Let’s slow down and thoroughly examine the email. When in doubt, report the suspicious message without opening links or attachments or replying!

## **WHAT WE CAN DO:**

Let’s just say no to suspicious emails. Better to delete than download and potentially compromise the company and/or our co-workers.

## **WATCH YOUR TONE**

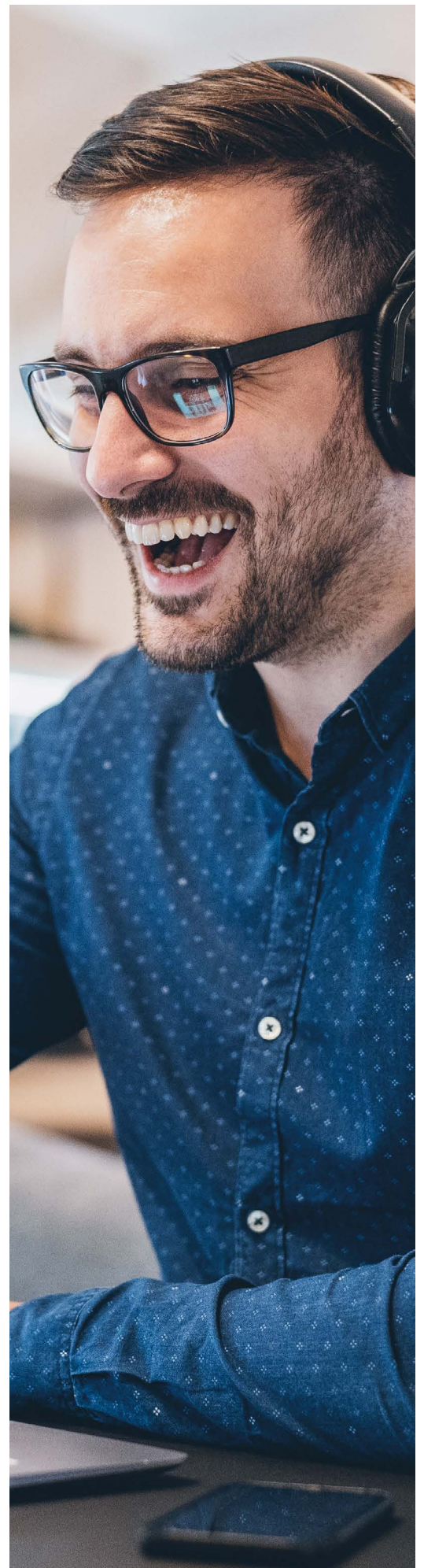
People communicate with words, body language, facial expression and intonation. But when we're working remotely and only communicating through email or phone calls, it can be easy to misinterpret what someone says. For example, the email from a co-worker critiquing a project, when not accompanied by their friendly voice and cheery smile, could sound more severe than intended. Or a sarcastic joke, which would be obvious as a joke if told in person, could fall flat over the phone and offend.

To avoid these issues, using a video conferencing tool is the best way to communicate because participants can see our facial expressions and body language cues. If video isn't possible, let's overcommunicate in our emails and phone calls. We can even use emojis in more informal emails to communicate our emotions.

And, let's agree to take an extra minute to review our emails to make sure the message is straightforward with no room for another interpretation.

## **WHAT WE CAN DO:**

Let's all do our best to use approved company video conferencing tools so that we can see each other's faces during meetings.



## **CUT THE CHATTER AFTER 5**

When working from an office, it's normal to have a set time – say 5 p.m. – to log off our work computers, pack up and head home. The change in physical setting would let our brains know it was time to switch gears and start enjoying our evenings, with maybe just a couple email checks to be sure there were no fires to put out.

When working from home, however, when 5 p.m. hits, we tend to simply migrate from our home office to...our home.

The lack of physical distinction between workspace and home life has blurred the lines for some, and it can be challenging to know when it's worktime and when we should take the evenings and weekends to relax. Some of us even feel pressure in the evenings to reply to our co-worker's nonurgent email, even though it was sent after-hours, simply because we're still in "work mode." And then we reply to another email and another and another, and before we know it, the evening is gone.

So, if the communication can wait until the next day, let's think twice before emailing co-workers after work hours. Doing so allows all of us to take the evenings to relax and recharge.

## **WHAT WE CAN DO:**

Let's all just say no to sending nonurgent emails outside of work hours.

## **MIND YOUR VIRTUAL BODY LANGUAGE**

Video conferencing allows us to better connect with our distant co-workers. And it's much easier to communicate when we can see real-time facial expressions and read someone's body language. Remember, though, posture is part of our body language, and how we sit in video calls can convey our engagement (or lack thereof) in the current topic and our respect for co-workers.

Here are four tips for improving our posture on video conference calls:

- 1.** Sit up straight! We should imagine a string coming out of the top of our head and connecting to the ceiling. We should also pull those shoulders back to avoid slouching over our screen.
- 2.** Let's also pull our chair closer to the camera and computer so we don't have to lean forward to see co-workers' faces or the presentation. Leaning forward can cause us to hunch our shoulders.
- 3.** We should also elevate our cameras to eye level because looking down at our camera can cause us to round our shoulders unconsciously.
- 4.** As tempting as it might be, we must avoid sitting on a nice, soft couch. Doing so makes it easy to lean back on soft cushions and forget about posture...which, in turn, might make us appear unengaged and uninterested in work and more interested in what might be on TV.

## **WHAT WE CAN DO:**

Let's all sit up straight like Mama taught us and try to have the best posture on the team.

## **SYNC YOUR HOUSEHOLD SCHEDULES**

When working remotely, communicating with one another can be just half the challenge. Depending on the size of our households, we might also need to talk through our schedules with housemates.

Whatever the week's schedule holds, we should let family and other housemates know when we can't be interrupted. Here are a few tips for syncing schedules:

- Put up a master calendar in the kitchen or other central space showing blocks when we have meetings or need uninterrupted time for a project.
- Rotate signs or simple sheets of construction paper on the office door showing when we're available and when we're not. A green sign for "Come on in!" and a red sign for "Please do not disturb" should help!
- Those of us with young children and spouses working from home should divvy up the responsibility of keeping the kiddos occupied and entertained each day.

## **WHAT WE CAN DO:**

Let's swap tips for cohabitating with others while working from home to help keep our relationships and sanity intact!



## **FORGE FRIENDLIER REMOTE RELATIONSHIPS WITH CO-WORKERS**

When technology becomes our top communication tool with remote co-workers, it can be a challenge to build relationships. No coffee chats in the break room. No lunchtimes or happy hours together.

Research shows that those of us with friends in the workplace are not only happier with our jobs but are more engaged, better performers. Harvard Business Review suggests we should brush up on our communication skills with colleagues for a better chance of forging friendships. This might include responding to colleagues in a timely manner or finding commonalities like a shared love for ice cream, running or concert-going.

Ultimately, making friends with virtual colleagues requires proactive communications and taking chances. So, none of us should be afraid to put ourselves out there.

## **WHAT WE CAN DO:**

Let's find out one interesting thing about each of our co-workers and share a unique point about ourselves.

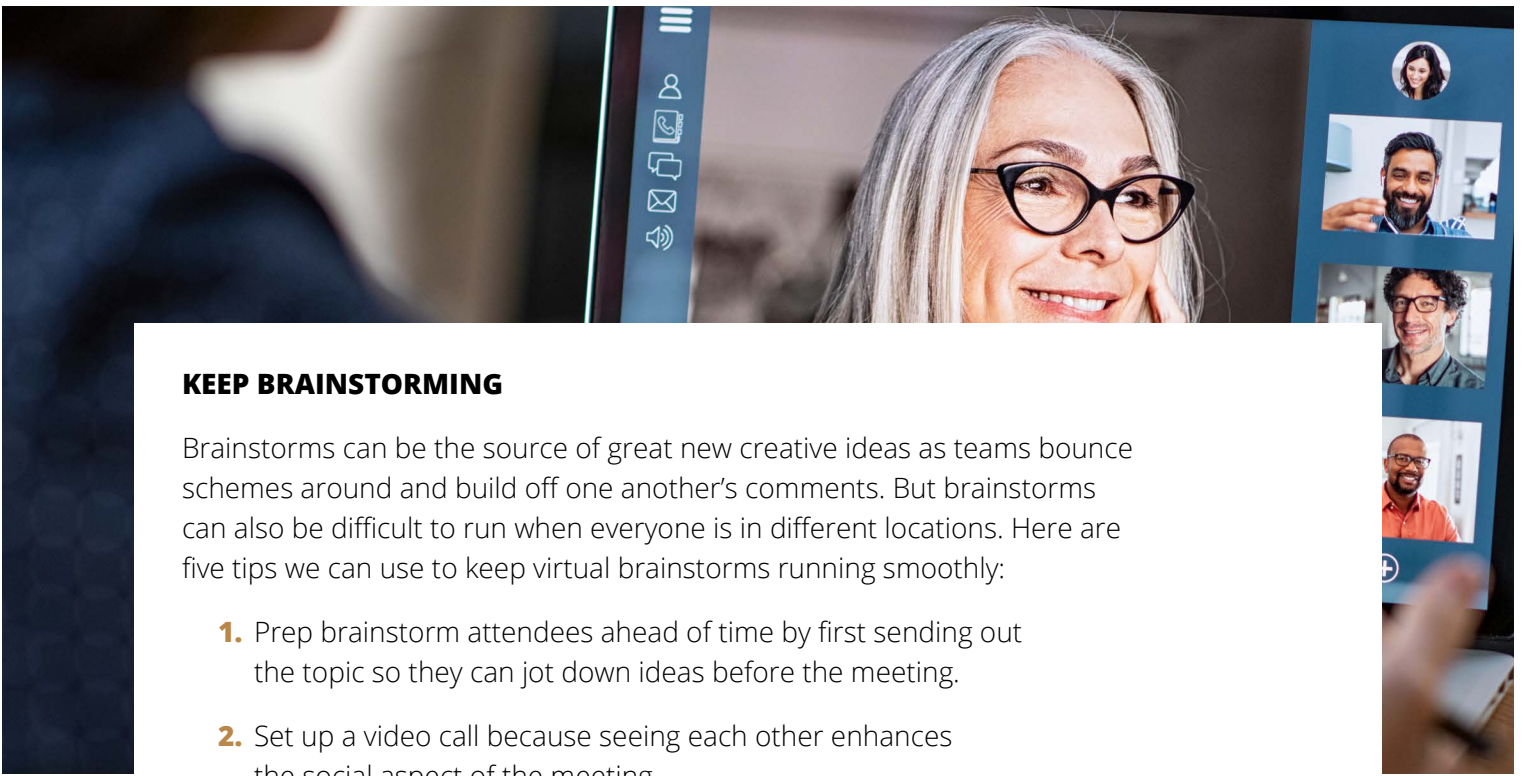
## **LET'S LIVEN UP OUR CONVERSATIONS**

Many of us struggle to have meaningful conversations when only syncing with co-workers remotely, or we draw a blank when someone asks us how we're doing. To avoid either situation, we should avoid asking questions that lend themselves to one-word answers. Instead, let's ask questions with some mettle, like, "How are you balancing work while homeschooling three children?" and, "What types of meals are you finding time to cook?" These questions invite a more in-depth and interesting conversation.

Second, we should prep before conversations: Let's recall what we have previously discussed with the colleagues we're about to meet with and ask about those topics. "How is your mother doing after her fall?" "What's your secret for keeping your sanity balancing kids, pets and two of you working from home?"

## **WHAT WE CAN DO:**

Let's remember to ask thought-provoking questions that help us better engage our co-workers and customers, too.



## KEEP BRAINSTORMING

Brainstorms can be the source of great new creative ideas as teams bounce schemes around and build off one another's comments. But brainstorms can also be difficult to run when everyone is in different locations. Here are five tips we can use to keep virtual brainstorms running smoothly:

1. Prep brainstorm attendees ahead of time by first sending out the topic so they can jot down ideas before the meeting.
2. Set up a video call because seeing each other enhances the social aspect of the meeting.
3. Use a virtual whiteboard and designate a scribe to input everyone's ideas while also sharing his or her screen so attendees can see the whole list.
4. Welcome all ideas because brainstorms are a time to collect as many ideas as possible. The analysis and planning come later.
5. Take turns. We all know people accidentally talk over each other during virtual meetings, so let's try and use conferencing app buttons that symbolize participants raising a hand (a la Zoom) so everyone has time to share. We don't want great ideas lost in a cacophony of creative voices.

### WHAT WE CAN DO:

We should open up sessions with these reminders to make the most of our virtual brainstorms.

## MAKE FRIENDS WITH YOUR MUTE BUTTON

Although it seems like a no brainer, we should remember that when we are not speaking on conference calls, it's best to place ourselves on mute. Otherwise, the overall background noise of the call can become maddening and meetings unproductive.

On the other hand, when it is our turn to talk, it can be easy to forget to take ourselves off of mute. Even the CEO of Zoom has left his mic on mute while he was trying to speak on an earnings call.

So, here are some reminders to keep us proactively muted (or not) during meetings:

- Join the call a few minutes early to ensure there's time to find and play with the mute button.
- Follow the agenda closely so it's easy to anticipate when we will need to unmute ourselves. Remember that slow Wi-Fi can cause a delay in mics turning on and off.

## WHAT WE CAN DO:

Let's remember to be patient and understanding when someone makes a mistake with the mute button. Given the number of conference calls we all attend each week, mistakes are bound to happen.

## USE THE 24-HOUR EMAIL RULE

Inbox anxiety is real. A clogged inbox overflowing with unread and unanswered emails can overwhelm even the most senior worker, and the chimes of new arrivals can haunt our dreams. With the average person spending nearly three-and-a-half hours each workday just checking their work email, it is important that we're respectful and courteous when deciding when and how many times to follow up with co-workers.

Let's remember the 24-hour rule. After sending a co-worker an email, we should give them at least 24 hours to respond. When the time is up and there's no reply, we should feel free to send a short follow up note.

## WHAT WE CAN DO:

All of us should give each other breathing room on replies when the need isn't urgent.

## MAKE TIME FOR FACE TIME

When all of our meetings are remote, it can be easy to fall into the habit of only talking with each other on the phone instead of using a video conferencing platform. A normal phone call is fine for a quick question, but video conferencing can actually improve our communication as we are able to read and respond to co-workers' body language and expressions. And, of course, seeing our co-workers can also help strengthen our interpersonal relationships.

Video calls aren't quite the same as being in a real conference room together, but they are still better than simply hearing a disembodied voice. So, let's remember to go video-first, when possible, on all of our conference calls.

## WHAT WE CAN DO:

Let's lead by example for co-workers, clients and others by using our own camera during conference calls.



### **LET'S THINK BEFORE SCHEDULING ANOTHER CONFERENCE CALL**

Although we all know and appreciate how video and audio conferencing keeps us connected, 'Zoom fatigue' is real. So is fatigue from Cisco WebEx, Microsoft Teams and plain phone calls, especially when an email or instant message would suffice.

Therefore, before scheduling another meeting, let's ask whether it's necessary. Instead of taking up people's work time with a meeting, we should consider whether the issue or project could instead be discussed via email. Many times, they can, and it can save everyone time and energy!

### **ADD FAVORITE QUOTES TO EMAILS**

Want to inspire and encourage fellow remote co-workers from afar? Let's add a zingy or thoughtful quote at the end of email messages ... one that speaks to us from favorite authors, leaders, comedians, and more!

This is just one small step to help our communications bring a smile or chuckle to co-workers. Although we might not touch everyone, we could brighten one person's day.

As Dr. Maya Angelou once said, "Be a rainbow in someone else's clouds."

### **WHAT WE CAN DO:**

Video and audio conferences are great methods of communications, but they aren't always necessary. Let's find a balance.

### **WHAT WE CAN DO:**

Let's consider adding a quote to our email signatures each day and see what responses we get from the other end.



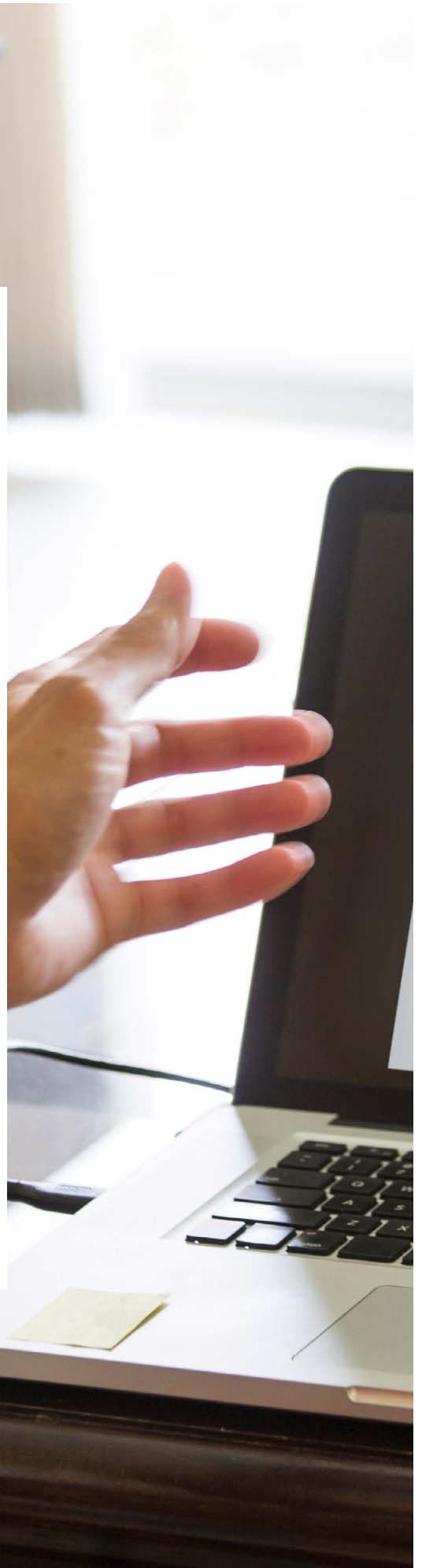
## SCREENSHARE LIKE A PRO

With the number of virtual meetings we attend each week, it's fair to assume that each of us has or will soon need to share our screen during a call. That way, our fellow meeting attendees can see our presentation or document. But, before we share our screen, we should remember to go through a quick checklist so that screensharing doesn't turn into oversharing:

- Disable notifications – When we receive a new email or IM, many times a preview of that message can pop up somewhere on our screen, too. This can be distracting at best and potentially disclose confidential information at worst. We should either turn off notifications and/or close our email and instant message platforms while sharing our screen.
- Close all other documents.
- Clean up our desktop – We may consider moving all desktop files into a single folder to present a cleaner screen.

## WHAT WE CAN DO:

Let's go through the checklist before sharing our screens.



## HONE THOSE LISTENING SKILLS

Ernest Hemingway once said, “When people talk, listen completely. Most people never listen.”

Some people are better listeners than others. Instead of trying to really listen to what another person is saying, there are those who interrupt, start to formulate a response or stop listening because they think they know what someone is going to say. And since remote communications has some challenges already, we should ask ourselves if we are truly trying to hear what our co-workers are saying.

Today, let’s make a concerted effort not to zone out. Instead, we can mindfully practice listening to our colleagues using these tips:

- Listen to learn
- Set agendas aside
- Repeat back what we heard
- Be patient and wait to talk until the speaker is done
- Ask questions for clarification

Our co-workers will appreciate the effort we make to become better listeners. And let’s remember the words of Greek philosopher Diogenes: “We have two ears and one tongue so we would listen more and talk less.”

## WHAT WE CAN DO:

Let’s button the lips and open the ears so we can listen with intent.

## **CONSOLIDATE YOUR FEEDBACK**

We all have that one co-worker, client or vendor who bombards us with multiple, back-to-back emails with feedback on the same topic. Or maybe we're the culprit who sends these rapid-fire messages without waiting for a response. We all get busy, and it can be tough sometimes to find time to organize all our thoughts into one email.

But sending several emails on the same topic over a short period of time can be overwhelming as the recipient tries to sort through various comments and questions, especially when walking over to our co-worker's desk to discuss the topic isn't an option.

So, if someone is waiting for our feedback on a project, we should consider blocking off time on our calendar for crafting a response. Doing so will show that we respect the recipient's time.

## **REMIND PEOPLE ABOUT OUR OOO ... MANY TIMES**

We've all been there. We plan a week of vacation and let co-workers know in advance that we'll be out. And still, someone calls or emails, expecting a quick reply. This lapse in memory can happen even more often when we work remotely, since co-workers can't see our empty desk.

So, let's remind co-workers about upcoming OOO more often than we would if we were all in the office. In the two weeks before our vacation, we should mention our time off at the end of each meeting or put reminders in our email signature. And let's not forget the ever-helpful OOO email auto-response.

## **WHAT YOU CAN DO:**

We should not only share this tip with others but lead by example. We all need to remember not to send three short emails when a single, more well-thought-out response will do.

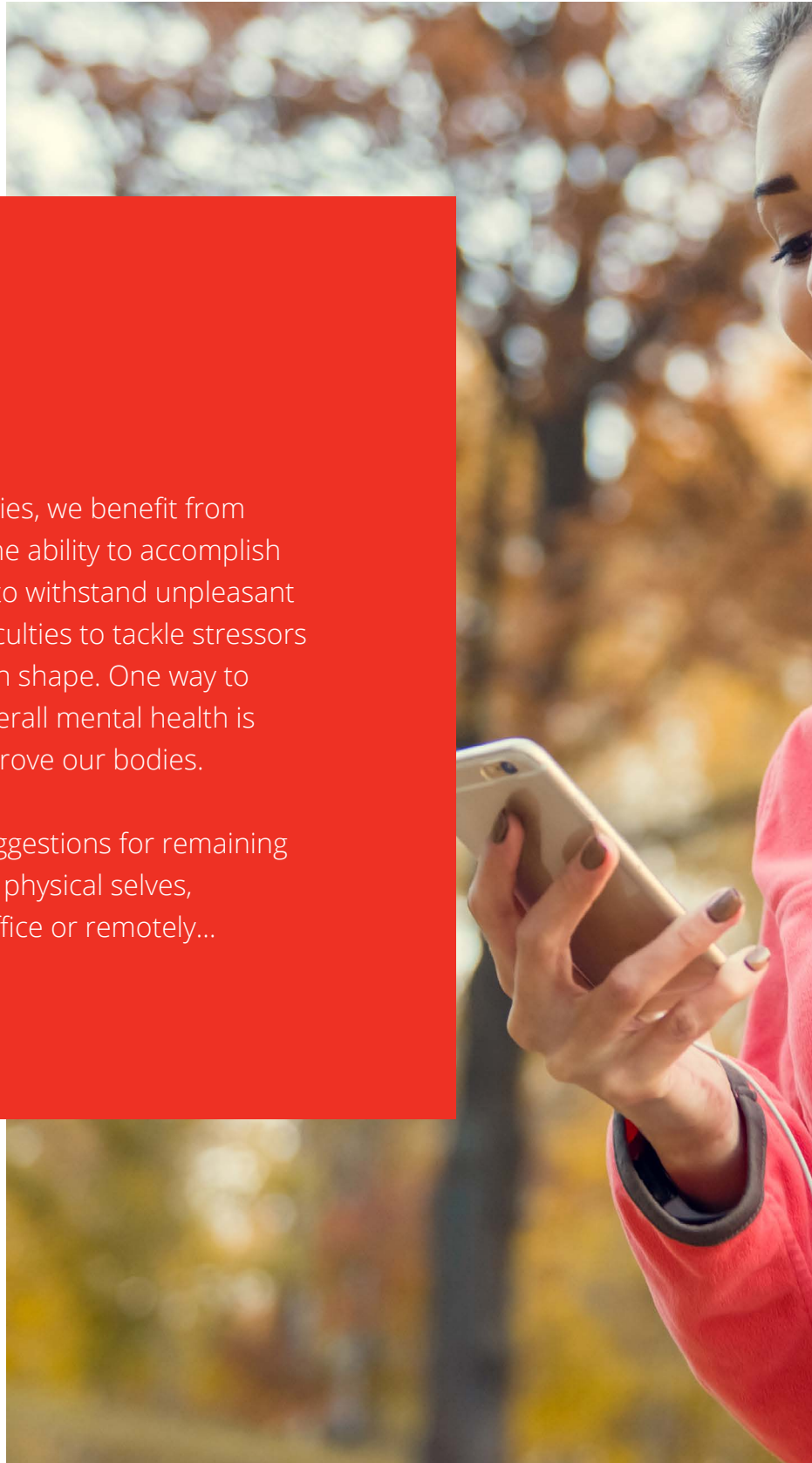
## **WHAT WE CAN DO:**

Let's share this tip with our colleagues. Or go big and take up the task of creating a team vacation calendar that everyone can use to enter their OOO time.

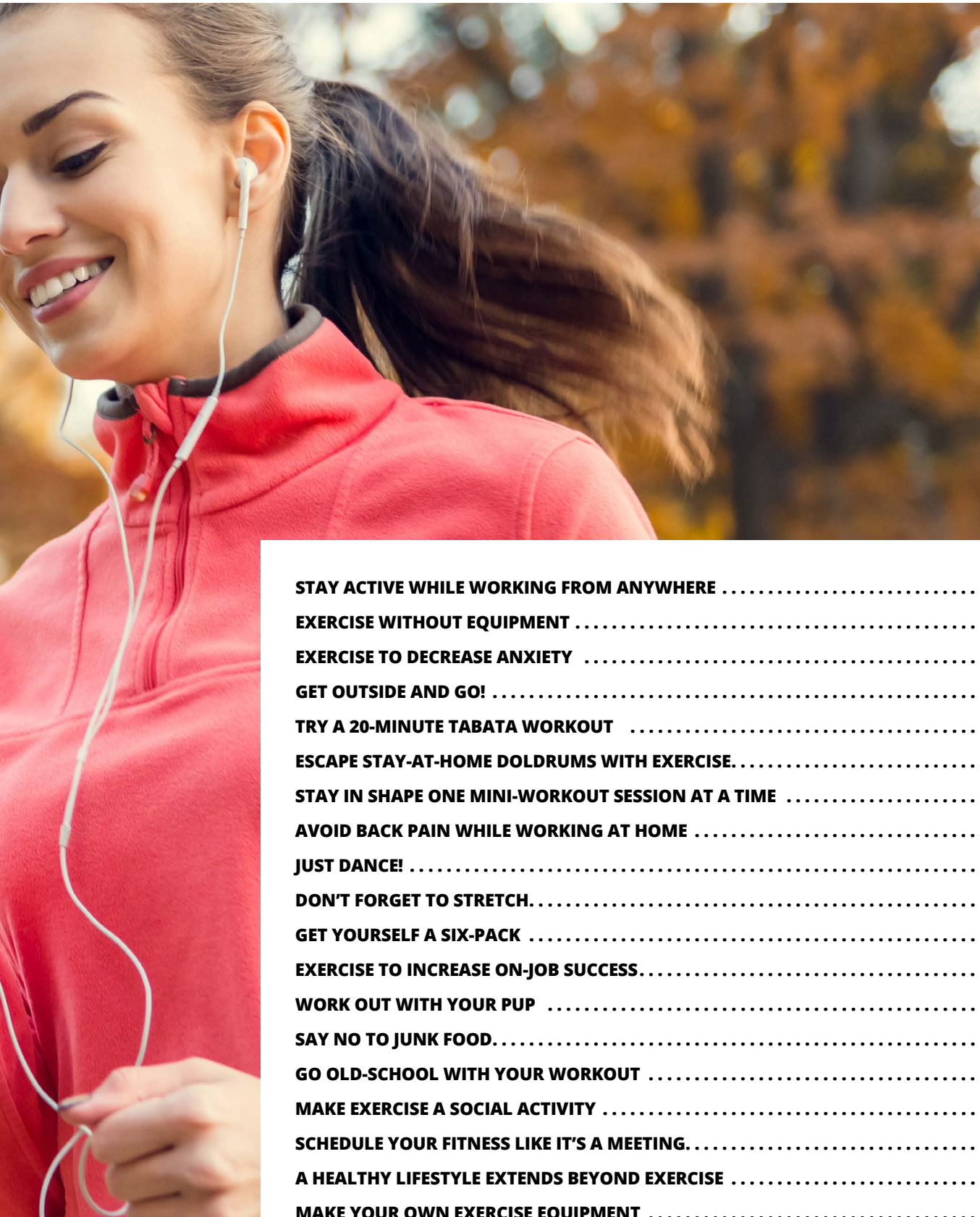
# 03 BODY

When taking care of our bodies, we benefit from increased levels of energy, the ability to accomplish daily goals, the wherewithal to withstand unpleasant situations and the mental faculties to tackle stressors head-on – all while keeping in shape. One way to improve our physical and overall mental health is to partake in exercise to improve our bodies.

Let's take in the following suggestions for remaining active and taking care of our physical selves, whether working from the office or remotely...







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## STAY ACTIVE WHILE WORKING FROM ANYWHERE

According to the American College of Sports Medicine, “the Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans recommend 150-300 minutes per week of moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity and 2 sessions per week of muscle strength training.”

When working remotely, it’s easy for us to fall out of normal exercise routines or even forget to stand up and move around during the day. Here are five tips we should remember for staying active at home during the workday:

1. Turn on some music and walk or dance around the house for 10-15 minutes 2-3 times a day.
2. Go for a walk around the block or use home aerobic machines.
3. Search YouTube for quick exercise videos, including strength training and yoga.
4. Kick around a ball with family.
5. Don't sit all day! Let's get up, stretch and walk around a little each hour.

## WHAT WE CAN DO:

We all know that staying active is important to our physical health and mental well-being. So, let's just do it!

## EXERCISE WITHOUT EQUIPMENT

According to the National Center for Biotechnology Information, U.S. National Library of Medicine, physical activity is associated with enhanced cognitive processing, among other benefits.

Even on days when we can't make it to the gym, we can exercise anyway.

Using our own body weight with a circuit-type program can be an effective way to maintain strength and aerobic health in a short period of time. Body-weight workouts can incorporate a variety of movements that don't require equipment. For a quick and effective workout, let's complete three repetitions of the following:

**45-SECOND SQUAT JUMPS** For lower impact and intensity, omit the jump and just come up on your toes.

**20 ALTERNATING LUNGES** Take a step forward and lower your body so your front leg forms a 90-degree angle without your knee extending past your toes.

**15 PUSHUPS** Start in a plank position on your knees or toes. Remember to engage your core and glutes while lowering the body toward the floor.

**15 ABDOMINAL CRUNCHES** Make sure not to pull on your head or neck and engage the core.

**10 BURPEES** These can be done with or without the hop at the top.

## WHAT WE CAN DO:

Let's stay active by sharing these tips to help keep our mental and physical well-being intact.

### **EXERCISE TO DECREASE ANXIETY**

What's the best kind of exercise to do? Any exercise that we'll actually do! Let's try different formats until we find something enjoyable that works.

Physical activity helps our mind and body in many ways, including:

- Releasing chemicals like serotonin and endorphins in the brain, which can help elevate our mood
- Giving us more energy – the sweat is worth it!
- Enabling more restful sleep
- Boosting our immune system
- Decreasing the risk of serious health issues like cardiovascular disease and type 2 diabetes

In general, the Mayo Clinic recommends aiming for at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity every day. Examples of moderate exercise are swimming, brisk walking and even mowing the lawn.

### **WHAT WE CAN DO:**

Let's make a pact and get up out of our chairs for a quick mid-day exercise break or wake up early to take a yoga class.

## GET OUTSIDE AND GO!

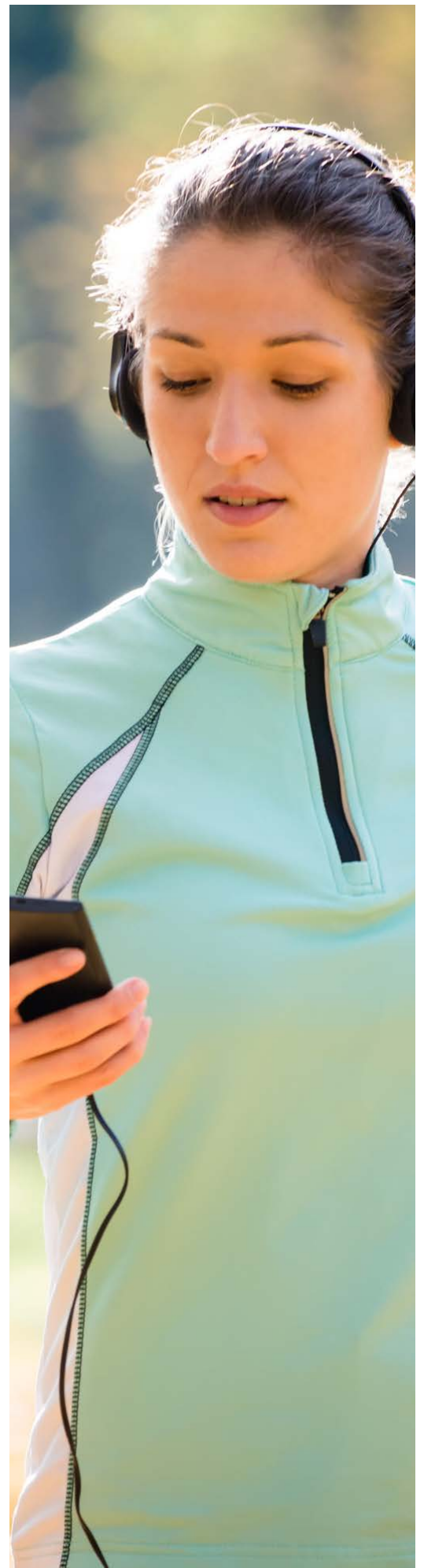
Working out contributes to good health, which in turn, helps boost our immune systems. And it can be invigorating to get outside in nature to exercise. According to ACE Fitness, outside exercise, also known as “green exercise,” is a great way to enhance our mood and get in touch with Mother Nature. Plus, it’s free! Here’s a simple circuit we can all try on for size:

- 10 jumping jacks
- 1 minute of jogging in place
- 20 air squats
- 20 abdominal crunches
- 10 pushups with knees up or on the ground

**REPEAT THREE TIMES.**

## WHAT WE CAN DO:

Any form of exercise better than no exercise, so we should all encourage each other to simply get outside and move – or try the suggested circuit.





## TRY A 20-MINUTE TABATA WORKOUT

Tabata workouts are an interval-based training method incorporating 20 seconds of work and 10 seconds of rest for four minutes. This equates to each exercise in the following regime being repeated 8 times. Rest for one minute between sets for a 20-minute workout.

### TABATA SET 1 repeat for four minutes

- 20 seconds of jumping jacks/10 seconds of rest
- 20 seconds of alternating lunges with weights/10 seconds of rest

### TABATA SET 2 repeat for four minutes

- 20 seconds of biceps curls/10 seconds of rest
- 20 seconds of abdominal crunches/10 seconds of rest

### TABATA SET 3 repeat for four minutes

- 20 seconds of running in place with high knees/10 seconds of rest
- 20 seconds of weighted squats/10 seconds of rest

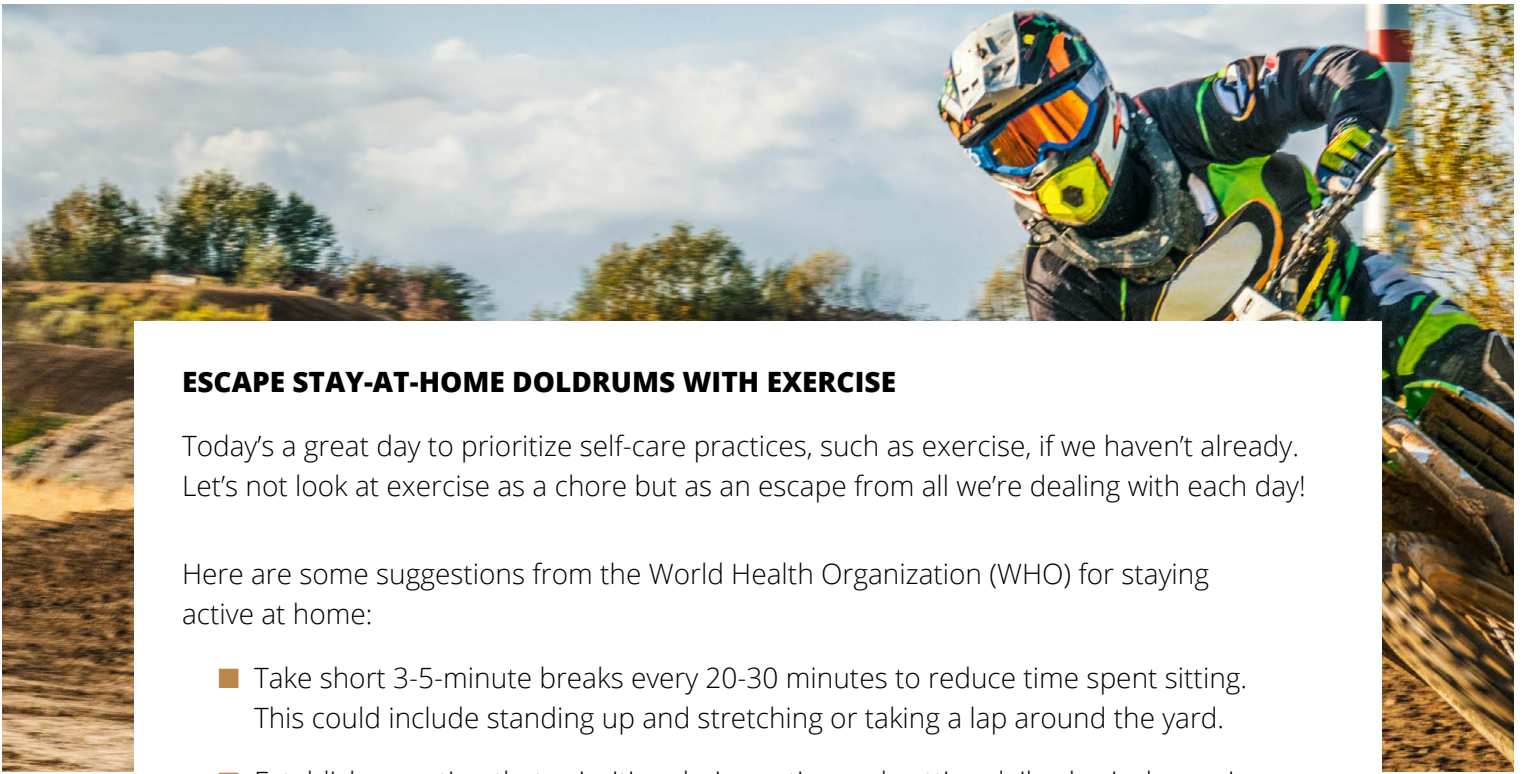
### TABATA SET 4 repeat for four minutes

- 20 seconds of pushups (knees or toes)/10 seconds of rest
- 20 seconds of planks (knees or toes)/10 seconds of rest

When we're working out from home and do not have dumbbells, we can always improvise with water or milk jugs or go without weights. Any exercise is better than none!

## WHAT WE CAN DO:

Let's all try out this 20-minute Tabata workout and simply see how it goes!



## ESCAPE STAY-AT-HOME DOLDRUMS WITH EXERCISE

Today's a great day to prioritize self-care practices, such as exercise, if we haven't already. Let's not look at exercise as a chore but as an escape from all we're dealing with each day!

Here are some suggestions from the World Health Organization (WHO) for staying active at home:

- Take short 3-5-minute breaks every 20-30 minutes to reduce time spent sitting. This could include standing up and stretching or taking a lap around the yard.
- Establish a routine that prioritizes being active and getting daily physical exercise.
- Exercise with friends and family – outside, of course. This could be a simple walk or bike ride around the neighborhood.
- Set daily exercise goals that are challenging but realistic.

### WHAT WE CAN DO:

Let's put these tips into our back pocket – and into action so we stay physically active each day.

## STAY IN SHAPE ONE MINI-WORKOUT SESSION AT A TIME

We all want to say we're too busy for a 30- or 60-minute workout, but let's brush that excuse aside. Shape magazine tells us that short bouts of exercise can be as effective as longer ones if the intensity level and overall workout time are comparable. So, let's make time for three 10-minute workouts throughout the day. Who's game?

Shape suggests repeating any of these exercises for a minute at a time. We can make them high- or low-impact.

**JUMPING JACKS** We know how to do these. If our lower body joints say no to high impact, let's omit jumping and always keep one foot on the ground.

**STAIR RUNNING OR WALKING** Travel up the stairs with arms pumping and stay safe by walking down. We can vary this exercise by taking two steps at a time.

**JUMP ROPE** The rope is optional. Depending on our fitness level, we can jump high and raise our knees to hip level or keep one foot on the ground, shuffling right and left.

**SQUAT JUMP** Let's bend our knees and lower our hips as if sitting in a chair. Jump up while lifting arms overhead and then land gently. Again, the jump is optional.

**STEP-UP AND DOWN** Find a curb, stair or steady platform. Alternate right and left as we step. For higher intensity, we can add a hop when stepping up.

**JOG IN PLACE** Let's find a small area and jog in place or in a small circle, lifting knees up and swinging arms naturally.

**LEAP SIDE TO SIDE** Place an object on the floor and leap from left to right over it. Or step sideways over it for lower intensity.

## WHAT WE CAN DO:

Let's all select a favorite exercise or two – or all – and design our own 10-minute workout. And then do it three times a day!

## **AVOID BACK PAIN WHILE WORKING AT HOME**

According to the American Chiropractic Association, back pain is the single leading cause of disability worldwide, preventing people from engaging in work and other everyday activities. Back pain is the third most common reason for doctor's office visits, behind skin disorders and joint disorders.

When working from home – and even when we're back in the office – let's incorporate these tips from Fern Health for maintaining healthy posture and avoiding back pain.

- Keep computers at eye level. If needed, stack them on top of some books
- Relax your shoulders and keep your spine straight
- If your lower back is uncomfortable, place a rolled towel or blanket behind it for support
- Ensure your elbows are at a 90-degree angle
- Place your feet flat on the floor
- If working from the couch or an upholstered chair, arrange pillows behind your lower back to maintain a straight spine
- Create a standing desk by propping your computer up on a dresser
- If standing, wear supportive shoes

## **WHAT WE CAN DO:**

Let's practice these tips to avoid debilitating back pain while working from home.

### **JUST DANCE!**

Dancing has many physical, mental and emotional benefits. It requires balance, strength, endurance and cognitive ability, too. So, let's turn on some music and dance with abandon!

Among other benefits, dancing improves cardiovascular health, balance and strength, boosts cognitive performance, challenges our brains and can be a social activity.

In an article, "A Dancer's Brain Develops in a Unique Way," Hanna Poikonen of the Cognitive Brain Research Unit at the University of Helsinki wrote: "In dance, the basic elements of humanity combine in a natural way. It combines creative act, fine-tuned movement and collaboration, much like playing music. The movement involves the whole body, like in sports..."

So, let's choose a style – whether Zumba, hip-hop, Cha-cha, tap –and have some fun while getting exercise in. Perhaps a virtual dance party is in order!

### **DON'T FORGET TO STRETCH**

Ever wonder why cats stretch so much? They do so to get their muscles moving after inactivity that includes sleeping or sitting still, according to Live Science. Whether working from the comfort of our home or back in the office, we shouldn't underestimate the power of stretching!

Verywellfit tells us that stretching our muscles has numerous benefits, including reducing neck and shoulder pain and increasing productivity once we return to work after a stretch break.

### **WHAT WE CAN DO:**

Pass these tips onto your staff and if you're brave enough, show them on video a dance move that you're working to perfect.

### **WHAT WE CAN DO:**

Share your favorite stretch!

## GET YOURSELF A SIX-PACK

Core strength is crucial for our overall fitness and helps us improve balance, stability and overall health. Plus, strong abs make us less likely to fall victim to debilitating back pain.

Getting six-pack abs requires dedication and hard work – but does not mean we should do endless amounts of crunches. In fact, other than core-specific exercises, Healthline suggests:

**DOING MORE CARDIO**, which helps reduce belly fat and makes our abdominal muscles more visible

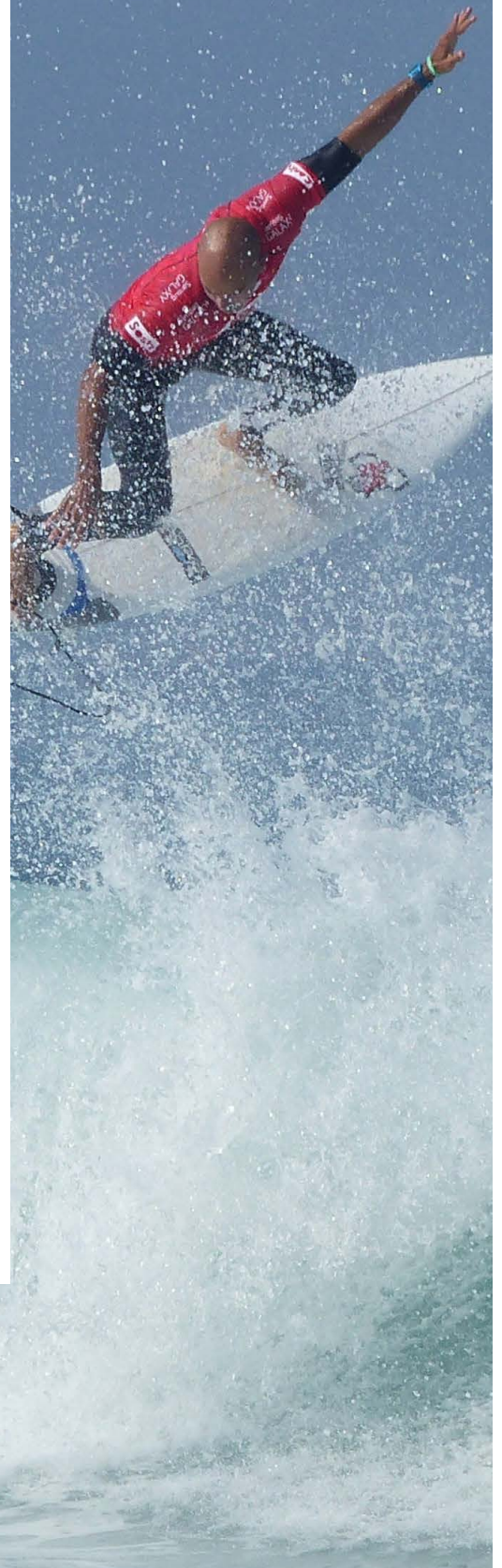
**INCREASING OUR PROTEIN INTAKE**, which boosts feelings of fullness and promotes appetite control

**PRACTICING HIGH-INTENSITY INTERVAL TRAINING**, which involves alternating between intense activity bursts and short recoveries – and increases fat burning

There's a six-pack in each and every one of us if we're willing to do the grueling work to get there.

### WHAT WE CAN DO:

Let's commit to getting a stronger core, improving posture and feeling toned and strong.







## **EXERCISE TO INCREASE ON-JOB SUCCESS**

Although some people work in a corporate office, many of us work from home. The more we stay at home, the easier it is to sit on the couch, make numerous trips to the kitchen or pantry, binge watch TV and forego exercise. However, physical exercise is essential to optimal health.

In fact, Entrepreneur.com says exercise is one thing that most successful people do. And not just sometimes, but every day. Entrepreneur reports that Cher, Warren Buffet, Richard Branson and Barack Obama incorporate regular physical activity into their routines and consider it integral to their success.

Therefore, let's set time aside to build a workout schedule – whether before work, during lunch or in the evening. We should set some goals, too, whether that means losing weight, doing 25 pushups without a break or running five miles daily. Not only does exercise build muscles, it builds our brain and benefits our mental well-being, too.

### **WHAT WE CAN DO:**

Let's all remember regular exercise is vital to our overall health and finding greater success, whether on the playing field, yoga mat or in the boardroom.

## **WORK OUT WITH YOUR PUP**

Does our at-home workout routine need a bit more variety and camaraderie? Would our dog love some more one-on-one time with their best friend? Why not combine the two!

A quick internet search reveals some exercises we can do with our four-legged buddy. From curls and squats to push-ups, the difficulty of these doggone good exercises will vary depending on the size of your available pooch. Do you have guns of steel? Your St. Bernard will be no burden. Just getting into weight training? A chihuahua is the way to go.

And, of course, those of us who prefer getting outside for exercise can bring our pups along. We can even pick a new route each week to provide a change in scenery.

## **WHAT WE CAN DO:**

Hands up! Who regularly works out with his or her dog?

## **SAY NO TO JUNK FOOD**

When working at home, we have easy access to much more food than we would in the office (usually), but that is not an excuse for eating unhealthy foods. The Ohio State University suggests following the 80/20 rule: eat 80% healthy foods – such as fruits, veggies and lean proteins – and 20% “want” foods – cookies and cream ice cream, for example.

Tiny trips to the kitchen can lead to loads of extra calories. So, eater, beware! Rather than graze through the day, we should set regular snack times and grab something healthy and filling, such as a low-fat yogurt, a fruit smoothie or a banana with a spoonful of peanut butter.

## **WHAT WE CAN DO:**

Let's share a healthy recipe for a low-fat snack we enjoy.

### **GO OLD-SCHOOL WITH YOUR WORKOUT**

No kettlebells, slam balls or BOSUs? No problem. Let's grab a mat and jump rope and get back to the basics with our next workout. The following is a simple-yet-effective exercise session:

- 20 sit-ups
- 20 pushups
- 30 jump ropes
- 30 air squats
- 20 jumping jacks
- 30 jump ropes
- 1-minute plank

Let's repeat this old-school series for five rounds for stronger, healthier selves.

### **MAKE EXERCISE A SOCIAL ACTIVITY**

Exercise routines, for many, are social. But sometimes, we are unable to work out with others: if we have a sick child, for instance. Or perhaps we used to belong to a gym and miss that interaction. If this hits home, think about inviting others to exercise with you.

Download an app and invite a couple of exercise buddies to work out in your backyard, driveway or nearby green space where you can spread out and exercise together safely. Why? Because when accountable, we are all are much more likely to get the exercise we need during a time when it is needed the most. Plus, it's social!

### **WHAT WE CAN DO:**

No equipment? Doesn't matter. Let's try this session on for size. It takes minimal equipment and space, after all.

### **WHAT WE CAN DO:**

Let's be bold! Download an app and ask our colleagues to participate in an exercise session remotely, but all at the same time. It could be fun, social and healthy!





The Mayo Clinic recommended treating physical activity like any other important appointment during the day.

### **SCHEDULE FITNESS LIKE IT'S A MEETING**

Remote working can easily lead to a more sedentary lifestyle. We don't have to walk to our cars. We don't have meetings to run to. It's a shorter walk to the kitchen. The couch is just a few steps away from our desk. That's why it is even more important to make exercise a priority in our lives right now. And we can do that by putting exercise on our calendar and sticking to it.

The Mayo Clinic recommended treating physical activity like any other important appointment during the day. We wouldn't miss a client meeting or doctor's appointment, so we should make the same commitment to our own fitness regimen.

### **WHAT WE CAN DO:**

It's simple: Let's all schedule our workouts as if they were meetings. Priorities, people!

## **A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE EXTENDS BEYOND EXERCISE**

Keeping our bodies fit and healthy is not just about exercise – it's about eating healthy and drinking plenty of water, too. In fact, eating unhealthy foods can leave us feeling sluggish and unproductive.

So, next time we head to the grocery store or shop online, we should consider buying the following superfoods that can help boost productivity and health:

**AVOCADOS** An avocado a day enhances blood flow, firing up those brain cells, according to WebMD

**BLUEBERRIES** These tasty tidbits reportedly boost concentration and memory

**GREEN TEA** Extracts from green tea are supposed to enhance cognitive functions

**DARK CHOCOLATE** Need to maintain and improve overall brain health? Have a piece or two to help

**NUTS** Rich in vitamin E and amino acids, a handful could help increase memory and brain function

**EGGS** Sometimes called the perfect food, eggs contain choline, a nutrient that helps boost the brain's reactive sensors and increase memory

**SALMON** Omega-3 fatty acids in this fish are linked to a healthy brain

So, let's put aside the bacon, ice cream or pizza and opt for healthier food choices to keep us going strong throughout the workday!

## **WHAT WE CAN DO:**

Let's all share which superfood (or any food) helps us make it through the day.

## **MAKE YOUR OWN EXERCISE EQUIPMENT**

The Do-It-Yourself (DIY) movement is for real, especially during 2020 when people are spending more and more time at home and forgoing gyms. The good news is, plenty of tutorials guide us into making our own exercise equipment, from hand-crafted sandbags to medicine balls.

Need an agility ladder, which is an amazing workout tool for improving footwork and agility? Easy! All that's needed is about 30 feet of duct tape and a dozen or so 20-inch paint stirring sticks. Once made, we can hop, skip, jump and bear crawl through this homemade piece – no excuses that we no longer have this equipment!

## **WHAT YOU CAN DO:**

We should share this tip with our teammates and ask if they have any DIY exercise items at home.



# 04 CULTURE

Workplace culture can make or break a business. Consider it the personality of our companies. Is it boring and non-committal to anything, or does it sum up our traditions, beliefs, values and overall attitude? Is our culture all business, or does it allow us to inject some fun into the workplace? A good culture does matter, particularly for attracting and retaining great employees.

Following are some fun and creative ideas for injecting personality into your organization...





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## **ENCOURAGE YOUR CO-WORKERS TO SHARE THEIR WORK-FROM-HOME PLAYLIST**

Music is one of the best ways to bond. According to Berkeley's Greater Good Magazine:

"There is something about music that seems to bring us closer to each other and helps us come together as a community. Researchers discovered that we have a dedicated part of our brain for processing music, supporting the theory that it has a special and important function in our lives."

Music is also a great motivator. For example, research from the journal of Psychology of Music shows that software developers experienced more positive moods, better quality of work and improved efficiency when listening to music.

## **EXTEND EMPATHY TOWARD WORKING-FROM-HOME PARENTS**

It's tough to manage a full-time job when children are underfoot, especially when they are sick and need more attention than usual.

When this happens, managers and employers should be understanding, empathetic and flexible and know that affected employees' schedules might be a little out of whack. Alternative childcare solutions can be hard to come by at short notice.

We should all gently remind managers and co-workers that we might be a little out-of-pocket while a child is sick but we will respond to emails as soon as possible.

## **WHAT WE CAN DO:**

Whether it's Bohemian Rhapsody or Brahms, let's encourage one another to share the songs that are keeping us productive and raising our spirits.

## **WHAT WE CAN DO:**

Let's all embrace the remote working norm: video conferencing calls with children in laps and pets wandering around (and maybe barking) in the background.

## LET'S LEVEL UP OUR SKILLS

We all should have a career plan. But if not, it's likely because we've got our heads down into our daily work and have forgotten to step away and grow our skillset. Right now is a great time to check out continuing education options to expand our skillset and horizons.

So, let us be the first to find out if professional organizations in our industries have webinars, podcasts or certification programs, and sign up for their e-newsletters so we are informed of upcoming networking events. We should also ask our co-workers if they know of any other additional opportunities.

## WHAT WE CAN DO:

Let's be a fountain of information by finding out and sharing what courses or learning resources are available at your company. We could also suggest that each person commits to learning at least one new skill during the next month.

## CELEBRATE EACH OTHER'S WINS

A little encouragement goes a long way. In a time when we're all feeling a little disconnected, it is important to continue to recognize and celebrate each other's successes at work.

Did someone just wrap up a difficult project successfully? Did they do a stellar job with their last presentation? Did they snag a new client?

Whatever our co-workers' wins are, let's give them a shoutout, and let them know that we think they are awesome and their efforts are noticed and appreciated. Just a short note or call can make someone's day.

And let's remember to share our own successes, too!

## WHAT WE CAN DO:

Consider gathering a list of our team members' wins each week and communicating that list to the rest of the team during an all-team call or via an all-team email.



## **BRAG ON YOUR FAMILY AND HOUSEMATES**

We all brag on our kids at work. Maybe some do this more than others, but no biggie! Talking about our families and/or housemates is a great way to bond with our co-workers and take a break from the daily grind. And we shouldn't lose this habit when working remotely.

So why not make it a point to keep sharing what our families or housemates are accomplishing?

Did your 5-year-old paint a cool (or strange) looking elephant? Scan it in, share it with your friends at work and challenge them to share their kids' artwork, too! Did your oldest just get accepted to college? Let your colleagues know! Is your spouse learning a new hobby? Ask them what they love about it and share that info on a team call.

Whatever we are up to at home, let's share with our co-workers to stay better connected!

### **WHAT WE CAN DO:**

Let's make it a point to take time during weekly team calls just to ask how each person's family and/or roommates are doing.

## **HOST A FUN LUNCH N' LEARN**

We all have skills and interests that differ from our co-workers'. Maybe one person likes kayaking and another enjoys cross-stitching. Or maybe someone has a wealth of knowledge about an obscure topic, like Victorian fashion or the origins of strange English words.

Whatever our interests, we should consider sharing it with our co-workers during a fun Lunch n' Learn. Every member of the team can submit one slide on his or her topic of choice (work-appropriate, of course) and then spend a few minutes presenting it and answering any questions.

By the end of lunch, you'll know more about your co-workers than you ever thought possible! (And you might have a newfound appreciation and interest in someone's ice curling hobby...You never know!)

## **HAVE AN ART SHOWCASE**

Every single one of us can be creative. Whether that means using paint and canvas, needle and yarn, pen and paper or some other medium, we can all have fun by creating a beautiful, funny, insightful or goofy piece of art and then sharing it with others.

So, why not challenge our co-workers to each create a piece of art over the next week? It can be a painting, a drawing, a video, a poem, a photograph, or anything that you want! Then, everyone can share their art with each other.

## **WHAT WE CAN DO:**

We could all consider hosting a Lunch n' Learn and sharing, beforehand, the topic we have planned to make others feel more comfortable presenting their own slides.

## **WHAT WE CAN DO:**

Let's share this tip and schedule a virtual meeting so everyone can present their artwork.



## **SCHEDULE THREE SOCIAL CHATS WITH CO-WORKERS**

Working from home makes it easy to fall into the rhythm of work, sleep, work, sleep without making time each week to socialize with our co-workers. Sure, we may still talk shop during business calls, but when was the last time any of us took 15 minutes to chat with a co-worker about how we're all doing outside of work?

Here's a challenge: Each week, let's schedule a minimum of three 15-minute, non-work video calls (or regular phone calls if we lack video meeting capabilities) with co-workers. We should choose different people to talk to each week. Not only will this help us maintain existing social bonds, but it can also help us get to know other awesome people in the company that we haven't had the privilege of working with yet.

## **WHAT WE CAN DO:**

Let's get the ball rolling by scheduling 15 minutes with a few co-workers just to socialize.

## **SHARE YOUR WORKSPACE**

While some of us have a designated home office – i.e. a room with a desk and computer with a door that shuts out the rest of the household – many who work from home resort to taking over the dining room table, the kitchen counter or the sofa. Or we regularly migrate from room to room each day.

Some of us have even surrounded our home workspace with decorations like flowers, posters and quotes on post-it notes to help inspire and energize us throughout the day.

Whatever our workspace looks like, we should share a photo of it with co-workers and encourage them to reveal what their "office space" looks like, too. Doing so will help us provide a glimpse into each other's lives.

## **WHAT WE CAN DO:**

Let's kick off the workspace-sharing by including a photo of our own real or makeshift home office.

## **USE THE FIRST 5 MINUTES OF VIRTUAL MEETINGS TO JUST CHAT**

Instead of getting right to business on conference calls, let's take the first five minutes to ask others what they did over weekend. Have they started any hobbies or watched Tiger King yet?

It can be hard for some people to know when to talk in virtual meetings, especially if they are the newest, most junior and/or shyest person on the team. So, let's make it a point to ask. Taking a moment to connect and talk about our personal lives helps us build stronger relationships with our co-workers. It also gives us all a bit more social interaction unrelated to work topics, something many people sorely miss when working remotely!

### **WHAT WE CAN DO:**

Let's lead by example and start the next team call with an "around the room" chat where each person has a chance to talk about how he or she is doing.

## **CONTINUE TO CELEBRATE BIRTHDAYS**

When working remotely, we may not be able to all sign a birthday card or celebrate with co-workers over lunch or a slice of cake, but there are plenty of ways to show our appreciation for our co-workers on their special days.

We should consider sending virtual birthday cards, sending co-workers a gift card for lunch delivery and celebrating with them virtually, or even just sending them an email wishing them well and letting them know how awesome we think they are!

### **WHAT WE CAN DO:**

How about we lead by example by wishing employees happy birthday on team calls and coordinating virtual celebrations.

## SHARE A LITTLE CUTENESS

When working from home, pets can be frequent (and sometimes adorably frustrating) additions to conference calls.

So, why not officially introduce our pooches, felines and other fur kids (or feather or scale kids) to the whole team! Consider starting an email chain where everyone can contribute a photo of their paw-fficemate. Or schedule a team meet n' greet video call where pets are welcome.

And remember, we should all try to be courteous and understanding on regular conference calls by moving noisy pets to another room, or by forgiving your co-worker during a video call when she's unable to keep the cat off her lap or he can't stop his dog from barking at squirrels.

## SHARE YOUR FAVORITE BOOK

Reading has a ton of benefits, including strengthening our brains, improving our empathy and reducing stress. It can even help our sleep and increase our vocabulary. All great pros!

Many people have rediscovered the simple joy of reading as they sit at home during the pandemic. Some have made goals of finishing two or three books a month. Others are leisurely working through the latest mystery novel. And some have decided to branch out from their go-to genre and have been pleasantly surprised to discover they like reading something different.

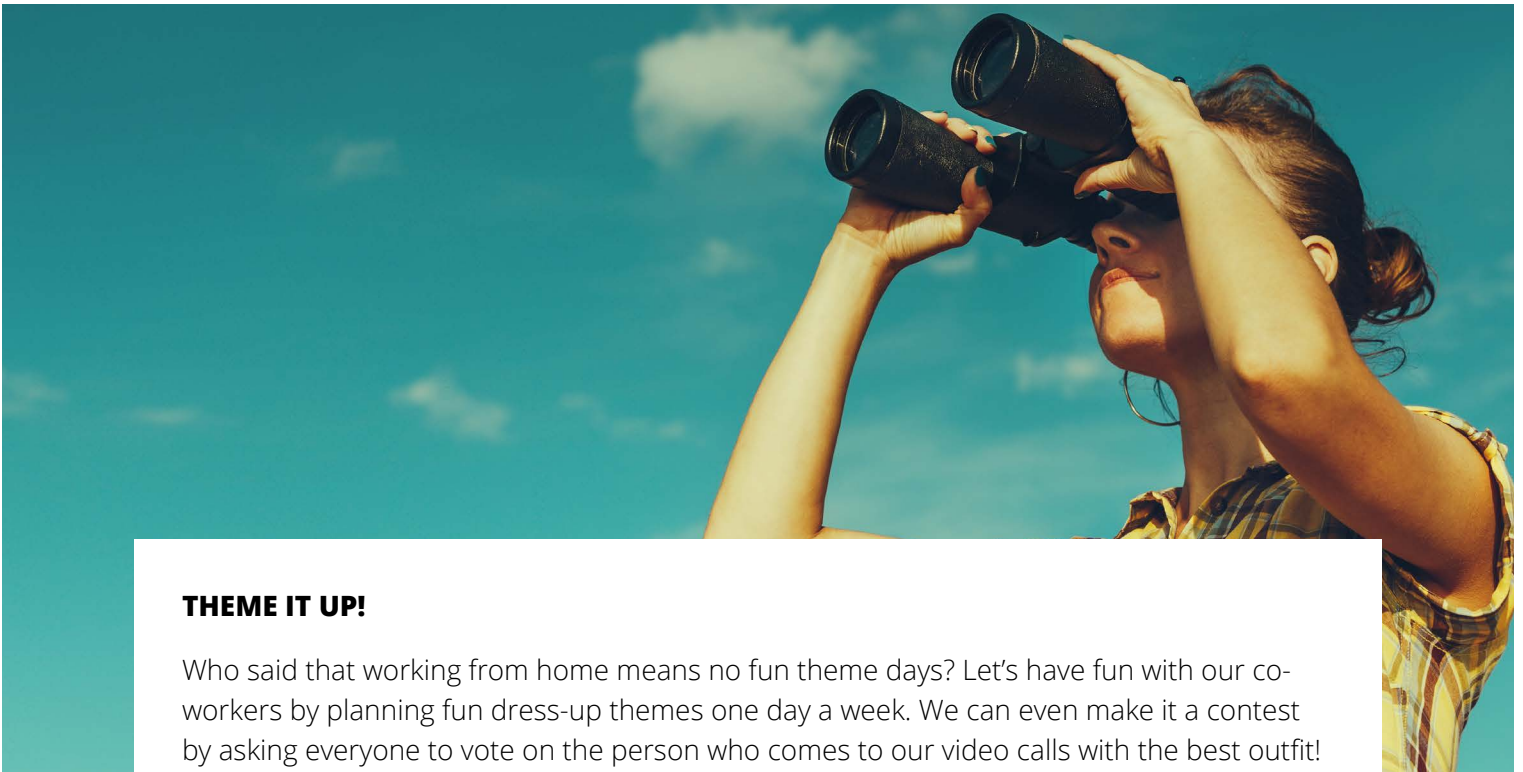
Whatever our reading habits are, let's let our co-workers know what our favorite book is or which one has made us think differently.

## WHAT WE CAN DO:

Let's all share this tip with our colleagues and suggest posting cute pet photos so we know who is behind the bark or meow during team meetings.

## WHAT WE CAN DO:

Let's share this tip with our colleagues. Also we should let them know what we've been reading recently and our all-time favorite book.



### **THEME IT UP!**

Who said that working from home means no fun theme days? Let's have fun with our co-workers by planning fun dress-up themes one day a week. We can even make it a contest by asking everyone to vote on the person who comes to our video calls with the best outfit!

Fun theme ideas could include:

**HAT DAY** Wear your favorite ball cap or break out the craziest hat in your closet.

**HAWAIIAN SHIRT DAY** Show off your fun floral patterns and vote on whose shirt screams "TOURIST!" the loudest.

**SPORTS DAY** Our favorite teams may not be playing, but that does not mean we can't show our team spirit.

**CRAZY HAIR DAY** Can you wrangle your hair into Cindy Lou Who braids? Are you a pro at gelling your hair into a mohawk? Do you have a spectacular wig you are dying to show off?

**TIE DYE DAY** Rock these groovy patterns loud and proud!

### **WHAT WE CAN DO:**

Share this tip with your team, and consider setting up a theme day for your team. You can plan a video conference lunch for everyone to show off their awesome outfits.

## START A “QUESTION OF THE DAY” THREAD

A fun icebreaking activity for teams is to create a “Question of the Day” email or IM thread. It starts when one person sends a question to their team (a work-appropriate question, of course), and each person answers so that the whole team can see their response. We may see someone who responds similarly to ourselves and find out we have something in common!

Example questions could include:

- What are your top three favorite movies?
- What is the best piece of advice you have ever received?
- Which came first, the chicken or the egg? And why?
- Marvel or DC? And why?

## CAN YOU WIN AT REMOTE WORKING BINGO?

Working from home is full of fun moments that probably wouldn't happen in the office. Have you taken a video call in your pajama pants? Have you done chair yoga? Has your cat wandered into the frame on a video call?

Why not compete against our co-workers and see who can complete a Remote Working Bingo board the fastest? We can make our own, or do a quick Google search to find so many options! Let's challenge our co-workers to see who can complete a row or column or the whole board first.

## WHAT WE CAN DO:

You know the drill by now: It's up to us to share this tip and consider kicking off the first “Question of the Day!”

## WHAT WE CAN DO:

Let's go! Not only can we share this tip but can choose the Bingo board and competition rules.

## **DRESS TO IMPRESS (YOURSELF)**

Show of hands. How many of us just throw on a T-shirt and some sweatpants to work from home when we know there are no video calls all day? Or if we do have a call, do we wear a professional shirt and yoga pants? We've all done it, and there is usually nothing wrong with that. It's a nice change, after all, not to worry about preparing work clothes every night.

But when it comes time for an important virtual presentation, we should consider dressing like we would if going into the office for the meeting. That means a professional shirt AND professional pants AND professional shoes. Looking professional can boost our confidence, improve our mindset and help our communications skills.

And if we're looking for a confidence boost every day but still want to rock those sweatpants, let's iron those shirts!

## **SHARE A FUN/WEIRD FACT ABOUT YOURSELF**

Although we might think we know our co-workers pretty well, we might be surprised. We may never have guessed that she was once a sponsored boulderer, or that he lived in five different countries growing up. Someone else may make a mean soufflé, and another co-worker may be checking state parks off his travel list one by one.

Let's consider sharing a fun fact about ourselves with co-workers, such as a unique hobby or skill or that we can quote the movie "Frozen 2" from memory. Whatever the interesting tidbit might be, let's share with our colleagues and ask about their fun facts, too!

## **WHAT WE CAN DO:**

Be the example! Let's share this tip and encourage co-workers to always wear professional attire during video calls, especially with external folks like clients and vendors.

## **WHAT WE CAN DO:**

It's up to us to get this ball rolling, so let's share a fun fact about ourselves.



## **SPEAK UP AND HELP EACH OTHER OUT**

It should go without saying that we should all help our co-workers if they are struggling with a project. Whether it's providing advice, directing them to a subject matter expert, or offering to help directly with a project, part of working together is compassion.

It is hard when working remotely to tell when someone may be struggling. We can't see our co-worker staring at a lengthy email and running his hand through his hair for the fourth time in five minutes. Nor can we overhear our desk neighbor's frustrating call with her vendor. That means it is important to regularly communicate with our co-workers each week, even if it is just a short "How's it going?" email. A simple check-in can mean the world to our co-workers.

On the other side, if we struggle with a project, sometimes it can be difficult to know where to turn, especially if we are the newest or most junior person on the team. But it is important for our own mental well-being and productivity to speak up and let our manager and co-workers know we need help.

### **WHAT WE CAN DO:**

We should share this tip with our colleagues and try to check in with everyone regularly. It's important to ask them if they need help. And if someone approaches us with a problem or question, we should help them find the best solution.



It is important for our own mental well-being and our productivity to speak up and let our manager and co-workers know we need help.



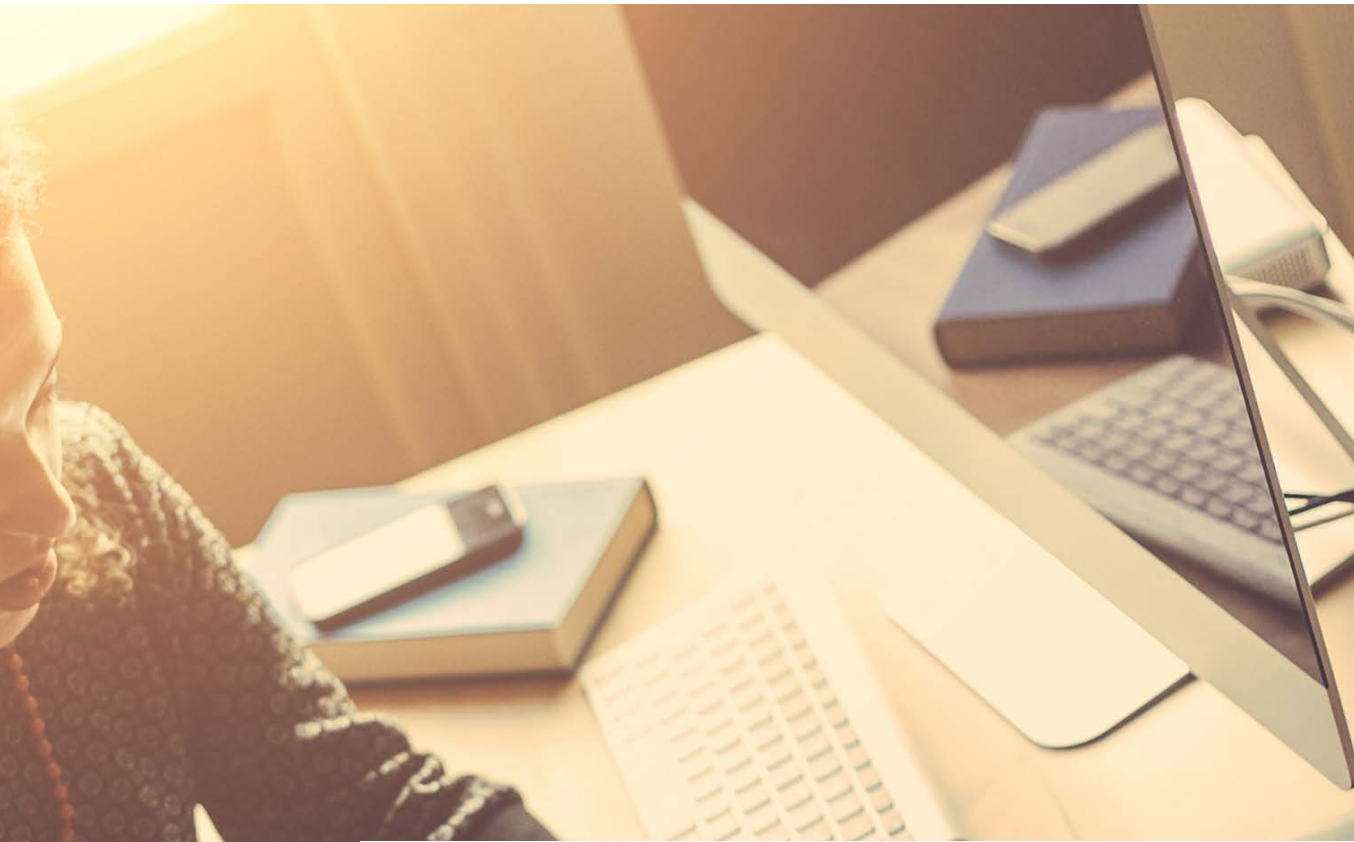


# 05 SPIRIT

A person's overall health has many components of well-being that include physical, mental, emotional and spiritual – the last of which is often overlooked. Spiritually healthy people have a clear purpose in life and act according to their ideas of right and wrong. While some spiritual people pursue a general sense of self-awareness and harmony, others follow religious practices.

Following are some tips for keeping our spirits up – regardless of what is going on in the world around us ...





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## **STOP – IN THE NAME OF MINDFULNESS**

When having a particularly challenging day, let's take the time to calm down by trying this one-minute **STOP** mindfulness exercise from PsychCentral:

**S**tand up, breathe and feel connected to the earth.

**T**une in to your body. Lower your gaze and take note of physical sensations or emotions. Discharge any unpleasant sensations, emotions or feelings when exhaling. Notice any pleasant ones and let them fill you up while inhaling.

**O**bserve. Lift your eyes, observe something pleasant and be grateful for its beauty.

**P**ossibility. Ask yourself what is possible or what is new.

If you find yourself being reactive, try the following steps:

- Pause and take one to three big breaths.
- Say "step back."
- Say "clear head."
- Say "calm body."
- Breathe again. Say "relax," "melt" or "ease."

## **WHAT WE CAN DO:**

Let's share with our co-workers this quick tip for easing the day's stress.

## **PRACTICE MINDFUL BREATHING**

Meditation is essential for our wellbeing. Perhaps, since we're working from home and might have children to care for, we don't think we have time to practice meditation.

However, we could benefit from trying out this Pocket Mindfulness mindful breathing exercise that can be done sitting down or standing up:

- Breathe in and out slowly with one breath cycle lasting for about 6 seconds.
- Inhale in through your nose and exhale out through your mouth.
- Put outside thoughts away, including your to-do list.
- Breathe purposefully and pretend you can see your breath as it enters and leaves your body.
- Think positive thoughts.
- Feel some calmness and awareness.

## **WHAT WE CAN DO:**

Even with deadlines to meet, we can encourage our colleagues to take a few moments to practice mindful breathing to help calm frazzled nerves.



## KEEP YOURSELF OCCUPIED

Stress and anxiety beget stress and anxiety. Try not to let negative thoughts spiral out of control. Instead, we should focus on getting our work done, but take time every day for activities that lift our spirits and make us smile, like:

- Playing a board game or hide-and-seek, or solving a jigsaw puzzle with family or housemates
- Painting, drawing or some sort of creative crafting
- Baking a dessert we normally wouldn't make – with the ingredients already in-house
- Reading an old classic or a new best-seller
- Attending an online meeting or webinar that we normally couldn't make time for

## LIFT UP YOUR FRIENDS

Many people work from home and miss the former in-person interaction we used to have with our friends. Interactions with friends prevent loneliness, boost happiness and reduce stress. They also help us cope with trauma and provide a lending hand when needed most.

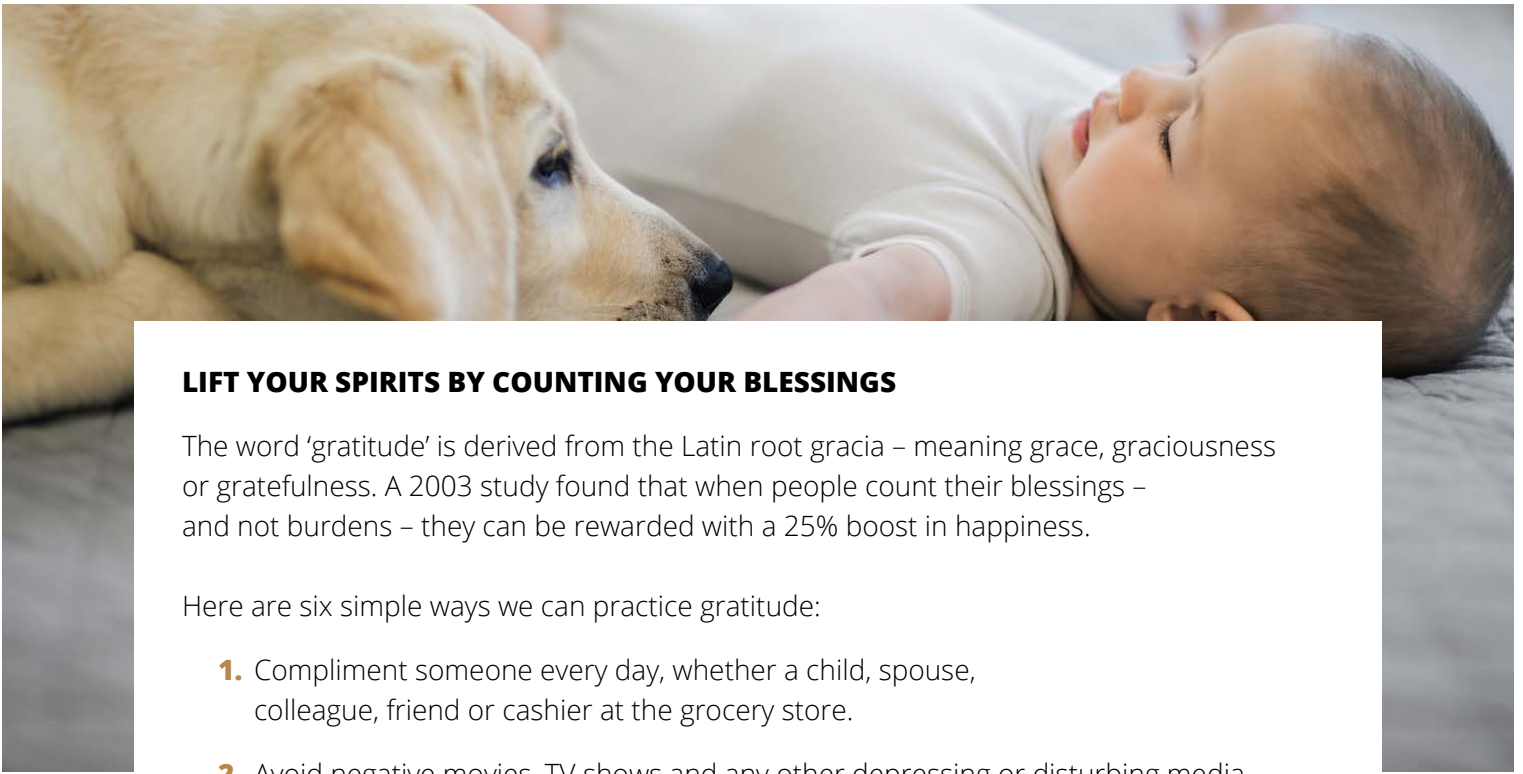
So, let's all reach out and contact a friend today to tell him or her we care enough to check in.

## WHAT WE CAN DO:

We can all encourage our colleagues to find any activity that will help lift their spirits during these times.

## WHAT WE CAN DO:

We could all share this tip with our colleagues and share how we reached out to a friend this week.



## **LIFT YOUR SPIRITS BY COUNTING YOUR BLESSINGS**

The word 'gratitude' is derived from the Latin root *gracia* – meaning grace, graciousness or gratefulness. A 2003 study found that when people count their blessings – and not burdens – they can be rewarded with a 25% boost in happiness.

Here are six simple ways we can practice gratitude:

- 1.** Compliment someone every day, whether a child, spouse, colleague, friend or cashier at the grocery store.
- 2.** Avoid negative movies, TV shows and any other depressing or disturbing media.
- 3.** Commit to one day each week where you will not complain about anything.
- 4.** Focus on your own strengths, and write them down, remembering to compliment yourself like you would others.
- 5.** Create a gratitude jar and write something you are thankful for every day. When feeling blue, read through them to remind yourself of all the good things in life.
- 6.** Say thank you for today's challenges. They are opportunities for growth.

### **WHAT WE CAN DO:**

Let's choose one thing about every co-worker we are grateful for and share it with them. Also, we should pass along this list and encourage them to spend time each day practicing gratitude.

## HAVE A GOOD LAUGH

Laughter is a serious source of stress relief. According to the Mayo Clinic, giggles, chuckles and rollicking guffaws have both short- and long-term health and well-being benefits, including alleviating stress, reducing tension and increasing personal satisfaction.

So, we should take time every day to watch something, read something or talk with someone who makes us laugh. We will be amazed how quickly our mood can turn around!

Here are some knee-slapping best practices to pass along:

- Surround yourself with humor: Decorate your workspace with funny memes, jokes, or comic strips that make you chuckle. Taking a break? Open your favorite streaming service and watch some stand-up comedy or open YouTube for compilations of America's Funniest Home Videos.
- Laugh at yourself: Don't take yourself too seriously. If you make a mistake like putting your phone in the fridge or accidentally cutting your hair too short at home, don't be afraid to giggle at your blunder.
- Laugh together: If you have a family member, friend or co-worker who you can always laugh with, why not schedule a virtual hang out? Laughing together can strengthen your relationship even more!
- Read a book: A joke book that is! A quick Google search will give you tons of books packed with all the knock-knock jokes you could ever want.

## WHAT WE CAN DO:

Let's share this tip with our teammates along with work-appropriate jokes and content that we find funny.

## **PAY IT FORWARD**

When we're feeling down in the dumps – and even when we aren't – why not practice random acts of kindness? Why not pay it forward? Although the theory of doing nice things for others for no particular reason became popular after "Pay It Forward" became a major motion film in 2000, the concept of paying it forward has been around for centuries.

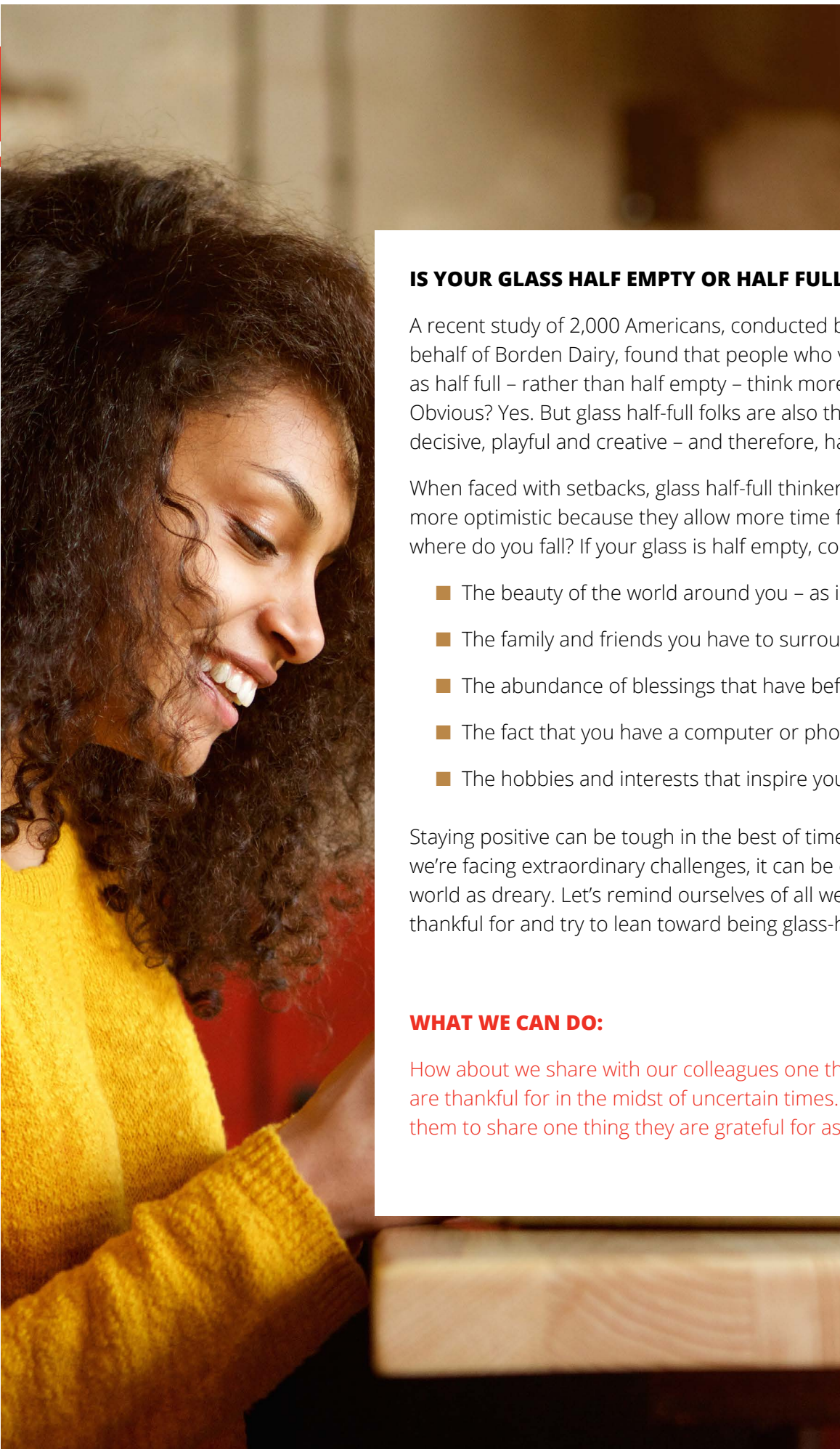
Consider this excerpt from Ralph Waldo Emerson's 1841 essay Compensation: "But the benefit we receive must be rendered again, line for line, deed for deed, cent for cent, to somebody."

So, the next time we are in the drive-through line at Starbucks, let's pay for the order of the person behind us. When grocery shopping, how about we purchase a bouquet of flowers and bring it to an elderly neighbor down the street?

Altruism benefits the givers more than the receivers and can increase happiness while decreasing depression. So, let's be givers and pay it forward today!

## **WHAT WE CAN DO:**

Let's pick a day and suggest everyone pay it forward – asking for nothing in return.



## IS YOUR GLASS HALF EMPTY OR HALF FULL?

A recent study of 2,000 Americans, conducted by OnePoll on behalf of Borden Dairy, found that people who view the glass as half full – rather than half empty – think more optimistically. Obvious? Yes. But glass half-full folks are also thought to be more decisive, playful and creative – and therefore, happier overall.

When faced with setbacks, glass half-full thinkers are more optimistic because they allow more time for fun. So, where do you fall? If your glass is half empty, consider:

- The beauty of the world around you – as in nature
- The family and friends you have to surround you
- The abundance of blessings that have befallen you
- The fact that you have a computer or phone to read this tip
- The hobbies and interests that inspire you

Staying positive can be tough in the best of times. And when we're facing extraordinary challenges, it can be easy to see the world as dreary. Let's remind ourselves of all we have to be thankful for and try to lean toward being glass-half-full thinkers.

## WHAT WE CAN DO:

How about we share with our colleagues one thing we are thankful for in the midst of uncertain times. Ask them to share one thing they are grateful for as well.

## **TAKE ON A NEW HOBBY, EVEN IF IT'S A LITTLE SQUIRRELY**

During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, people found new ways to entertain themselves while working from home: baking homemade bread for the first time, sewing and giving away masks, knitting or learning a new language. Finding a new hobby simply lifts the spirits.

When Pennsylvania plumber and HVAC contractor had to shut his doors on March 19 because his business was not considered “non life-sustaining,” he turned his efforts toward building miniature picnic tables for squirrels. Kid you not.

Within 24 hours of setting up an Esty store to sell his squirrely treasures, he had 400 orders. So, let’s all find our passion – regardless of how silly it might seem. We might make some money or simply have a great time nurturing a new-found skill.

## **WHAT WE CAN DO:**

Let’s ask our colleagues to share one silly/fun/interesting thing they have done since working from home. Guaranteed – we will learn a lot about each other and might even find some similar interests!



**GET HOOKED ON CROCHET FOR A SENSE OF CALM**

A survey on crocheting conducted in Australia found that 90% of respondents said the craft made them feel calmer and 82% said it made them feel happier. Further, 70% felt that crocheting improved their memory. And while most of the respondents were female, needlework needn't be for women only.

Ever heard of pro football legend Rosey Grier? After retiring from the New York Giants and the Los Angeles Rams back in the late 1960s, the defensive lineman came out with a book in 1973 called "Rosey Grier's Needlepoint for Men." He said that crocheting, needlepoint and knitting calmed his fear of flying and lifted his spirits.

So, regardless of our gender or proclivity toward crafts, we should consider picking up a crochet hook or needle for a greater sense of calmness and serenity in our lives. There are plenty of beginners' tutorials online.

**WHAT WE CAN DO:**

Let's ask whether anyone is into these crafts and if so, suggest they share their works on an upcoming internal video conferencing call.

## POST A CORNY JOKE TO LIFT OTHERS' SPIRITS

Who doesn't like an eye-rolling, corny joke? Let's start a thread with our co-workers by posting a question on a certain day – say Monday – and the response on another day like Wednesday. The person who guesses the answer first gets to tee up the next joke. Here's a start to get you thinking silly...

- What's a hot dog on wheels? Fast food.
- Which bird is always out of breath? A puffin.
- What lights up a soccer stadium? A soccer match.
- What do you call a boring dinosaur? A dino-snore!
- Why did the invisible man turn down the job offer? He couldn't see himself doing it.
- How do you catch a whole school of fish? With bookworms.

## WHAT WE CAN DO:

We should share the silly joke idea with our teammates. Better yet, let's ask everyone to come up with a corny joke, turn it into a contest and reward the winning jokester – if only with bragging rights!

**INCREASE HAPPINESS BY CHANGING YOUR ROUTINE**

A recent study published in the journal Nature Neuroscience, reported by Healthline, shows a link between our physical environment and happiness – new and diverse experiences can lead to positive emotions.

So, let's consider reading new books in unaccustomed genres, watching out-of-your-norm TV shows, cooking new recipes, attending virtual events and challenging ourselves to learn and do new things.

**WHAT WE CAN DO:**

We should lead by example and share one way we stepped outside our comfort zone to enjoy new, socially distanced yet positive experiences.

**ENJOY YO-YO MA TOGETHER**

There is no doubt that music can smooth out our rough edges. Music can help lift our spirits and promote calm. For example, let's all take the time to close our eyes and listen to world-renowned French-born Chinese American cellist Yo-Yo Ma perform "Going Home" by Dvořák. It can be found with a quick Google search.

**WHAT WE CAN DO:**

After searching on Google, send a link to co-workers so you can listen to Yo-Yo Ma's soothing music together. Better yet, set up a group video-chat and listen in together!



Study nature, love nature, stay close to nature. It will never fail you.

### **SURROUND YOURSELF WITH NATURE**

Frank Lloyd Wright once said, “Study nature, love nature, stay close to nature. It will never fail you.”

The environment we live in can increase or reduce the amount of stress we feel, and being inside too much can be detrimental to our health and well-being. Regardless of our age, upbringing or culture, nature can soothe the soul and lift the spirit. In fact, one study cited in the book “Healing Gardens” shows more than two-thirds of people choose to immerse themselves in nature when stressed. Further, the Journal of Positive Psychology suggests that spending a few minutes in nature quickly elevates mood.

Therefore, let’s take the time – every day – to get in touch with nature, even if it is to simply sit outside to hear the birds sing, tend to our garden or walk in a nearby park. Nature can do wonders to lift our spirits, especially if we’ve been feeling isolated from others and hemmed in from working remotely.

### **WHAT WE CAN DO:**

How about we suggest that the next internal virtual team meeting be held outdoors – bird chatter and all!

**ADOPT A FOUR-LEGGED (OR FEATHERED OR FINNED) FRIEND**

Many of us continue to be cut off from co-workers, friends and families during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Pets offer much-needed companionship and a host of mental and physical health benefits. And pet adoption is up as people are working from home and have more time to devote to new critters in the household.

Animal lovers already know the joy that pets bring to our lives. And research shows that taking care of a pet can lower blood pressure, boost mood, reduce anxiety and bring levity to anxiety-producing situations. Pets decrease loneliness, offer emotional support, provide laughter and give purpose, among other benefits. They force us to make time for play or walks, love to snuggle (most of them) and have an uncanny ability to lift our spirits when we're feeling blue.

So, rather than soak up our spare time on social media or watching too much news, let's go online and find out what animals in the area need to be adopted. It could do both parties a world of good.

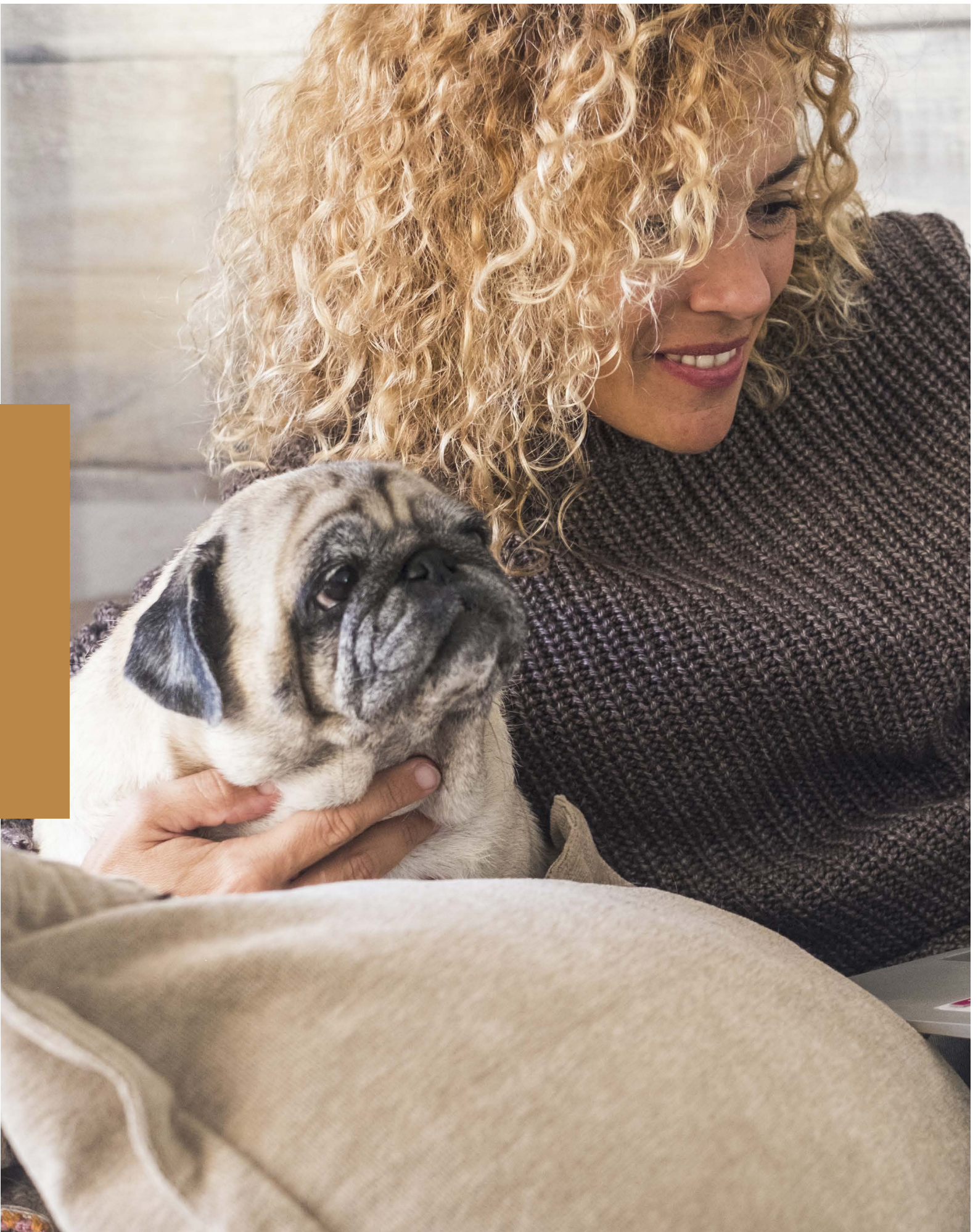
**WHAT YOU CAN DO:**

After sharing this tip with our teammates, why not suggest a virtual pet parade so people can show off their best buds?



Pets decrease loneliness, offer emotional support, provide laughter and give purpose, among other benefits.







## COMMUNICATE WITH COLLEAGUES THROUGH TRIVIA

A great way to connect and stay engaged with our colleagues is to play a daily game of remote trivia. Consider designating one person to post a question through your video chat channel and reward the day's winner with something simple like a lottery ticket ... or with bragging rights only! Or, ask the day's winner to be responsible for posting the next trivia question.

Sample trivia questions to get us thinking include:

- What was the world's first national park?
- Which American company makes Snickers candy bars?
- What is the breed of animal and name of the mascot for the University of Tennessee?
- What actor plays Thor in "The Avengers" series?
- Who is the world's best-selling author?

## IMPROVE YOUR MOOD BY CLEARING AWAY CLUTTER

Award-winning author Lisa J. Shultz once said, "Instead of thinking I am losing something when I clear clutter, I dwell on what I might gain."

Heaps of folders in our offices, unpaid bills on the kitchen counter, dirty dishes in the sink and unfolded (or unwashed) laundry can all be reminders of things we should be tackling – but aren't. When clutter increases, oftentimes, so does anxiety.

Chances are that decluttering everything at once is an insurmountable task. But if we set aside just 30 minutes to declutter an area where we spend a good chunk of time, we'll feel a small sense of accomplishment, which could boost our mood.

## WHAT WE CAN DO:

We should all share this tip with our colleagues and perhaps start the trivia game by posing our own question.

## WHAT WE CAN DO:

Let's declutter an area in our home or office today and suggest our colleagues do the same for a small sense of relief and accomplishment.

# THANKS FOR READING!

There you have it – oodles of thought-provoking, creative and actionable tips to help all of us better engage with our remotely working teams. Although the content was created during COVID-19, when many employees worldwide worked from home, these tips are timeless and can be used anytime we want to better connect with remote co-workers and others.

In fact, share them with family and friends: the more the merrier!

Arketi Group is here to help you with any of your business-to-business (B2B) marketing and content development needs. If you are interested in learning more about us, please reach out to Arketi CEO Mike Neumeier, APR, at [mneumeier@arketi.com](mailto:mneumeier@arketi.com). We'd love you hear from you!

# ABOUT ARKETI GROUP

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