

PSYCHOSOCIAL WELLBEING WHEN WORKING WITH REMOTE TEAMS



Introduction

In a world where technological developments, increased globalization and now also Covid19 are defining the workplace, working with remote teams is more and more part of the daily reality. Working remotely can have many advantages, but also introduces a number of challenges.

Remote teamwork forces us to redefine our daily interactions, communication and alignment. Transparency, flexibility, connection and clarity are now more important than ever to create a safe work environment in which employees feel good and competent, while working remotely.

This document is meant to provide organizations, and more specific people managers, with some tips and tricks on how to safeguard the wellbeing of their team members in a reality where there are limited physical interactions.

The basic conditions of working from home

Hardware & software



Depending on their job, employees need the right **tools, software programs** and **knowledge** to work with this technology. Think about:

- . Computer
- . Internet connection
- . Phone
- . Headset
- . Skype, MS Teams, Zoom, Google Hangouts, etc.

Besides, employees have to be able to access the necessary **company information**.

- . Make sure that your company drives are public or accessible through a secured connection e.g. VPN

Are there **instruction manuals/WebEx training/instruction videos** at hand to teach employees about the use of tools?

Can employees reach **IT** when experiencing issues?

Can employees get a **reimbursement** for their **internet costs**? If not, is there a solution for employees without home internet?

Meeting etiquette



WHO?

Try thinking about following elements when inviting people to a meeting:

- . Given the objective of the meeting, who needs the information and who has the needed information to make an informed decision?
- . What is the workload of the invitees?
- . Am I not forgetting about someone?

WHAT?

- . Objective
- . Agenda



WHEN?

- . Length of the meeting
- . Frequency
- . Timing

The **camera function** allows you to read **facial expressions** during a call. These provide you with a lot of information about emotions, did my message come across, etc. At the same time it increases the **feeling of being connected**.

Be aware that it might be harder to **focus** during a virtual meeting. Therefore you might prefer to organize two short meetings, instead of one long meeting.

Psychosocial wellbeing

Following aspects might affect the psychosocial wellbeing of employees in a direct or indirect manner. By explicitly recognizing the reality of the employee as a team leader, you might reduce stress levels, fear and guilt feelings. Besides it will be important to verbally express and to show your support in actions.

Circumstances at home:

- Are there children or ill people at home? Does this affect the timing when the employee is effectively working and available?
- Do they have a separate desk area that allows them to focus?
- What about the ergonomically situation?

Work-life balance:

- Is the employee able to disconnect at a certain moment?
- Does he/she succeed at bringing structure in their day?
- Is it clear when they are expected to be available and when not?

Energy level:

- Does the employee still feel energized?
- Are they still able to sleep well? If not, what is giving them trouble?

Expectations:

- Discuss your expectations towards the employee. Be explicit and make it tangible.
- Ask about his/her expectations towards you. What do they need from you?



TIPS

- ✓ Don't hesitate to **redirect** someone to the **confidential advisor** or to **Mensura** when you are worried about the person or when you don't know how to help.
- ✓ **Lead by example**, your team members will probably perceive your behavior as the yardstick.
- ✓ If employees struggle to structure their day, it might be useful if they **block time for certain tasks in their agenda**.
- ✓ Consider to share agendas with each other, in order to have a better view on availabilities.
- ✓ **Recapitulate, summarize and ask questions** to ensure everyone is aligned and to avoid miscommunications. Ensure a common understanding about the **content**, but also about the **process**.
- ✓ We would recommend to make psychosocial wellbeing an agenda topic during **one-to-one meetings**, rather than during team meetings because they might feel more safe to share delicate issues.
- ✓ A **team meeting**, might be the perfect opportunity to recognize the difficulty of the circumstances and to express your willingness to discuss possible issues.

The right meeting for the right cause

Virtual one-on-one meetings



Organize one-on-one's on a **regular basis**. Especially in times where people don't have many social contacts.

Psychosocial aspects

- **Starting a one-on-one conversation** with topics about **psychosocial wellbeing**, you are making it clear that this is an **important priority**. Once the employee had the opportunity to discuss these topics and is more at ease, it will help to focus on topics about the job content.

Workload and tasks

- Help team members to **set the right priorities**.
- As a team leader it might be even more important to keep an **overview on your team's workload and the division of tasks**. Explain why this information is important to you, to avoid that employees perceive this as controlling or micromanagement. Co-create a **work schedule** based on mutual expectations. You might want to follow-up more strictly at the beginning, and let go along the way when there is more trust.
- Besides you can see this as an opportunity to explain **how their contributions fit in the bigger picture**.
- Don't forget to provide **new input**. E.g. Online training

Possible questions about work content:

- ☑ What is currently occupying you? Are the expectations clear?
- ☑ What is going well? Where are you experiencing roadblocks?
- ☑ What is planned for the rest of the week?
- ☑ Is your workload manageable in the current work conditions?
- ☑ How can I support you?

Virtual team meetings



Even when working remotely team meetings are important for:

- The sense of belonging
- A good cooperation
- Staying connected to each other
- Sharing company messages about the circumstances

As in other team meetings it will be important to:

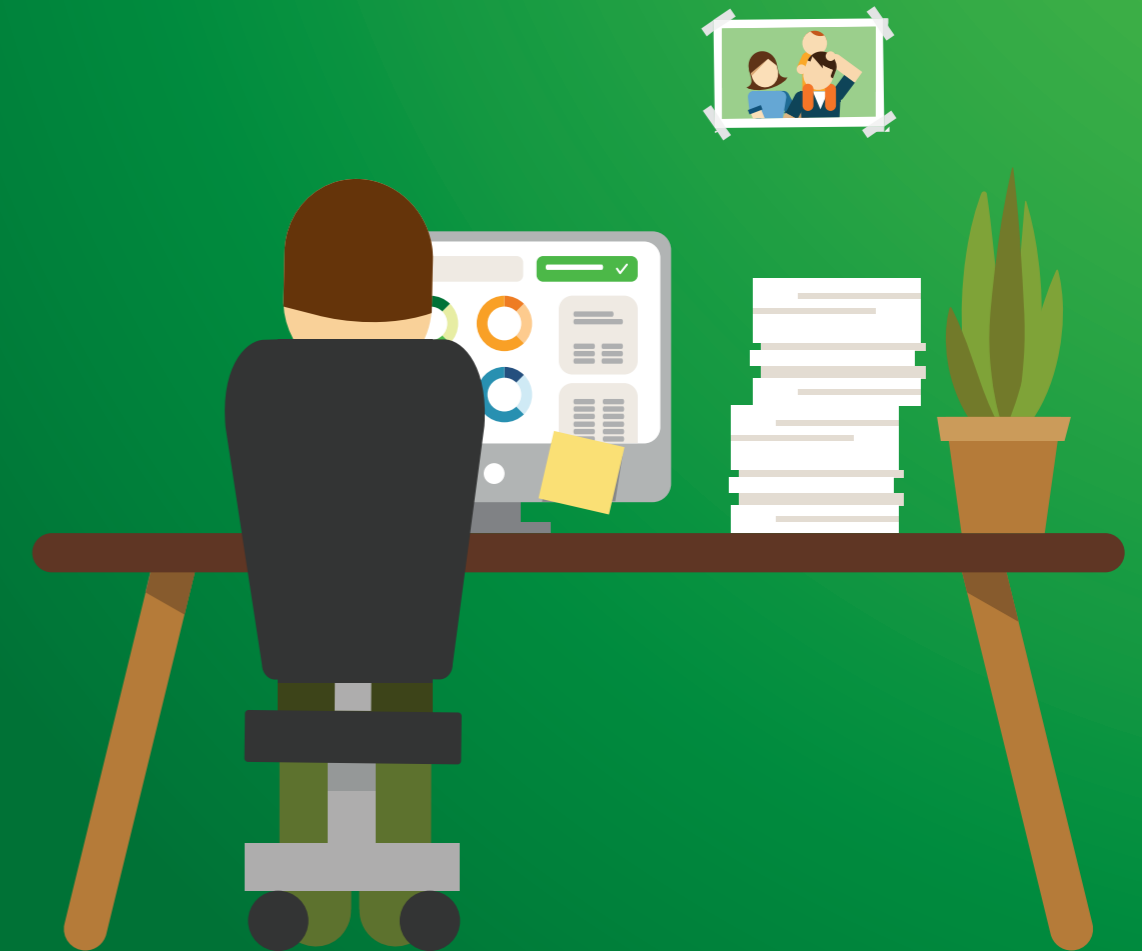
- have a designated team leader, time keeper and note keeper.
- send over the report afterwards.

- ☑ Agree on the **usage of cameras**.
- ☑ Ask participants to **"mute" their mic** in order to avoid background noise.
- ☑ Do not underestimate **the power of an informal meeting or moment**, even when meeting virtual! This is very important for the energy, team spirit, ambience and social support.

Useful links and information

Websites

- ✓ Forbes - [Mental health and remote work](#)
- ✓ Gallup - [Leading remotely](#)
- ✓ Business Insider - [How to lead your team when everyone is working from home](#)
- ✓ Harvard Business Review - [How to get people to actually participate in virtual meetings](#)
- ✓ Workplace Mental Health - [Working Remotely During COVID-19](#)



Questions?

Visit our website www.coronaatwork.be
or contact us via:

T 02 549 71 57

www.mensura.be

