

title: **Zoom Fatigue**

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Post Text

After years of not being able to get much off the ground career-wise, 2020 has been a game changer for me. Not only did I finally get an ADHD diagnosis and proper treatment, but I can also work remotely - my career holy grail. As expected, I've found I can finally work at my pace in a comfortable environment without the hassle and stress of commuting, dressing up, and keeping up appearances with co-workers. I'm as productive I've ever been and I'm even often satisfied with my work product. Life is good - or as good as it can be in a pandemic, anyways. While thinking I finally had what it took to level up, I recently accepted a senior position at a small startup. The shift to the new role has been drastic. I went from scarcely having any meetings at all to company-wide, daily in-person Zoom stand-ups and many other meetings of both the scheduled and the 'hey can you hop on a call rn' variety. The Slack channels are less toxic than at my last company, but people don't appear to DM at all and are instead super @ happy in channels with > 10 people - not a great vibe. It appears I am expected to drop whatever I'm doing in a given moment and jump into a thread or a call - or just hang out in a breakout chat on Zoom while I knock out tasks in general. On Friday, I was literally in one of these rooms from the time standup ended until 5:30 - around 4 I started dropping off fast, but people kept asking me where I was at with my task while sporadically explaining things to me, working on other projects, and even handing me new tasks - due today. I tried not to panic, but I could see my face losing color and I couldn't string together a coherent sentence. Ultimately, someone else grabbed that task and knocked it out in 15 minutes. I was too drained to do it, but even if it had been first thing in the morning, I would have taken at least an hour to poke around the API a bit, write a few unit tests, dream of Paris at night, etc. - the first time doing something is hell and I don't have a full concept of the boundaries of the system yet. Anyhow, it was not a good look on the new senior engineer and I hope it's not a sign of what's to come. The main reason I found that remote worked for me is that I can take the initial steps I need to summarize requirements in a way I can understand, to write tests against my functionality, and to occasionally jump down a rabbit hole chasing a bug, update outdated dependencies, or find clever ways to improve whatever system I'm spun up on. In short - I enjoy working behind the scenes, knocking out semi-well-defined tickets and asking for clarification, sometimes hitting home runs, but mostly flying under-the-radar. Now I've placed myself directly in the spotlight and in emotional harm's way. I'm torn because I definitely _get_ that if I'm going to expect higher pay and better benefits, I need to be an effective communicator and keep my team aware of where my head is at and what my priorities are. However, I will never be the chatty, verbose coder that I've met here and elsewhere - believe me, I've tried, and it's as exhausting to attempt as it is impossible to sustain. On the other hand, I _know_ I've provided tons of value to prior teams I've been on just being myself, putting in a little face time here and there, having good one-on-ones/pair programming sessions, but mostly working privately in a relatively distraction-free environment. I'm not sure that style of work should directly mean I'm worth less to a company, especially when all tech companies pay so much lip service these days to valuing 'diversity of thought'. To wrap up this ironically verbose rant on a somewhat positive note, I think some of the Zoom/Slack behavior I'm seeing at the new company is largely the result of good faith open communication between a close team that was forced to go remote and miss out on their 'family vibe'. On my part, I don't expect their culture to change materially on account of me, but I do plan to take the good advice I've seen on the ADHD sub to not mention my ADHD directly, but to describe the symptoms in my check-in meetings with my supervisor. Then I can maybe low-key get some kind of accommodation for the space and time I need to focus on problems I care about while still delivering value to the company. They did, after all, bring on a remote worker and are hoping to expand their business, so my (carefully worded!) input may help prepare them to do more of the same. For those of you that are new to the field, let this be a reminder that, when you're asked if you have any questions during an interview, it might not hurt to ask a few about your potential team's day-to-day work habits and development process. For remote workers, I'd be happy to hear about your experience in similar situations

Comments

Commenter_2

ID: REDACTED! ~(o.o)~ <3, Upvotes: 6

Sounds like lack of boundaries in your company which can be a sign of people who are inexperienced with the IT business.

You need to communicate how distracting it is if people tell you to drop everything and go on a call.

There should be regular catch-ups where you plan the day/week/month goals and talk about what are the problems people experience etc. There needs to be proper planning and trust that people are doing their job especially with remote roles.

This kind of lack of organisation is worrying but not uncommon in small companies and startups. People lack the necessary experience with being slightly more self managing then you'd need at say corporate position. Communication is the key, see if you can get them to become more organised over couple of months. If no one listens there's no hope and you need to move on as the place will go up in flames eventually.