

The first time you work remotely on a team will be an adjustment. It feels like you have to re-learn how to work: how to connect with others, how to structure the day, how to stay engaged and feel part of the team. Over time and with some creativity, the things you used to do with the team, if changed slightly, could still work. Here are some tips on how to transition more effectively.

1. Continue Casual Collaboration

While you don't physically sit in the same space as your co-workers, you still sit within the same infrastructure, just virtually. Use the tools you now have at your disposal for collaboration. Instead of walking over to your co-worker's desk, think of their computer as the new "desk" and knock on the virtual door. For example, within Teams, the little bubble next to a teammate's name shows if she is busy, in a meeting, free, away, etc. Instead of scheduling another meeting on already packed calendars, when her indicator shows she is free, send an IM, asking for a couple minutes to quickly collaborate on something you are working on. "Knock" on her virtual door.

2. Change the Way You Commute

Before working remotely, you had a regular routine, which included the drive to/from work and regular trips to run errands. Working remotely changed how much you ventured out of the house, which led to feeling isolated. It became too easy to order online and have it delivered versus getting in the car and venturing out to the store. Here are some things to add interaction with others back into your schedule:

- Replace your commute time with a walk around the block.
- Use that commute time, get in your car and take a scenic drive.
- Get back to running your errands in person and walk back into a store.

3. Turn on Your Video

As an executive coach, I regularly observe behavior and one thing I've noticed is that most people aren't comfortable turning on their camera in virtual meetings. We feel ok being in person in the room, but the moment we see ourselves on screen, we become shy and change our behavior.

The silver lining I've also noticed is that once you work through the discomfort, you can once again, have a natural interaction like you had in person. Here are some tricks to try:

- Get ready as if you were going into the office. Even if it's only from the waist up. (You can still wear your fuzzy slippers).
- If you use Zoom, right-click on your picture and hide your view.
- If you use Teams, use something to cover your picture on the screen: physical Post-It notes, on-screen Sticky Notes, or even the calculator.
- Change your background or use the filters available. This may even invite a conversation with others and break the "video ice". One that sparks conversation often is the beach background because we all start dreaming about that next vacation.

4. Schedule Social Time

You no longer run into others while grabbing coffee in the break room or invite someone to go out to lunch. In the remote environment, there is increased temptation to fill the time with work versus infusing social interaction into the day. While you can't physically go to lunch together, you can invite someone to a virtual lunch or grab coffee and take a break. We all need regular mental breaks to maintain our personal effectiveness. Make the time to take the break and keep building connections.



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