

Ep #14: Video Call Fatigue



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With Your Host

Kori Linn

Ep #14: Video Call Fatigue

This week, we're talking about video calls. So if you've been experiencing some video call burnout, this one's for you.

You are listening to Love Your Job Before You Leave It, the podcast for ambitious, high-achieving womxn who are ready to stop feeling stressed about work and kiss burnout goodbye forever. Whether you're starting a business or staying in your day job, this show will give you the coaching and guidance you need to start loving your work today. Here's your host, Career Coach, Kori Linn.

Hey y'all. This week, we're talking about video calls and specifically, video call burnout. So if you are feeling some Zoom fatigue, I have got some good information for you. But before we get into that, I just want to take a minute to make a little statement, which is just to say that my business is an anti-racist business.

And I think it's really important that I say that because I'm a white woman and I have had so much privilege in my life and yet, being anti-racist is really important to me and I want to come out and say that really clearly so everyone knows where I stand on that. It's a key business value of mine, and one of the things that we work on in this podcast, we work on work stuff.

But a lot of what we're doing is we're discovering the internalized thought patterns that reflect social conditioning. And as someone who grew up in America, a lot of the social conditioning that we receive, that I received has white supremacy in it. And so I think it's really important to go about the work of being anti-racist on purpose.

I remember being a little kid and learning about things like slavery and understanding this is wrong and fucked up and not okay. But much later as an adult, I've learned so many more things and seen very specifically how even within my own thinking there was this unexamined white supremacy that I had to learn and uncover and weed out, and how I had to change those thoughts on purpose.

Ep #14: Video Call Fatigue

And this work is not one and done. So I just wanted to share that with y'all and let you know that that's where this podcast stands and that's where my business stands. And we may get into some more of that in the future, in specific podcast topics, but I also wanted to say that I'm going to get it wrong sometimes.

I'm anti-racist, I'm also a white lady. I am going to for sure get it wrong. I'm going to get educated, I'm going to be corrected, and I'm open to all of that and I think that actually wraps in so beautifully with what I teach on the podcast. Any time we're trying to make an ambitious big change in our lives, any time we're trying to create a result that we have not created yet, we probably are going to get it wrong along the way.

People may come in and have feedback for us. Remember last week, we talked about feedback. And this is not an area where I have received feedback recently, but it's definitely an area where I've received feedback over the years. And listen, it's not been super fun to hear that.

It's been really difficult, especially because I got a lot of that feedback before I had coaching tools. But I think it's so important and I think being willing to be uncomfortable in order to get that feedback is so important. Doesn't mean it's always delightful. Obviously, it can be very painful, especially as we have to reckon with who we think we are as people and then uncovering some of this and doing the work around it.

A lot of the work we do on this podcast is about uncovering internalized oppression and sometimes within our thought patterns, that's where the internalized oppression is. And sometimes it's internalized towards ourselves, but sometimes it's uncovering the way our social conditioning is actually biased against other people.

And I know for me, it's as important to me to do the work to unlearn the biases I have against myself as it is to unlearn the biases against other people. So that's where we stand. I just wanted to make that really clear for

Ep #14: Video Call Fatigue

everyone that that's what I'm about, that's what my business is about, that's what the podcast is about.

Again, for sure I'm going to be imperfect in it. If I could be perfect, I probably would vote for that, but since I can't be, it's like, be imperfect or don't do it, so let's just be imperfect. Okay, that's that.

So without further ado, let's get into video call fatigue, video call burnout. Are you feeling the Zoom fatigue? If so, you're not alone. Many people are working from home and maybe have been working from home for like, 10 months now, or they're working from other remote locations.

And even people who aren't working remotely may be doing more video calls to connect with family and other loved ones, friends, everything like that because of the pandemic and the quarantines. I know not everyone's in quarantine, but I know at least where I am, a lot of people are not seeing each other in person.

So it's a lot of video call connecting. And with the shift to spending more time in video calls, like I said, many people are starting to experience video call burnout. Even people who have always been in meetings for eight hours a day, like I know someone like this, they were always in eight hours or meetings back-to-back at the office.

But that was at least punctuated by room changes and taking the stairs to different floors. But now, so many people are like, sitting at home on Zoom calls for eight hours a day and their legs are like, practically atrophying beneath them.

Or maybe your team used to do a happy hour every week where you had the chance to connect with people one-on-one, but with video calls, happy hour just feels like this terrible cacophony of everyone talking and zero actual connection happening.

Or I see this one a lot too. Maybe you're just tired of seeing your own face on video, but you also can't seem to not look at your self-view. Pro tip for

Ep #14: Video Call Fatigue

that, I turn my self-view off. I could definitely coach myself about seeing myself, but I can't see myself in real interactions with real people, so I just turn that shit off and you can too.

While it's clearly true that being on video calls isn't the same as being in person, it's also true that it does not have to lead to video call burnout. That's because the video calls themselves are not creating the burnout and the fatigue we may feel about it.

Yes, our brains do interact differently with video calls than they do with being in person, but I think a large part of the burnout and fatigue that we feel is actually created by the thoughts we have about video calls. Not by the video calls themselves.

And I actually - my business is virtual, so even before the pandemic, I was on video calls all the time. And I find that I can feel a really great connection to my clients, working with them on video. I have clients all over the world, many of whom I've never met in person. But when we're on calls together, I feel very present, like we're together.

But I think that that takes practice. It takes a mindset practice. So for many of us, it was such a huge change, we didn't have any practice, it was just like, this is the new normal. So there has been some fatigue, especially because it was such a large influx, such a large amount of video calls that people were doing as compared to what they were doing before.

I mean, when I worked at Expedia, we were on a global team, so I was definitely on a lot of video calls. But not all day. I went into an office in Washington state, where I live, and saw real people. I mean, the people are real, even if they're on video calls, but you know what I mean.

Anyways, that being said, I think it was a really big switch for people and that has kind of made it difficult for them to get used to it and to be able to think creatively and clearly about how to have the best experience of video calls.

Ep #14: Video Call Fatigue

I think for a lot of us, with the pandemic, even though there were things happening, when we went from no quarantine to quarantine, that was pretty fast. And I think a lot of us sort of got an emotional equivalent of whiplash because the change felt so sudden. Even if to people in the public health sector, I'm sure it wasn't.

But anyways, here's the thing; there are actionable steps you can take to make video calls more enjoyable, but that's actually not what I'm going to focus on today at all. Because the biggest difference is made with how you think about video calls. And when you change your thoughts about video calls, your brain will actually come up with tons of actionable things that you can do to improve your particular experience.

And this is so important y'all because this is not just for video calls. I get people all the time who are asking my advice for how to handle things and listen, I'm very talkative, I have a lot of ideas, I have a lot of advice that I'm very happy to share with people.

But the number one thing we can do is be willing to change your own thoughts, be willing to change your own mindset. Because as much as I have tons of great ideas, so do you, and when you change how you think about something, you get access to your own great ideas.

You get access to your own capacity for problem solving, which is something that will always be available to you when you're willing to change your thoughts. Whereas when you come ask me, that's great and I'll share with you, but then you're just going to get my ideas.

Which listen, I love my ideas, but I want you to be able to tap into your own brilliance, and it's there. And changing how you think about stuff will help you access that.

So let me break this down for you. When you think video calls are a problem, that's what you experience. Because the brain has this thing called confirmation bias, and confirmation bias means your brain shows

Ep #14: Video Call Fatigue

you data that matches your beliefs. It also means your brain will literally hide data that is contrary to your beliefs.

So if you have one set of beliefs, it's like a Google search. Your brain is like, here's everything that matches that and anything that doesn't match it doesn't get filtered with the Google search. So it's very biased data.

On top of that, when you think that video calls are the problem and that the problem's out of your control, you actually block yourself from coming up with creative solutions. When we think things are out of our control, then we also don't try to change things. And when we don't try to change things, guess what? They often do not change.

And then with our brain's confirmation bias, our brain's like, "See, they're unchangeable." But no, they're often not. It's just that we think they're unchangeable, therefore we don't try to change them, therefore they don't change.

So in this way, believing that things are changeable is actually a prerequisite to taking action and creating changes. Mindset, which is really just the thoughts we have that we use to think about things is key here because without changing your mindset, without changing your thoughts, like I said, you don't have access to your own full set of problem-solving skills.

I see this happen again and again in all areas of clients' lives. When they think the thing is the problem, whether the thing is video calls, or anything else, their boss, their schedule at work, whatever, a specific kind of software, when we think any of the things is a problem, then we're stuck.

But when we're willing to believe that maybe the thing isn't the problem and that changing our thoughts could help us come up with better solutions, then we're empowered. Then we have choices, we have options. We're not just stuck. And that is true for you and it's also true about video calls.

Ep #14: Video Call Fatigue

There are two main thought patterns in particular that I see creating video call fatigue. And yeah, they're going to create other kinds of fatigue and burnout in other areas too because the way we think about one thing is usually the way we think about everything.

And while you may not be thinking these exact thoughts and these exact words, chances are high that if you're experiencing video call fatigue or other kinds of burnout, you may be thinking a variation of one or both of these.

These two thought patterns are, "I have to do this," and, "This isn't as good as..." fill in the blank. Now, I have to do this may seem true. You may be on these calls for work, you may be thinking this is the only way I can talk to my mom, whatever the thing is. It may seem like you have to do it.

But here's the thing; when we tell ourselves I have to, we do not feel in control of our own lives. For many of my clients, this outlook feels disempowering, draining, and exhausting. Take a minute to think about the calls you're attending.

Is it absolutely true that you have to take them? What consequences would you face if you chose to decline one or some of them? What feelings might come up for you if you said no or set limits about when you're available for video calls?

Probably, you are choosing to be on these calls because you either don't want the consequences of skipping them, or you don't want to feel the feeling you think you'd feel if you declined them. There are very few things in life that we have to do.

This is not just semantics. This is so important. It's not bright-siding. It's about remembering that you are the one choosing to do whatever you're doing and you're probably choosing to do it for a reason.

When you get on a video call thinking I'm choosing to be here for x, y, z reasons, you're telling yourself the truth and you're reminding yourself that

Ep #14: Video Call Fatigue

you are the one in control. This is not only more accurate but also so much more empowering.

I think this is so important because I see this all over areas of clients' lives where they're like, well, I have to do blah, blah, blah. But they don't. You don't have to. You don't have to do anything. You have free will. It's kind of amazing.

I used to be like this too and it's such a drain on our energy. So be honest with yourself. Why are you doing it? Why are you getting on these video calls? Do you actually want to be on them for some reason? If you do want to be on them, get really clear with yourself about why you want to be on there. Do you actually want to oversee the conversation around a certain project? Do you actually really value getting feedback from your boss in a one-on-one, even if it's remote?

Get clear on your reasons for going and language it that way. And sometimes, you might actually find out that you don't need to be on the video call. You're like, oh, I've been going to this call, there's actually no reasons I want to do it, I had the thought I have to but I actually don't have to. You might find yourself declining some meetings, and that can be really valuable. You can get time back in your day.

There's nothing wrong with the Zoom calls. What I'm saying is definitely it comes down to how you think about them, but that doesn't mean you should just get on all of them willy-nilly. You get to choose which ones you want to be in, and part of our job at work is to be our own protector of our schedule and to figure out what we actually need to be involved in to do our job and to be willing to say no to things that we don't need to be involved in, even if we happen to feel some discomfort when we do that.

I would much rather see you say no and feel some discomfort than say yes, even though you've discovered that you don't have a good reason to be on that call. Okay, that was my rant.

Ep #14: Video Call Fatigue

Now let's move on to the second one. Just like I have to, the thought, "This isn't as good as..." fill in the blank, may seem true. But here's the thing; it's only one viewpoint. And when you think it, confirmation bias, which we talked about before, will kick in and show you all the ways that video calls aren't as good as whatever you're comparing them to.

And like we also discussed, it will suppress data to the contrary. It will seem factual, but it won't be factual. If this confirmation bias felt awesome and got you good results that you liked, that would be one thing, but it doesn't. It feels depressing and it burns you out and it makes you sad about whatever's happening in your current life versus that fill in the blank that you wish it were.

And due to all of those things, I think it's worth at least considering that you could choose to think something else. Here's the question I want you to ask yourself. Am I willing to be wrong about video calls if it means I could feel better?

If you are willing to entertain the idea that you could do video calls without ending the day feeling totally drained, then you can ask yourself what would that look like, what changes might you need to make. When you start with the premise that you can have a better experience, it's much easier for your brain to come up with ways to make it happen and to actually implement them.

When you're convinced that you can't have a better experience, you don't bother to brainstorm or implement solutions and you get more of what you already had. So I want you to think about this. Not just with video calls, but with everything in your life.

And especially in your work life, where are you thinking these thoughts? Where are you thinking I have to do this and feeling totally disempowered and forgetting that you have ultimate choice over everything in your life? Where are you thinking this isn't as good as, and getting stuck in the confirmation bias of how it's not as good as something else would be?

Ep #14: Video Call Fatigue

And here's the thing about that too; when we think it isn't as good as, we don't notice all the ways it is good. So the antidote to this is what is working? Just like we talked about in the very first podcast, the question what is working, what is going well is incredibly powerful.

Like I've said again and again, it's not about only seeing what is working. It's not about bright-siding. It's just about being willing to see what's working and get out of the negativity bias that our brain naturally tries to go in. We talked a little bit about confirmation bias, negativity bias is another bias the brain has, where the brain tends to focus its attention on things that it perceives to be threats, which we often call negative.

So our brain will always be circling back to what it sees as "not working," and that's why we have to on purpose circle back to what is working. I've heard that it can take up to five pieces of what is working data just to balance out the natural negativity bias.

So when I'm telling you to spend some time thinking about what is working, I'm actually telling you that because it's going to help you be more realistic, not more optimistic. It seems like you're going to be optimistic, but it's actually about being more realistic and balancing the brain's natural bias.

So again, in review, if you're feeling burned out and fatigued from video calls or anything else, what is it that you're thinking about them that is making them feel terrible and blocking you from coming up with creative solutions?

Is it a thought like I have to do this? Is it a thought like this isn't as good as fill in the blank? If so, you have solutions here. If it's I have to do this, get clear with yourself. You don't have to. You're choosing to. Why are you choosing to? Do you want to keep choosing that? If it's this isn't as good as, then you can think about what is good about it and then from that place, you can think about what else would I like to change.

Ep #14: Video Call Fatigue

And if you love what I teach and you want some help taking things a little bit deeper, and figuring out how this all applies to your own life, I've got good news for you.

I've got space for a few new one-on-one coaching clients starting this month, so let's hop on a call. I'll give you some coaching right away to help you get going and if it seems like a good fit, I will share with you how we can work together. Just head on over to my website and click on the Work With Me button and get started there.

Also bonus, my coaching offering is totally virtual as to better serve my global audience, and yes, I do work with people who are not native English speakers and we've had great success doing that. There's even a testimonial on my website with someone in that category so you can check that out on the testimonials page. Alright y'all, have a lovely week and I will talk to you next time. Bye.

Thank you for listening to Love Your Job Before You Leave It. We'll have another episode for you next week. And in the meantime, if you're feeling super fired up, head on over to korilinn.com for more guidance and resources.