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Dear DEI, Esq: How Do I Deal with Zoom Fatigue?

Diversity and Inclusion



In this series, DEI, Esq. is helping individuals who may have experienced or perceived some sort of bias become bias interrupters.

***Dear DEI, Esq*,**

I've been with my company for five years and have a great team I manage. Lately, we've been working remotely, and I feel like the lines between my personal and professional lives have been blurred. Too much of my personal life is on display when I am on video calls from home, and the idea of turning the camera on is oftentimes daunting. I don't want my team to see me when I am not "office-ready" and judge me.

One day last week, I forgot to remove my hair wrap and was dreading going on camera. This is exhausting. How do I overcome this?

Hope for your wisdom,

Too tired

***Dear Too tired*,**

Video call fatigue is a phenomenon that's here to stay. When on camera, it's easy to feel vulnerable and under a microscope. When we come to the physical office, we can leave our personal lives at home. A virtual office does not offer such a luxury. Our personal lives are on display in their full glory — whether it's our home décor, kids running in on camera, our unique cultures, or lack of "office-ready" makeup, hair, or outfit.

What you may be experiencing is the "isolation" bias pattern where people intentionally keep their

personal lives hidden to maintain their influence and authority or for fear of judgment, whether that fear is real or perceived. Knowing that video calls are not going away anytime soon, here are some things for you to consider.

The concept of bringing your whole self to work is not novel, but it gained new momentum in the virtual workplace. Doing so requires embracing vulnerability, but it's important to remember that vulnerability does not equal weakness or loss of influence.

When you know that "hiding" your personal life is not manageable for you, embrace the idea of being vulnerable and transparent about who you truly are and become empowered to bring your whole self to your video calls/remote meetings. This can be an opportunity to share with your colleagues what makes you unique and perhaps even educate others from different backgrounds or circumstances about the history of hair wraps or anything else that makes up your whole self. Our uniqueness and authenticity are powerful and should be celebrated.

Bringing your whole self to work can be overwhelming, so start small. Begin by having one-on-one conversations with your colleagues with your camera on, opening up about some aspects of your personal life. Hair wrap on? Share the history and purpose of hair wraps. Unique artwork in the background? Explain its significance. Once you get more comfortable at being transparent and vulnerable on a smaller level, consider bringing your whole self to a larger meeting — whether on camera or in person.

You've got this!

DEI, Esq.

DEI, Esq. is comprised of in-house counsel who share a deep passion for diversity, equity, and inclusion. While the members, Jane Howard-Martin, Connie Almond, Olesja Cormney, Jennifer N. Jones, and Meyling Ly Ortiz, work as employment counsel at Toyota Motor North America, Inc., their views and the thought-leadership expressed are their own and not necessarily the views of their employer.

Learn how the ACC Maturity Model can help you.

Jane Howard-Martin



Vice President and Assistant General Counsel

Toyota Motor North America, Inc.

Jane Howard-Martin is vice president and assistant general counsel for Toyota Motor North America, Inc. (TMNA) and manages the Labor, Employment, Immigration, Benefits and Trade Secrets practice. Howard-Martin leads the labor and employment practice group that is responsible for providing legal advice and counsel and managing litigation and labor matters for a workforce of 33,993 based in our North America affiliates, including the nine North American Manufacturing Centers (NAMCs), R&D, Finance, and Headquarters functions.

Prior to joining Toyota in 2003, Howard-Martin was a partner with Morgan, Lewis and Bockius, LLP in their Los Angeles and Pittsburgh offices, and previously was a partner at Kirkpatrick & Lockhart in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Howard-Martin has been featured in a number of publications and symposiums. She authored a column on employment issues for USAToday.com, a treatise on Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act and served on the Editorial Review Board of the Pennsylvania Labor Letter. Howard-Martin also appeared as a panelist on MSNBC's "Today in America" on the issue of harassment. She is a frequent speaker on employment law topics at various conferences including those held by the ABA, the National Employment Law Council, and the American Employment Law Council. In November 2020, Howard-Martin received the ABA Honorable Bernice B. Donald Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in the Legal Profession Award. She is the past President (2009) and currently serves on the board of directors of the California Employment Law Council and is also a board member of the American Employment Law Council. She is also a fellow with the College of Labor and Employment Lawyers.

Howard-Martin earned a BA from Harvard University in 1979 and received her juris doctorate degree from Harvard Law School in 1982.

She lives in Los Angeles with her husband, Gus Martin, who is on the facility at California State University, Dominguez Hills. In her free time, she enjoys ballroom and hip-hop dancing, trying international recipes, writing historical fiction, and travel.

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Olesja Cormney is managing counsel in the labor and employment group for Toyota Motor North America, Inc., a mobility company headquartered in Plano, TX. She is a strategic counsel and a proactive problem solver, offering an innovative perspective and an agile approach based on her prior business experience. Cormney is honored to be on the board of the ACC Dallas Fort-Worth Chapter.

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Jennifer Jones is managing counsel in the labor and employment group at Toyota Motor North America, Inc. She has over a decade of experience counseling employers on a broad range of labor and employment law issues. As one of the founding members of DEI, Esq., she has a deep passion for diversity, equity, and inclusion, and has authored many articles and participated in many panels on the subject. She also sits on the board of two nonprofit organizations, both with a mission of ensuring that children from disadvantaged backgrounds have access to quality secondary and post-secondary education. In her free time, Jones strives to be a “fun mom” for her two small children

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Meyling "Mey" Ly Ortiz



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Meyling "Mey" Ly Ortiz is managing counsel of employment at Toyota Motor North America, Inc. Her passions include mentoring, championing diversity and inclusion and a personal blog: TheMeybe.com. At home, you can find her doing her best to be a "fun" mom to a toddler and a preschooler and chasing her best self on her Peloton. You can follow her on LinkedIn. And you knew this was coming: her opinions are hers alone.