Video Calls: Tips for Autistic People

Video calls have become a part of work and social life for many of us. This sheet provides some Top Tips on video calls from an Autistic perspective.

Autism Wellbeing have also produced an information sheet called "Video Calls and Autism" which provides information about why video calls may be a challenge for Autistic people. These two information sheets together provide insights into why video calls might be challenging for Autistic people as well as tips on how to have a successful video call.

- Your laptop camera is often at the top of the screen in the middle and when it's working it looks like a tiny light.
- By looking into your laptop camera when talking on a video call, other participants on the call have the experience that you are looking them in the eye. This is useful for two reasons – the other participants are likely to feel more engaged with you and it means you don't have to look at the other participants' faces/eyes on your laptop screen, which some Autistic people find uncomfortable.
- If you find the on-screen images of the other participants intrusive, you can change the gallery view either so that it shows only the speaker or so that it shows fewer of the call participants. Check out online tutorials (*eg* on YouTube) to learn the features of the various video call platforms – there are lots of ways to customise your viewing experience so that you feel more comfortable and in control on your video calls. Alternatively, you can stick a post-it note on the screen (but not the camera) so as to block out elements of the screen view that make you feel uncomfortable.
- Another idea is to put up a poster or something pleasant to look at on the wall behind your laptop. That way, you can look beyond your laptop screen at the poster instead.
- Change the volume setting to a level that you are comfortable with, or you may prefer using headphones.
- Blur your background or sit against a plain background. This may feel more private and is less distracting for other participants.
- If it feels more comfortable, turn off your microphone and/or turn off your camera.
- If it feels more comfortable, communicate via the message and/or chat functions.
- Before the call, tell the call organiser about any accessibility requirements you have.
- Prepare for a video call like you would prepare for a face-to-face meeting – take time to regulate your senses and emotions before the call and also afterwards. Remember, video calls can be just as tiring as a face-to-face meeting and your self-care before and after a video call is just as important.
- Check your camera and microphone before joining the call (most video call platforms prompt you to do this). Whilst on a video call, have with you a choice of objects to use for sensory regulation. You can use these to regulate yourself without other participants being able to see, as your camera will not pick up what you are doing with your hands.