

BEWELL



during Self-Care September & beyond

Faculty of Education

Healthy Workplace Practices

Preamble

September is the start of a new academic year and one of the busiest times for students, faculty, and staff. The Faculty of Education encourages staff and faculty to reflect on what we have learned since we switched to remote work and to put in place some new practices that will ensure we emerge from the pandemic healthy, focused, and connected with each other and our communities. The Faculty-wide wellness initiative, [Self-Care September](#), is a great place to start.

Each unit within the Faculty will likely want to examine its own practices and develop guidelines specific to its culture. This document represents a starting-point for your discussions.

Tailored practices

What does it mean to work from home? Impromptu office visits have been replaced by scheduled Zoom meetings. Organic connections over the water-cooler have morphed into Skype instant messages. Spontaneous walks and lunches with colleagues are paused.

While some people's calendars are full of meetings, others work for long periods of time without social connection. As such, wellbeing practices will take different forms for each of us.

For those who have busier schedules, calendar control and unplugging may need to take priority. For those who do not meet with colleagues often, camaraderie and social connections may need to take priority.

Designate a workspace

While working remotely, the line between work and home can easily be blurred. Consider these tips:

- If possible, set up a dedicated space to work in your home.
- Let household members know that even though you are home, you are working during specified hours and would like interruptions to be kept to a minimum.
- When you're done working each day, close your laptop and put it in a drawer. If you are working on a desktop unit, cover it with a towel so you are not tempted to "just check email."
- Transition to home life by changing your outfit, taking a walk, or doing an activity with a family member or friend.

Lead with kindness

“Normal” looks and feels different for each of us. During meetings, people may choose to leave their video off—and that is perfectly okay. Your home circumstances, comfort, ability, and choice to join a meeting via video are unique. It is important to recognize and respect people’s personal space and privacy preferences. Before making assumptions, remember that many people:

- Prefer privacy;
- Do not feel comfortable on camera;
- Live with family, friends, roommates, dependents, or pets; or
- Do not have an internet connection or wifi router that adequately supports live video.

Add tone and include words of appreciation

Body language and facial expressions are modes of communication that cannot be expressed in an email and may also be less apparent in Zoom calls. Instead, proactively include positivity, empathy, and connection in your written and verbal communications. Tips for consideration:

- Begin or end communications with words of praise or appreciation.
- When appropriate, use emojis to add tone.
- Regularly share words of encouragement.

WAYS TO CREATE BALANCE FOR THOSE WHO ATTEND MANY MEETINGS

Make your calendar work for you

Think about ways that you can regain control of your calendar to ensure you have time for non-meeting-based work. Tips to consider:

- Each Monday, look at your calendar and schedule a lunch break, a coffee break and a 30-minute daily walk. You may need to do this several weeks in advance, to get ahead of the influx of meeting requests.
- Block off time that you need for specific tasks, such as three-hour sessions for writing or project work. People who book meetings with you will work around the priorities you’ve set.
- Consider designating one day per week as a no-meeting day.
- Block off 60 minutes each day for attending to email. Consider leaving your email client off until the designated time.
- Indicate the start- and end-time to your workday in Outlook or Apple Mail. That way, no meetings

can be booked outside of your regular work hours.

- If you take sick leave, prioritize your health and do not work.

Ensure productive meetings

Before scheduling or agreeing to attend a meeting, ask yourself the following:

- Is this meeting necessary?
- Could the meeting’s goal be achieved by creating a bulletin for information that does not need discussion?
- Could we maximize our time during meetings by sharing briefing documents ahead of time?
- Could we schedule the shortest possible time for the meeting? (Not all meetings need to be 60 minutes long.)

Use Zoom judiciously

Zoom is one of several forms a meeting can take. Before selecting Zoom as your meeting platform, ask yourself:

- Does the meeting need to take place over Zoom?
- Could it take the form of a phone conversation?
- Could you take a walk during the meeting and participate with a phone and a set of earbuds?

If you feel that Zoom is unavoidable, then develop some guidelines that will alleviate Zoom fatigue.

Here are a few thoughts:

- Leave your camera off and encourage your colleagues to leave their cameras off during Zoom calls. Or, begin and end the meeting with cameras on so everyone can wave to each other, and switch to camera-off mode for the majority of the meeting.
- Introduce a two-minute break half-way through the meeting. Stand, stretch, or do a brief session of chair yoga.
- If you are Zooming on a laptop, relocate it to a higher position such as a bookshelf or dresser-top, so you can stand during the meeting.

STRENGTHEN CONNECTIONS FOR THOSE WHO MAY FEEL ISOLATED

Create a virtual office

Develop a virtual space for casual conversation and connection. Consider this tip:

- Set aside a weekly time during which you are continuously on video in a Zoom room. Let your colleagues know your virtual drop-in office hours and room URL so they can “drop-by” and connect.

Create a virtual water cooler

Many people miss the casual social interactions that happen organically in an in-person office. Consider these tips:

- Use a chat app (such as in Skype for Business or Slack) to check in on members of your team without adding to the email load.
- Set up physically distanced group activities such as [Netflix Party](#), which synchronizes video playback and adds a group chat function to shows (available for Chrome browsers).

RESOURCES

As you develop health workplace practices to nurture social, emotional, and mental needs, make use of [UBC's Wellness Benefits and Resources](#).