

## Connect: Create meaningful interactions | Tools &amp; tips 1



To have better connections, reflect on how you connect

# Connection

Humans are born wired for connection; it is in our DNA, as strong a need as food, water and warmth. Connection with others is in fact an essential requirement for survival; unless a baby successfully connects with its mother, it will not be able to survive. Our brain therefore contains an innate attachment system, which gives us a magnetic attraction to others and with it, a feeling of safety and security. Alone and isolated, we find it difficult to survive, even as adults.

Since we associate human connection with safety, it stands to reason that in times of challenge and change our need for security intensifies. If staying at home to “flatten the curve” has taught us anything, it’s that we crave connection. We are all facing challenges right now and we all need support.

Paradoxically, however, precisely when the human connection is most needed, it is least available. Social distancing, working from home and virtual, online meetings keep us physically and emotionally apart. When we work fulltime from home, we lose the energy, engagement and positive vibes we get from laughing at a teammate’s joke, making eye contact with someone and smiling, or chit-chatting as we wait for the coffee to brew.

If we feel anxious, stressed, worried, fearful or uncertain right now (especially if you are the leader that others are looking to for stability), reaching out to supportive connections beyond your immediate family may be more challenging than ever.

Relationships are by far the most important determinant for our overall quality of life. The Harvard Study on Adult Development on lifetime happiness – the longest running study in this field - is the most well-known piece of research that connects high-quality relationships with a high quality of life. Good, healthy relationships help us live longer, healthier lives and are crucial for our mental and physical health.

It is the quality of your interactions that defines the quality of your relationships. When, a year ago, we were all plunged, pretty much instantaneously, into digital exchanges, the quality of our relationships inevitably became compromised. This is because connecting digitally has quite a few disadvantages compared with physical contact. Here are some of them:

- **Body language** - the scarcity of physical cues compromises our ability to assess a connection or a situation
- **Misunderstandings** can be more frequent
- The **flow** of the connection can become jagged
- Loss of informality - **going straight ‘into business’**
- **Loss of spontaneity**
- **Distractions** are abundant and easy.
- The energy and ‘feel’ of a team **are largely lost**

Thus, while online communication has its highs, it also has quite a few lows when it comes to the human touch.

When things get worse, a common human reflex is to push even harder. Less connectivity? Let's push for more! More virtual meetings, more screen time, more online engagement - and half-hour slots as a minimum. But more is not always better. More cleverly is the way forward.

In the upcoming session and the Tips & Tools that follow, we offer you the opportunity to learn to connect in a more meaningful way:

- To reflect on the meaning of connection to you, and how well you (think you) do it
- To find out what matters to you, and to your teammates, in your connections
- To upgrade your communication skills
- To hone these skills to what is certain to remain a digital working world
- To try some of these skills with your colleagues, including in the peer-to-peer coaching session

To prepare for the training session, we'd like to invite you to reflect on the following questions:

## Reflection

1. What does connection mean to you personally?
2. Why is it important for you?
3. What makes it easier for you to connect?
4. What would be one thing that, in your opinion, could improve the human connection within the team?

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We look forward to meeting you at the training session.