



REMOTE WORK HANDBOOK

Our unique take on working remotely. Tips,
tricks and how-to's.

Foreword



Wellbeing of one's self and others is the foundation of everything at VALA. Thus, this remote work guide book concentrates on the three core areas of VALA's LQM (Life Quality Management) program: physical wellbeing, mental energy and professional drive, with a fourth emphasis on family, friends and socializing.

Each program contains more detailed descriptions, sub topics and practical tips on how to incorporate more wellbeing into your life. The Handbook is written by VALA people, and most of the tips come from within the community, or from research done on the topic.

Working at VALA has never been dependent on working physically at our Erottajankatu office. Therefore, remote work has always been a natural work method for VALA, and people have the opportunity to choose for themselves where they wish to work from. However, client specific procedures have to be taken into account and organized directly between the customer and yourself. Contact your Project Contact or the admin team if you need help with the practicalities of remote work.

This Handbook was written during a pretty exceptional time with a global pandemic forcing people to work from home. However, the tips and advice in this Handbook can be used, even after the pandemic, in all types of remote work modes: full time, part time or occasionally.

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'There are hundreds of guides to remote work. Most of them good. But this is for our people, by our people'

– Toni

01

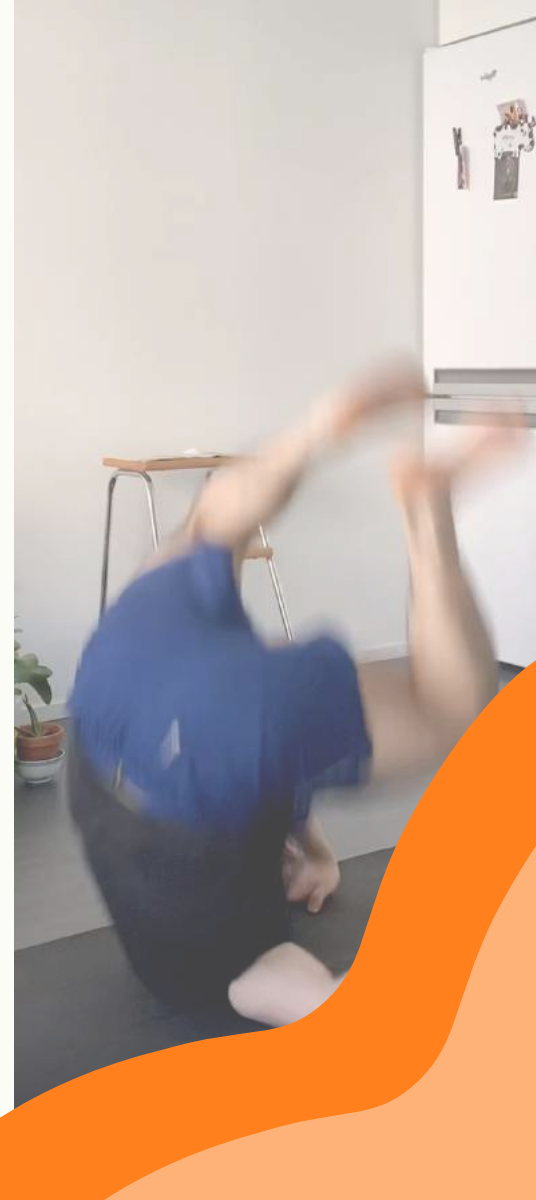
GENERAL HEALTH & PHYSICAL WELL-BEING



Our general health and physical wellbeing have a direct connection to our overall happiness. In this section, we want to share tips that VALA people have found useful during these times.

'Keep my Oura activity score >90. And no phone 1-2h before sleeping'

– Virpi's wellbeing goals for herself



1.1

GENERAL HEALTH & PHYSICAL WELL-BEING

In 1986, The World Health Organization (WHO) defined health as **“A resource for everyday life, not the objective of living. Health is a positive concept emphasizing social and personal resources, as well as physical capacities”**. A healthy lifestyle provides the means to lead a full life with meaning and purpose.





1.1

Why don't we have a little gratitude practice to start with, and take a moment to think about the following questions:
(Close you eyes after reading the questions and spend about a minute contemplating it)



What are you most grateful for today?

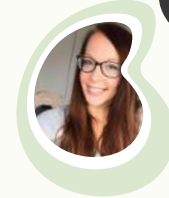


What made you smile today?



What did I take for granted in the past that now I really appreciate?

1.1



Tips for overall wellbeing from our occupational health & safety representative Heidi:



Think positive,
focus on
gratitude



Think small
(small steps lead
to big results)



Focus on
nutrition, drink
water



Give yourself a
break



Take care of your
social
relationships



Get a good
night's sleep



Exercise daily

1.2

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY



When daily routines change and gyms and other sports places are closed, you might get a bit unaware of how much you *actually* move during the day, or how much you *should* be moving.

Health Exercise Research and Expert Center (UKK Instituutti) has listed following adult physical activity guidelines:

At least **150 minutes** a week of moderate-intensity physical activity (that could be any movement that speeds up your heart rate) **or 75 minutes** a week of vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity (you will get the same health benefits in less time as you increase the efficiency of your movement).

In addition to this, the following activities are recommended:



Muscle toning to support functional capacity at least **twice a week**



Light movement as often as possible (such as home chores, going to the supermarket, walking stairs etc.)



Taking breaks from constant sitting or standing





Note:

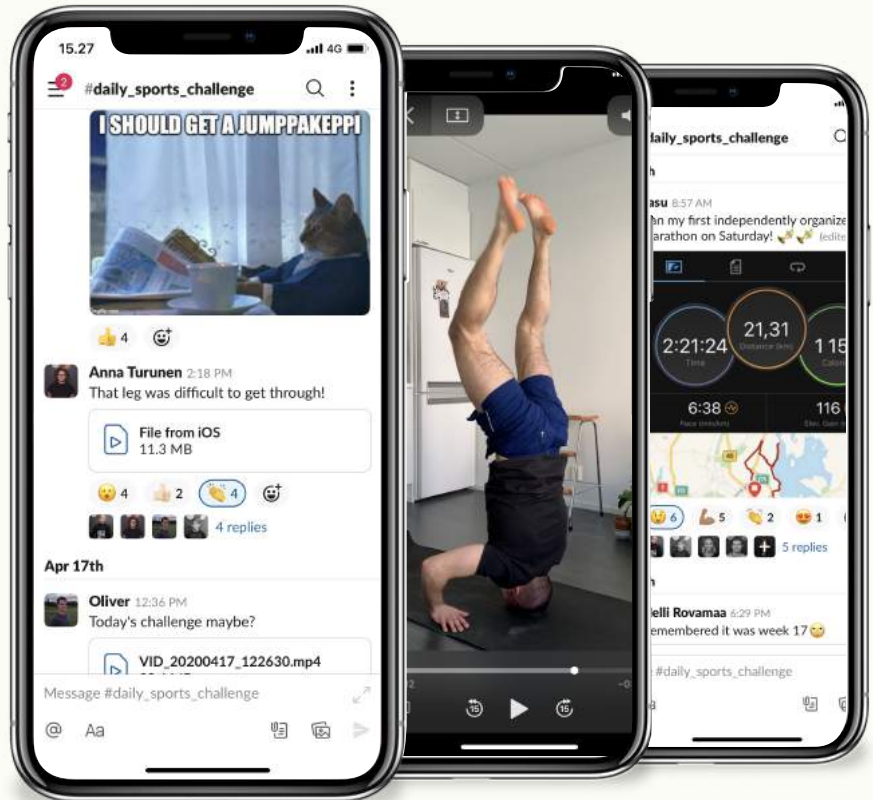
Remember that these are only guidelines, but can be helpful when all movement during the day is minimal. So just get up and move! But be merciful towards yourself. For most of us it is enough that you have a short daily walk or clean your apartment to get your heart rate up to the required levels.

Next we'll have some tips on how to make the most out of the physical activities: *Value*

1.2

#Daily_sports_challenge

We established a Slack channel for a daily sports challenge, where we post our sportive achievements and challenge others for different sporty things.

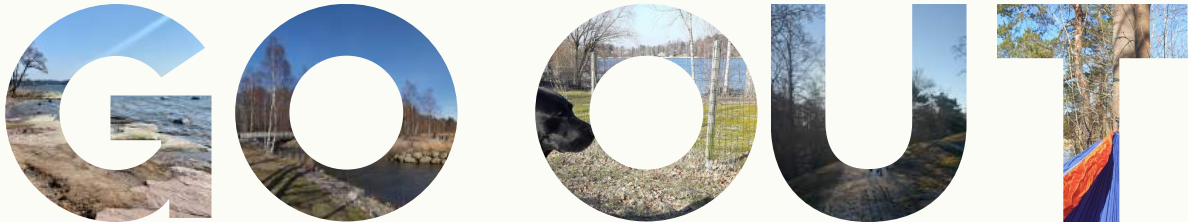


1.2

The outdoors

As walks and jogs are one of the few exercises people are able to do while in quarantine, this is a brilliant time to dive deep into it! Here are some hacks on how to make the walks even more interesting:

- Attaching additional weights to your legs for walks/jogging.
- Stair workouts. You can find long stairs for a good workout, for example, in Malminkartano, Westend, Paloheinä, Herttoniemi and Laurinlahti. For an urban atmosphere, try the stairs of Tuomiokirkko.



1.2

Explore your neighbourhood with a twist

- Find streets in your neighbourhood that you haven't yet walked on.
- Counting pets, people with face masks, etc.
- Guessing what year each building has been built, and checking the answers when you get home (by writing the address in Google, you can open the Oikotie link for most apartment buildings, and it gives the year when the building was built).
- Naming plants, birds and trees (gives you a chance to scream "Töyhtöhyppä!" every time you see a bird).
- Exploring new neighbourhoods (while keeping a distance to people!). Walk further than you have before and remember all the little cafes you want to visit once the pandemic is over.



Töyhtöhyppä?



1.2

Online trainings

- NB trainers exercise
 - Every week we get two home training sessions from our NB personal trainer. They are 10-30 minutes HIIT sessions, which are easy to do at home or even outside - no equipment needed!
- Yogaia - yoga at home. Over 100 new trainings weekly, offers free trials.
- 30-day-yoga challenge by [Yoga by Adriene](#)
- Elixia trainings. Everything from strength training to cardio and dancing for free.
- Chris Hemsworth's holistic fitness app. 20 to 40 minute home trainings, offers free trials.



1.2

Others

- Stick mobility exercises with, for example a mop or a resistance band
- Chinning bar
- Wall climbing tool
- Outside gyms
- Bike trips
 - Urban routes: discover Helsinki, you can find some nice routes for example here:
<https://www.myhelsinki.fi/en/see-and-do/activities/cycling-in-helsinki-three-routes>
 - Biking routes in all Finland:
<http://www.polkupyoraily.net/wiki/Luokka:Py%C3%B6r%C3%A4reitit>
 - Longer trips:
 - Helsinki-Porvoo (~50km). You can take the subway to Itäkeskus, and start biking from there. If you don't want to bike all the way back from Porvoo, you can take a ferry back to Helsinki.





1.3

WORK ERGONOMY

Work ergonomics can be difficult to achieve at home. Leena has some great tips for you regarding this:



Standing up while working every day for a while and sitting on a saddle chair or a gym ball the rest of the time.



If you have bad back-aches, take short but frequent walks. When you notice your back is aching, shorten the continuous working time and walk in between. Keep the sitting time short, for example 45 min of sitting down, 10 of walking (or even 5 minutes of walking per 20 minutes of working if the aches are really bad)”



Tips for [ergonomics during remote work](#) by Mehiläinen.



Tips for [ergonomics during remote work](#) by Helsingin Sanomat.



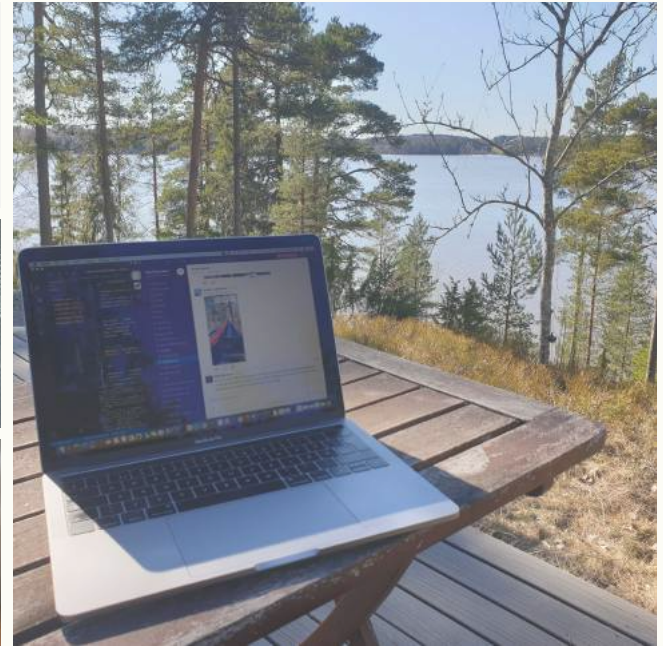
Tips for [general ergonomics](#) for by TTL (Työterveyslaitos/ Finnish Institute for Occupational Health).

1.3

Remote work stations by VALA people



@delish
Remote working week number three. I have totally
missed my coffee and check-in ritual for remote work!



02 MENTAL ENERGY

VALA realizes how diverse and scattered modern-day lives are and we therefore focus on catering to all kinds of dreams and life situations. Hopefully these tips help you gain more mental energy and find the balance between work and free time during the remote work period!

'When I put my nose in a glass, it's like tunnel vision. I move into another world, where everything around me is just gone, and every bit of mental energy is focused on that wine.'

– Robert M. Parker, Jr.



2.1

FREETIME & VACATIONS

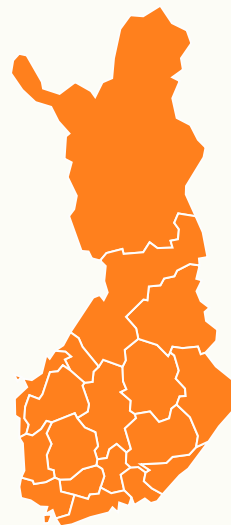


I'm quite sure that most of us use more time planning the vacation than we actually do spending time on it. And that's completely ok, because planning the vacation is half the fun! Vacation is a time when you shouldn't feel obliged to perform, but just to enjoy your time.

2.1

Here are some tips on how to prepare for your vacation:

- Don't stress about perfecting it. You don't have to have special plans or activities to enjoy every minute of your vacation. It's completely ok, or even preferred to get bored once in a while.
- If you feel like planning, prefer planning something for the *start* of your vacation. It's easier to settle down into vacation mode when you do something out of the ordinary at the beginning of it.
- Travel in Finland. Even though everything would be closed up because of Covid-19, you can still do a lot in this land of happy people and crystal clear lakes:
 - hike through those thousands of forests and hiking trails or paddle in one of those thousands lakes that we have here. <https://www.nationalparks.fi/>
 - Travel through the Finnish countryside by bike. <https://www.suomenlatu.fi/ulkoile/lajit/pyoraily.html> or discover the beautiful Turku Archipelago: <http://www.saaristonrengastie.fi/content/reitti>
 - Rent a cottage and enjoy Finnish summer <https://www.lomarengas.fi/en>, www.booking.com, <https://www.nettimokki.com/en> etc.
 - Helsinki city offers a possibility to hire rowing boats: <https://www.hel.fi/uutiset/en/kaupunginkanslia/city-rowboats-available-for-booking>





VALA
PETS &

BUDDIES



2.2

ROUTINES & RECOVERY



Remote work often equals increased work flexibility and flexible time management. On the other hand, remote work brings us increased responsibility for managing our own work & time. Here are some tips on how to make your remote working even more efficient!



Tips for work-related routines:

- Planning: Plan your week and work day in advance.
- Scheduling: Schedule your day the way that suits you best, e.g. by scheduling the challenging non-routine tasks for the morning, and checking emails only after this (web is full of hints for workday scheduling)
- Set targets: Plan clear objectives before each day. It feels great when you're able to tick them off your list once you're done with them!
- Deadlines: If you have a very flexible calendar and have trouble getting things done, set yourself clear deadlines and see how well you meet these deadlines.
- Report: Although you wouldn't be working in an agile team with daily meetings, send or show work progress reports to your colleague(s) frequently. This forces you to deliver, and forget struggling for perfection.

2.3



Tips for concentration



Pomodoro technique. This technique uses a timer to break down work into intervals, traditionally 25 minutes in length, separated by short breaks.



Automate some of your manual processes with Zapier, to have more time to concentrate on important stuff. (<https://zapier.com/blog/remote-work-automation/>)

Breathe

2.3



Switching between non-work and work modes

The isolation that comes with remote work, can affect many aspects of our day, such as the sense of being content on the results of your work day:

“It sometimes feels like my work effort is somehow not enough, when working from home.

At the office, it’s easier to pack-up your bag in the afternoon, and be content with your day's effort, when you see others closing up for the day and going home. At home, it’s more difficult to say when you’ve done enough and can close the laptop with a good consciousness, even though you would’ve worked the normal hours already. It’s difficult to get that sense of transition from work to freetime when the routines are different at home, and you don’t have that reciprocity from colleagues.”

– Jasu



2.3 Tips



Don't be afraid of work related thoughts in your free time. Use tools such as Google Keep, Trello etc. to write the ideas down when they come to you. This way you can save the thoughts for later, and get back to what you were doing.



Go outside! It's a [scientifically proven fact](#) that spending time in a forest helps you to recover and lower your stress levels. We have every man's rights, world's widest hiking network and thousands of lakes and forests to be explored. And it is all achievable without any costs. Grab your tent with you and spend a night in nature.



When you finish your work day, close the laptop, and turn work-related notifications on silent-mode on your phone. You can even set a timer on your computer or phone for 7:30 hours when you start working to make sure you finish on time.

2.3

Recovery



RECOVERY

During remote mode, freetime and recovery might be overlooked. The absence of commutes, hobbies and meetings alters your normal daily life. Therefore, recovery needs special attention during a time like this. Try adding recovery methods, such as relaxation breaks, into your work day. This way recovery doesn't only have to be emphasized after work.

Positive effects of adding moments of relaxation to your day:

1. You feel less stressed.
2. You improve your memory.
3. You improve your overall mood.
4. You sleep better.
5. You boost your immune system.
6. You become more productive.
7. You increase your energy.

(Source: Mieli.fi)



2.3

Tips for recovery and relaxation breaks



Take a yoga/meditation/exercise/stretching break during your coffee break.



Make yourself go outside during your lunch break, by either getting take-away lunch or going for a small walk after your lunch break.



Take the morning to yourself. Now that you are saving time on commutes, enjoy your mornings to the fullest, by preparing a nice breakfast, reading the newspaper without a rush or adding exercise to your morning routine.

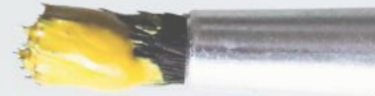


2.4

PROJECTS & HOBBIES

During a remote work period, and especially current social distancing, our old hobbies may not be possible to do, and we need to arrange new activities to do at home. Below, you can find a collection of home hobbies and projects, recommended by our dear VALA colleagues:

- Playing an instrument during breaks. Or when you have your microphone on mute during meetings if you're able to concentrate on the meeting.
- "Kon-Maritus" - clean and declutter your home.
- Wellbeing treatment for your plants: changing the soil, planting in bigger pots, fertilization etc.
- Small-scale home renovations, that you've been meaning to do when you have more time.
- Scrap-booking, bullet journaling or colouring books.
- Making photo albums from photos lying around, scanning your photos into digital versions, or arranging all your digital photos into corresponding albums.
- Learning new skills (e.g. a new language, playing an instrument, hand standing, studying something for example in the open university, meditation, etc.)
- Miniatures (for gaming, painting or collection)
- Complete spring cleaning: washing your windows and rugs, and airing out the apartment.
- Build a bug hotel
- Build an inside garden: germinate, plant and cultivate (e.g. chilies).



2.4



Podcasts for dealing with the epidemic

- Psykopodiaa (Koronavirus - psykososiaaliset vaikutukset)
- DocEmilia (36. Miten vaalia kehon ja mielen terveyttä koronakriisin keskellä)
- Maaret Kallio (HS Live, [Inhmissuhteet poikkeusaikana](#))
- Mindfulness exercises: <https://mielentila.com/tilaa-mielelle-aanitteet/>



03

FAMILY, FRIENDS & SOCIALIZING

The role of family and friends becomes emphasised during remote work mode - you might be spending every waking moment together with family members/roommates, or alternatively, be secluded from other people almost completely. Whatever the living condition, assess the situation and the challenges you face. Below, you can find tips from varying points of view.

'Family ties mean that no matter how much you might want to run from your family, you can't.'

- unknown





3.1

WORKING WITH KIDS AT HOME

Small kids staying at home from daycare and school can make it difficult to concentrate on remote work. A typical challenge can be finding a peaceful place in the house for meetings. If you're finding this work-life combination difficult, be gentle towards yourself and don't demand too much of yourself. Remind yourself that you are practically working two jobs simultaneously, when taking care of kids whilst working.

Depending on the maturity of the kids, they can be distracted with parent-freeing activities for a varying period of time. Check out the tips below for handling family life whilst remote working.

3.1



Tips

- Plan your working times and let your kids know, when parents are unavailable.
- Use tactics from work to organize the days together with the rest of the family. For example using Trello as a KANBAN board for the week's activities, homework, chores, timetables, etc. (Virpi).
- Go outdoors, so the kids can release extra energy. Go for a walk, biking, create a stunt track with the kids somewhere or let them jump on a trampoline.
- Hide all the “fun stuff” from the kids until they have done their daily tasks: remote controls, mobile devices etc.
- Talk about emotional regulation methods together with your kids before a difficult situation. Encourage using these methods on a bad day.
- Audio books: Nextory and Bookbeat have a lot of kids books available.
- Activities, such as, baking, crafting, coloring.
- Praise your kids on small achievements!



3.2

KEEPING UP WITH THE COHESION

We need to actively find new ways to keep in contact with others, as many casual encounters have disappeared. Ask a colleague for a remote coffee or an old friend to go for a walk together. Call your siblings or arrange something fun to do online with your regular party group!

Whatever you do, don't isolate yourself completely. Your company might be the thing to lift someone's spirits up and at the same it'll make your day a bit brighter as well!


3.2




Tips

- Remote socializing principles:
Video conferencing over only audio › Audio over only texting › Texting over silence.
- For non-formal communication, we at VALA have organized a daily remote breakfast every morning at 8.30. This is a great way to start the day and hear how your colleagues are doing or to share feelings. Even if you don't feel like talking, you can just join the meeting and hear familiar chit-chatting in the background.

★ Pinned by Joonas Luukkonen


 **Joonas Luukkonen** 2:11 PM

Remote Breakfast meeting (mon-fri 8:30): <https://meet.google.com/sbd-wccz-gqm>

 **meet.google.com**

Meet

Real-time meetings by Google. Using your browser, share your video, desktop, and presentations with teammates and customers.



- Talking about chit-chatting, if you are missing the office atmosphere, turn on this to get in the office mood: <https://soundofcolleagues.com/>

3.2

Tips

- We have also organized a remote wine tasting every Friday after work.



- Another great way to keep up with socializing is to share an experience with a friend; for example do the same workout online, or plant the same plants, or read the same book. Sharing something in your reality makes socializing deeper.

3.2

Tips

We established a challenge called 'Corona Care', which encourages VALA people to do meaningful actions during social distancing.



Nelli Rovamaa 1:00 PM

Friday, April 17th

WHY:

1. Altruism and self-care are extremely important now more than ever.
2. Enhances collectivity in a time of social isolation.
3. We also get a point on our Sustainability parameter in the BSC.

WHAT: A challenge to activate us to take care of ourselves and others.

WHEN: Point collection starts today!

HOW:

1. Open the Sheet: <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/170JxQLkeGHCgBjwCzGGJVMD2YfM95pX65zvlS00iNGg/edit#gid=0>
2. Write your name on a vertical tab and start counting points.
3. Add new actions under the two topics of Self-care and Helping others.
4. Post pictures related to your achievements on this channel!

IS THERE A PRIZE? Yes, the winner gets their photo rotating on the info board at the empty VALA office. Score! The winner also get collective praise, accepting nods, and a bottle of sparkling when the office opens again!



Teemu 1:01 PM

was added to #corona_care_challenge by Nelli Rovamaa, along with 7 others. Also, Tomi Knuuttila and 8 others joined.



Jasu 1:23 PM

Taking a walk = 1 point!

Image from iOS



3.2



Tips

- Remote games: Game nights don't have to be cancelled, they can simply be re-arranged!



otsol 10:38 AM

Hellohellohello!

So, as discussed earlier, this Friday, 08.05. 5pm remote poker games!

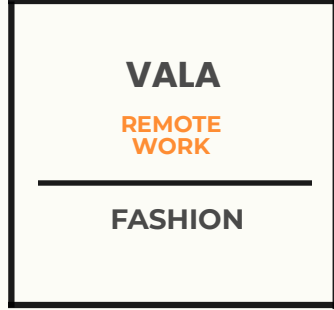
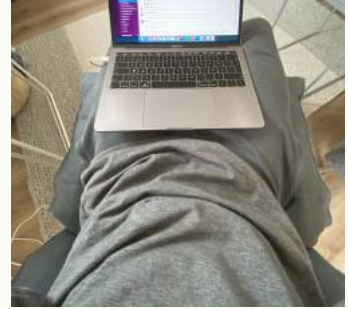
Game Format

- No-limit Texas holdem tournament

- Apps for socializing:
 - Houseparty app
 - Drawful 2 (through Google Hangouts)
 - Trivia through [RTG](#) or Houseparty app.
 - Remote Insensitivity (Cards against humanity -type) through playingcards.io.
 - Boardgames, Texas Hold'em, etc through [Tabletopia](#).
 - You can actually play any games remotely with your friends if you both just have the same game at home. For example remote Yatzy was awesome.

3.3

Also, sharing what you wear is a great way to feel united. A number of VALA people say they have spent the last month in the same soggy outfit from day in and day out. On the other hand, another group of people get dressed in their work clothing every morning to get their mind-set into work mode. Neither version is better than the other, the important thing is to find *your* way of working. Try something new and see how it feels!



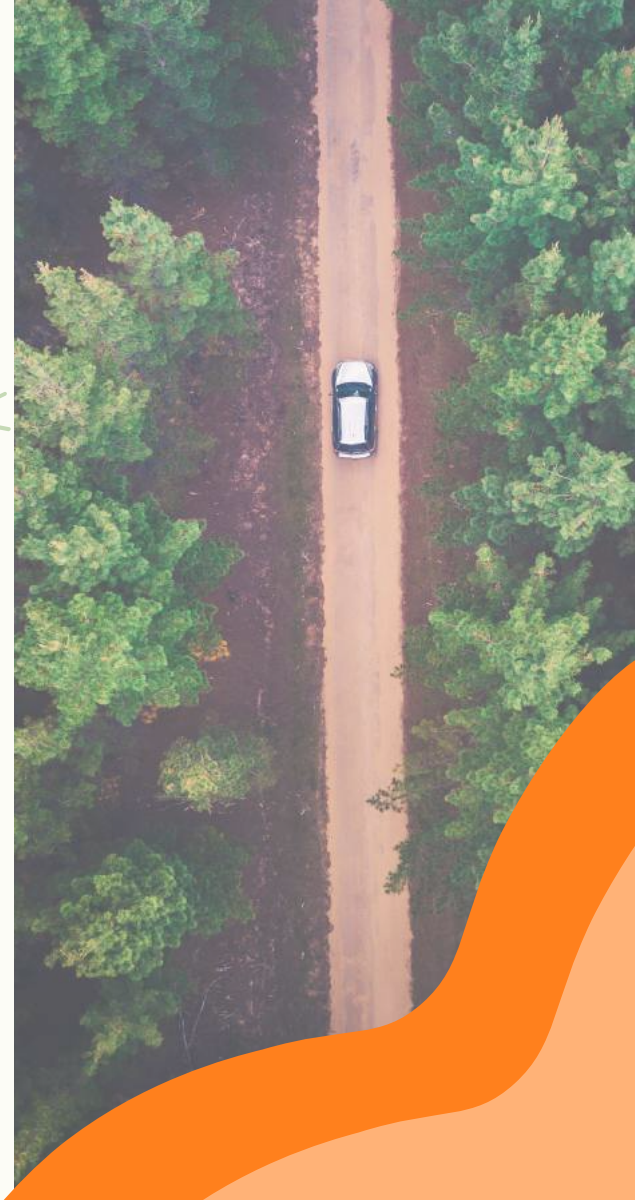
04

PROFESSIONAL DRIVE

A sense of professional drive is something we strive for in everyday work. It's important that our experts feel they are continuously developing their skills and that their capabilities are used to their full potential. In this section we share ideas on how to keep up with professional drive and developing skills in the remote work context.

'I think I was born with the drive for success because I have a certain gene.'

– Donald Trump



4.1

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

It's important to be able to develop one's professional skills in daily work. The optimal state is to have a sense that you are faced with enough challenges in your daily work, without being overwhelmed. In addition to daily challenges faced at work, remote courses, webinars and conferences can support professional development very nicely.

As remote work becomes a more widely accepted form of work and participation, there is a continuously growing number of new websites on various online courses and MOOCs. It's now easier than ever to learn new skills from the comfort of your own home.

Course websites used by VALA people:

- [Udacity](#)
- [FreeCodeCamp](#)
- [PluralSight](#)
- [FullstackOpen](#)
- [Coursera](#)





4.1

Our Slack channel [#professionaltraining](#) is full of tips on more websites, specific topics and updated info on upcoming events.

Note:

However, be mindful of your own energy levels. If things are very busy at work and you feel you get enough stimulus and challenges from daily work, don't push yourself too much. Especially during a time where a lot of your energy might go into readjusting into a new way of living. If however, the project is moving slowly and you could do with more challenges to keep yourself active and interested, start researching what new skills you would benefit from and what interests you.

4.2

RESPECT, INFLUENCE & PARTICIPATION

How to be a respectful co-worker in times like the one we're finding ourselves in at the moment?



1. Try to understand what each person is dealing with at home

- Although everyone is facing the same threat, not everyone is facing the same circumstances. Show your colleagues you care, by taking time to understand what they are dealing with each day. Find out how they are coping and how you can support them.
- It's important to remember that just because someone was doing well yesterday, does not mean that they are doing well today.

2. Stay in touch (daily)

- When people are based remotely, they often fall into “out of sight, out of mind.” We often make a mistake of only connecting with people when there's a problem or if we need something - now, more than ever, we need to get into the habit of checking in daily how others are doing.
- Offer help to others at every opportunity and show that it's OK to ask for help by doing it yourself.

4.2



Tips contd.



3. Be forgiving & patient, make it OK to not be perfect

Whether we are in a crisis or not, how we respond when people make a mistake has a profound impact on whether or not they feel safe when they are around us.

Messy hair, messy house, and background noise - make it OK for people to not be perfect by acknowledging it upfront in your meetings.

4. Nurture a culture of gratitude

Help nurture a culture of gratitude with your colleagues by always expressing your appreciation when people join a meeting, finish a task, or reach out to offer support.

5. Have fun!

Infuse your chats, texts, emails, and virtual meetings with games, memes and personal reflection. Bring a little laughter, fun and joy to each other's day.

4.2

Being a good participant and having a positive influence in online meetings

An important topic within remote work, is the ability to concentrate on online meetings and host engaging meetings in remote mode. The temptation to open a new tab and attempt to multitask during online meetings is higher, when you are not in the same room with other participants. It requires practise and self-control to offer your *full concentration* during these remote meetings.

Tips on staying engaged and concentrated during remote meetings:



- No matter how hard it feels, don't open a new tab or window! Keep the meeting page in front of you on the computer.
- Turn you camera on. This also prevents you from attempting to multitask, and helps you focus on the meeting at hand.
- Do something with your hands to keep yourself from adventuring into the internet during a meeting (some people knit, play with stress toys, doodle on paper, or do "keppijumppa").
- Take notes on the meeting. This way your focus stays on the contents of the meeting.



4.3

ARRANGING REMOTE MEETINGS & WORKSHOPS

Instead of cancelling workshops and meetings during remote mode, adapt into this new way of living and start arranging inspirational and effective sessions.

4.3

Tips on arranging efficient remote meetings and workshops

1. **Ask a colleague to take notes during the meeting.** After the meeting, make a short memo about the key take-aways, and share it with the participants later.
2. **Use the camera connection, whenever you can!** Simple but powerful when you want people to concentrate and relate to what you're saying.
3. **Ask everyone participating to speak up within the first 5 minutes.** A simple question to start with: short introduction, what did you have for breakfast today, how has your week been so far, any plans for the weekend, favourite restaurant you are missing at the moment, etc.
4. **Go over the focus and objective for the meeting,** when you start on the actual content part of the meeting: Why are we here today? What do you expect for this meeting? What do we want to finish off with?
5. **Go over the rules of the meeting.** For example, people are invited to participate in the conversation at any point, people are able to write comments in the comments section if they don't want to interrupt others, there is a chairperson making sure comments are acknowledged, the meeting is being recorded, etc.

4.3

Tips on arranging efficient remote meetings and workshops

6. Assign a chairperson, or someone to be in charge of the comments sections during the meeting. This way you don't have to switch between speaking, giving turns to speak, and checking what people have been writing. Free conversation does not flow as easily as in live meetings, so a more formal approach can be helpful.

7. Speak slower than you normally would, so that participants have time to comment between your monologues.

8. Incorporate questions into the meeting slides - try to activate people often to keep them focused, e.g. once every 10 minutes.

9. Provide equal air time for participants. Share speaking turns and make sure everyone has had an opportunity to speak.

10. Summarize the meeting shortly, once you have gone over all topics in the agenda. Ask the participants whether they agree with your summary. allow some time for comments and open discussion.

11. It can be fun to end with an “ending ritual”, something distinctive to you, your team or the company culture. E.g. clapping, asking a question, etc.

12. The chairperson should leave the meeting last, once participants start leaving. This is to ensure that the chairperson doesn't miss anything vital to the subject being discussed after the official part is over.

Thank
you!