

Some top tips and ideas for attending a virtual event:

Some people love virtual events and others can find them harder to engage or stay present. Especially, as it can be harder to feel the energy or the presence of the facilitator and of the group. So, it can be useful to think intentionally about how to optimise the space. Here are a few tips and ideas. They are by no means exhaustive or prescriptive and acknowledge that everyone is different. Please add more of your own!

Before and during the event:

- Think about your environment. Where are you sitting? Are you comfortable? What do you have to support you and keep you engaged and cared for? (e.g. a cosy or weighted blanket, a stress ball, sensory oils, a sensory box, a glitter stick, snacks, other fidget toys etc). Where possible, although we know at the moment it can be difficult, try to avoid distractions, and to make the space as private and quiet as possible.
- Some people find sitting still tricky and uncomfortable, so for some walking around the room or space up and down or gently moving can keep them alert, others, have an item like a balance board or a yoga ball- if this is the case, generally it is best to put your video off to avoid distracting other people.
- Arrive earlier than the start time. It takes a while to get into the zone virtually, so best to leave some time to settle in. If you miss the beginning it can feel quite disorienting and unsettling. This also means that you have time to hopefully attend to any technology concerns before the event starts. And please leave time at the end of the event so that you can attend it in its entirety and are not rushing off to the next thing. For your own regulation, wellbeing and processing we need to give some time to unwind, process, reflect, and switch between zones and tasks.
- Have some paper for notes, doodling, or mind-mapping. Everyone has different learning styles, but for many people writing or drawing what one is hearing can keep people much more present and engaged with the material.
- Proactively use the chat function to keep engaged and for it to feel interactive. Even if this is just comments, thoughts, emojis etc.
- If there are break out rooms, use these opportunities to go more in-depth.
- If you find it distracting to see your face in front of you, you can switch off your video, or you can switch off your video to you but so that other people can still see you. Some people do not want people to see into their homes, so you can select a different background on the online platform instead; or some people choose to sit by a neutral wall. You can also change your name if you prefer to be anonymous (or it can be quite fun to change your name to a word or name that describes how you are feeling or something about you).
- Mute your microphone so that other people are not being distracted by background noise; but remember when talking or asking a question to unmute yourself.
- Some people prefer seeing who is in the room, others finding so many faces distracting, so if you prefer you can change to speaker view.

Optimise the breaks

- Move away from the screen and give yourself a mindful moment! Get up, move around, shake-it out. You might like to have an uplifting song to listen to in the break or if possible, to step outside, or I like to do some rhythm clapping to wake me up. Other people depending on whether they are trying to up or down regulate may like to do some breathing/ relaxation/ tensing and releasing/ stretching exercises; others might like to use their sensory box or have a particular sensory item to use.
- Some people find putting eye drops in or putting some cold water over their eyes helpful due to the prolonged screen time.
- Some people like to do something a bit more physical like bouncing a ball or a balloon in the air; or pushing very hard up against a wall.
- Most events for your wellbeing there will be an opportunity to contact the facilitator or someone from the team in the breaks, or after the event for any further support. Please do use this opportunity. It is important to not sit with the material alone, if there are things which you want to discuss, share, check etc.
- Think about what snacks and drinks you eat or drink in between- which ones will alert you or make you sleepy? Different people will want and need different things.

After the session:

- At the end of the session, it can feel a little odd just switching off or going onto the task. So intentionally mark the end, have a break, and then reset for the next activity.
- It can be harder to engage and embed virtual material, so if you want and feel able. Get a time in the diary to meet and discuss with others, practice some of the ideas, read your notes, reflect on some key take home points, do some further reading etc.
- Some people will want to create a visual picture or notes of what they learned etc.