Mind: Virtual Etiquette
Body: Presbycusis
Spirit: Kindness

Virtual Etiquette

Dress Code: Yes, Please be Dressed – Etiquette Tips For Virtual Get-Togethers

With all the COVID-19 lock downs, restrictions, and isolation, we are left to meet with each other through various virtual means. Whether it is with FaceTime, Skype, Zoom, Webex, Go To Meeting, Microsoft Teams, or other platforms, there are a variety of ways we can still connect and communicate. For many families, this is a new and necessary experience!

We have heard the funny stories, of pets and kids hijacking business meetings. Apps that make you look like a cat or carrot, and challenges with mics and cameras. I was involved with a virtual work-related webinar, and the faculty member started the session asking everyone participating to please wear clothes during the session. She shared that in a previous session, she did have an attendee arrive buck naked!

So, let's look at some tips to make it a more comfortable experience for everyone 😉 – from acceptance, login, participation to logging off.

As a general way to approach a virtual get together, if you wouldn't do something during an in-person event, it is probably a good idea not to do it with a virtual event!

Responding to the Invitation

Let the host know that you will be attending. If you are not able to attend, politely let them know that you will not be available – no need to go into long explanations. If everyone's participation is requested or required, offer some alternative dates and times. The host should identify the intended length of the event. Make sure time zones are clarified! You don't want to arrive hours early or late because there was confusion about the date and time zone referenced in the invitation and what that means for you. Decide ahead of time where you will set up your device and if possible, remove as much distraction/clutter from the camera view.

Logging in

If this is your first time using the software, test it out ahead of time. Ask the host for a trial run, and give yourself a chance to become familiar with the login requirements, how to navigate, features, and how to join with audio and video working. Even with the best testing and intentions, problems can still occur – so arrange a backup number you can call for advice and support at the time of the event. If it is just not working for you, you may need to log out and log in again from scratch.

Attending and Participating

This is where the fun begins!

Arrive On Time! If you will be delayed, let the host know. The host should welcome and introduce everyone. If you are attending a business meeting that has already started, keep yourself muted, and at a natural break, you can announce yourself if that is appropriate. If it is a social get together, and the host has not had an opportunity to welcome and introduce you, announce yourself and say hello to everyone! With most platforms – everyone can see a list of all the participants. Be aware that the participant numbers may be so high that the pictures and names do not fit on one screen view.

If you are the host, invite/encourage each person at different times to contribute, participate and feel part of the event. As mentioned above – dress appropriately for the event. If you decided to dress in business attire from the waist up, remember to remain seated unless you want to show everyone your pajama bottoms with hearts and bunnies!

MUTE YOURSELF while others are talking or presenting! Side personal and business conversations are distracting and inappropriate. Unless it is a social virtual meet and eat together – do NOT eat during the call. Want to signal the group that you would like to speak? Use one of the cool features like 'raise your hand' – someone will notice even if the host is focused elsewhere. Be as present as you would be during an in-person meeting.

Need a bio-break? Let the group know that you will have to step away from the meeting for a short time and turn OFF your audio.

We have all heard the recognizable sound of a toilet flushing in the background.

Leaving and Logging Off

You wouldn't just walk out of an in-person meeting, so do not just leave a virtual meeting. If you will need to leave early, alert the host ahead of time. If something comes up during the call and you have to go, raise your hand and let folks know that something unforeseeable has occurred and you must leave, say good-bye and thank the host. Unless you have to leave early, wait for the host to conclude the meeting and then leave. The host should leave last. Most of us have a love/hate relationship with the technology. We hate the fact we cannot meet in person right now, but are grateful for the opportunity to at least enjoy a virtual connection. Respect for some basic conventions can make this a productive and fun experience for all.

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Presbycusis

It is called *presbycusis* – a fancy word for our progressive loss of the ability to hear higher tones as we age. While on those virtual calls, remember to maintain your volume while you lower the tone of your voice to help your older friends and family hear you better.

Kindness

"Kindness in words creates confidence. Kindness in thinking creates profoundness. Kindness in giving creates love."
Lao Tzu