# WR8 Collaborating with Colleagues Transcript

This is video 8 of the working remotely be connected module. We are still continuing to look at the social and behavioural structure you can create to make working at home more effective. And we are now looking at collaborating with colleagues.

00:26

Welcome back to the watching remotely videos. We're in the section on creating the social and behavioural structure for you to work more effectively remotely. And I hope you recognise some of the expectations that you had for yourself, and also had an opportunity to recognise what are matched expectations and mismatched expectations that you have with other people, both at home and your colleagues at work.

And now. In addition, obviously to managing our expectations we need to come up with ways to support us to collaborate well with our colleagues. And this means we need to do things, consciously to overcome the virtual distance that we feel when working remotely.

So the research into this shows that it's not just the geographic distance. So when we're working remotely, we think well it's because we're spread, you know geographically. And here I'm doing this in Scotland, across Scotland, but maybe it could be elsewhere as well, or even with colleagues in another continent. And we always think about it's the physical distance that's getting in the way, the geographic distance. And this geographic dispersion, it mentally impacts the way we think about how we can work together when we usually meet in the same physical work office. So we need to reconsider that and we'll come up with a few ways.

But interestingly the research also says the more subtle factors as well. So there's something called operational distance, which is all about how we go about getting things done and we come up with a way that works for us when we're all working in the same location.

And then we come up against barriers when we're not in the same location, and our way of working together doesn't work anymore. And we may not have the immediate resources, or we may not imagine we have the immediate resources, to deal with it, or it just could be a frustration and it's that that sort of barrier that gets in the way, is the frustration rather than us thinking about how else could we do it.

And the other distance that they talk about that this perhaps is even more subtle is called affinity distance, and this is about how much we still feel a real human connection with our colleagues because we're not seeing them every day, and it's curious how important those casual little one or two minute conversations or five minute conversations, the Hello that you have in the morning, that shared cup of coffee that you have with someone who sits at the desk next door to you. The, the, laugh and a giggle that you have, maybe at lunchtime. And maybe you meet up for coffee or go for a walk. All of these really small, social interactions that we have with our colleagues are actually really, really important to how we feel about our work. And all of a sudden now that we're having to work from home, we've lost those social connections. And that's what leads to this, this high level of reporting that people say they feel so isolated, when they are working remotely. And it's not just about the, you know, the time it takes and the lack of the immediate contact but it is the social and informal interactions that make a big difference. And that's also really critical because it impacts the trust that we feel, the trust that we feel with our colleagues when we’re not actually seeing them.

So it's important because the research shows all of these different kinds of distance that make up the virtual distance, they impact how we perform at work because we lose clarity about our goals, and our particular role in work and within the team, it reduces our trust with colleagues and we lose that sense of connection of belonging with your team and the organisation.

So it's absolutely critical that we overcome these distances, and we can still collaborate and still communicate with our colleagues.

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So, video conferencing has absolutely taken off during the pandemic. And there's a very good reason for that because it's absolutely ideal to see each other, even if we're not physically in the same room. Although we're only seeing the face and it's not the whole body, we're losing out a lot of the other body contact information, however, seeing the face is really important for having that sense of I can see eye to eye, we can see the facial responses, and we get some sense for the nonverbal communication, when we're looking through a video with somebody.

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That really adds to a sense of connection. Email by itself is not enough because it's so often misinterpreted we don't get the tone of the voice. And a telephone is good as well. And it just doesn't have the visual connection. The one downside that we're discovering with all this video conferencing and the huge number of back to back meetings, is - it's even got its own term that's called the zoom fatigue - and the research is discovering that it does seem to be much more tiring to communicate over video, and it's possible because we don't have enough breaks, we don't have enough of the social chitchatty bits, and we tend not to give ourselves enough of a break between meetings. If we're in physical meetings, more often than not, we at least have to walk to another room. Whereas, if we have back to back zoom meetings, some people aren't even allowing themselves time for a cup of water, even. So, this is all really important things to think about.

When we are communicating with our colleagues, we need to have some way of showing and creating a space for communication, so that we can understand their situation, what is it like for them at home? So making a point of starting your meetings and your one to one sessions with time for a social chat. More often than not we feel time is short, we have to focus and get straight into the meat of what is it we need to talk about what's the task, what's the objectives, and we're focusing very much on that. It's very operational. We need, especially during these times when we're remote, to allow time for the five minutes of Hello, how are you feeling? Recognising when somebody is feeling super stressed and under pressure, because that affects how we interpret the rest of the conversations that we have. And it allows each other to feel that someone's actually listening and listening out for us. So, and it helps us understand how is that helping to impact them working and have these conversations.

And we talked earlier about managing your routines. So have the conversation with your colleagues, so that together, part of your collaboration is how you manage your routines in a way that acknowledges what impacts on them and how you can align things so that it is a better option for all of you, or the least disruptive option for all of you. That you can.

One thing that's quite useful to do and have a chat with your line manager if you're not managing the team itself is to think about how could we create a team charter which is essentially a document that talks about how do we agree to work together. What can we expect of each other? What are appropriate behaviours? And what will not be tolerated? so what would be desired and what's not tolerated. And we do talk more about this in the managing remotely module.

What's really important is when you collaborate you have answer clarity on what the plan is. And the times and expectations and all the rest of it because that makes it easier to work together without hiccups and schedule clashes.

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And what you really want to do is also allow for flexibility so build the flexibility into your planning.

The other thing to think about is how do you collaborate with colleagues in terms of planning, when you're working together. And when you're not expecting to work at the same time so this is coming to recognise synchronous working, which is when you're all at work at the same time. And that's the time to plan in your phone calls, the meetings, the zoom conferences. And then there's the time to recognise, people will be working but not everybody's working at the same time and the term for that is called asynchronous working. And it means that maybe you're not expecting an instant email response, and maybe, is it useful in your communications to put out, you know, ‘I appreciate you're not working when I'm working, please could you deal with this when you're back into work’. Be clear about expected timeframes for when things need to be done.

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What do you need to do to just keep in touch and have fun together? Because that's a vital part of feeling part of the team, when you're at work. And it’s the things that you do that, that help to create that sense of a bond, and builds the strong relationships that you have with each other. So, one, one of my one on one coaching clients were saying to me, what has worked for them is to set up a weekly board game session. So it's quite a small team, and they all like doing board games so what they found is something that they all love to do, and they've created a virtual board game session. And other people have online quizzes. So there's lots of different things that are worth doing. And some people have coffee and cake virtually where you bring your own, or a wine or Gin and Tonic bring your own. So it's worth finding out what is it that you all love? What is a good thing for each of you to do, and create a time when, when you're all available to join in and do that?

And lastly, think about how do you let your colleagues know what's a good time, when it's okay for them to call you just for chat or what you're doing, and when is your power hour, when are the times not to disturb you. And the more clear you can be, and share those that information with, with all of your colleagues, then the easier you're making it to collaborate with each other. So after the session, use the worksheet write down, brainstorm yourself, and then have those conversations with your colleagues about what will make it easy for us to collaborate together.