

A GUIDE TO WORKING REMOTELY

Building psychological
safety in teams

Tools | Services | Tips | Suggestions



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INTRODUCTION

Remote work may be more common than it used to be, but it still comes with its challenges—especially if you're new to it.

Things like isolation, mental health and loneliness are becoming a bigger issue in remote teams.

This document is a short suggestion guide with tools, services and safety measures on how to build psychological safety in remote teams. For leaders, facilitators and remote workers.

A little something to make online teamwork easier, more aligned, organized and most importantly more psychologically safe for you.



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"THERE'S NO
TEAM WITHOUT
TRUST"

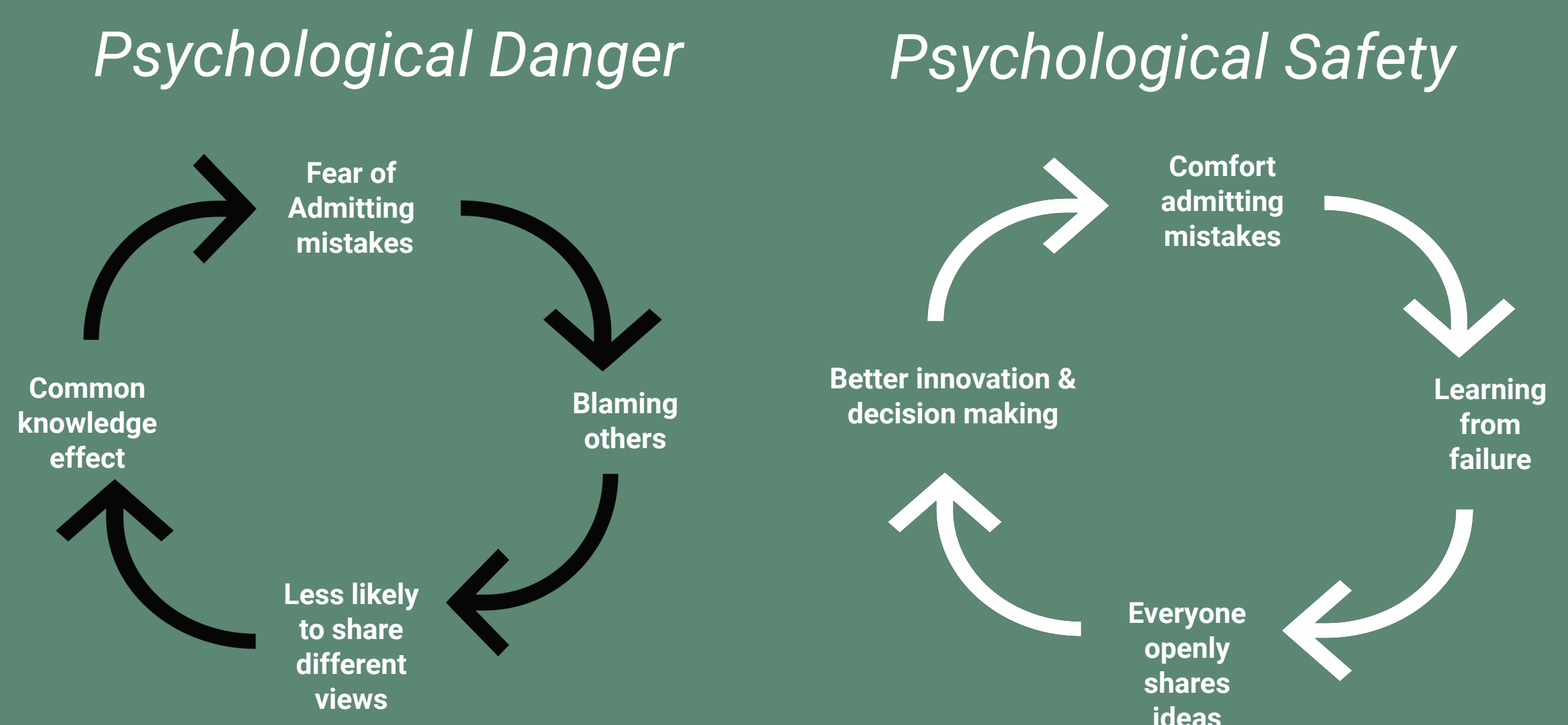
Paul Santagata

PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

- What is it? -

Psychological safety is about creating an environment that is safe for interpersonal risk-taking, where people know that they can voice their thoughts without fear of judgement and punishment. It creates an environment where people feel safe to interact, contribute and engage with each other, which consequently generates learn and grow.

There are 4 stages to foster psychological safety: Inclusion safety, Learner safety, Contributor safety and Challenger safety.



- Benefits of Psychological Safety -



Better levels of communication, sharing knowledge & engagement



More openness to learning including learning from failure



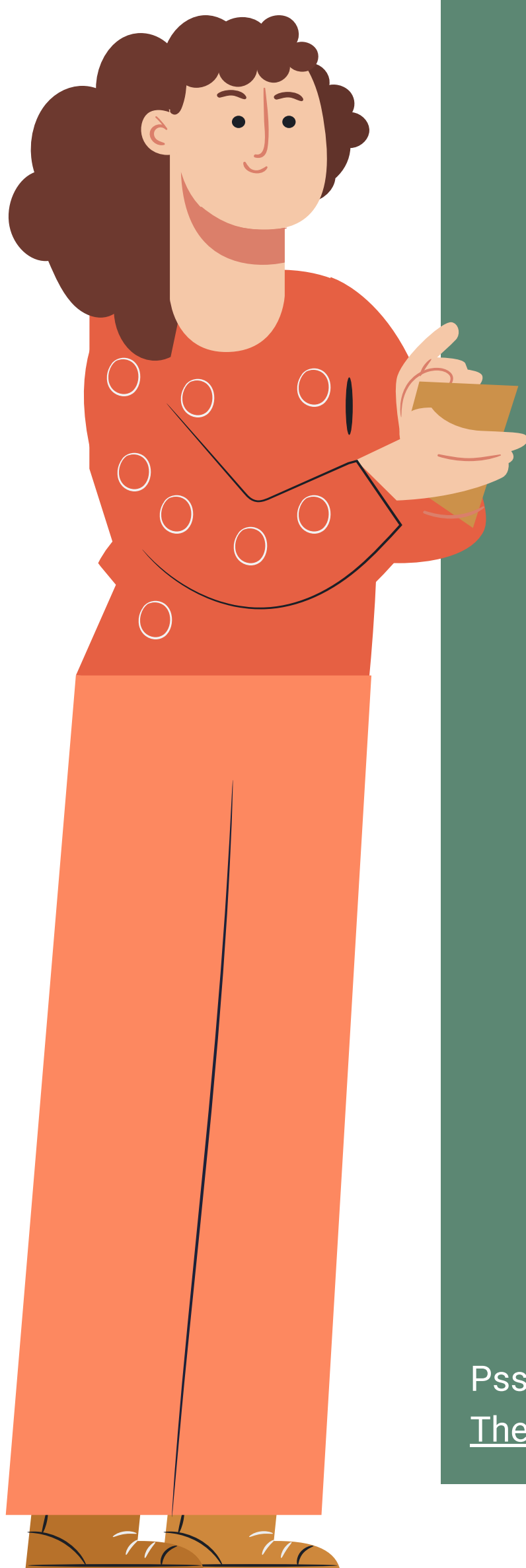
Improve performance with more creativity and innovation



Positive employee attitude, including more engagement and commitment to the team



Increased levels of proactivity and team performance



Psst! You want to learn more about psychological safety? read:

[The Fearless Organization - Amy C Edmondson](#) | [The Four Stages of Psychological Safety - Timothy Clark](#)

"THE MOST
POWERFUL TOOL
THAT A
COMPANY CAN
HAVE, IS
PEOPLE"

- Anonymous

THE ROLES

Remember that when working in a team you are working together. Even if you are alone you should never feel lonely. You should be able to count on your team, and they should always be there for you. Team is everything!

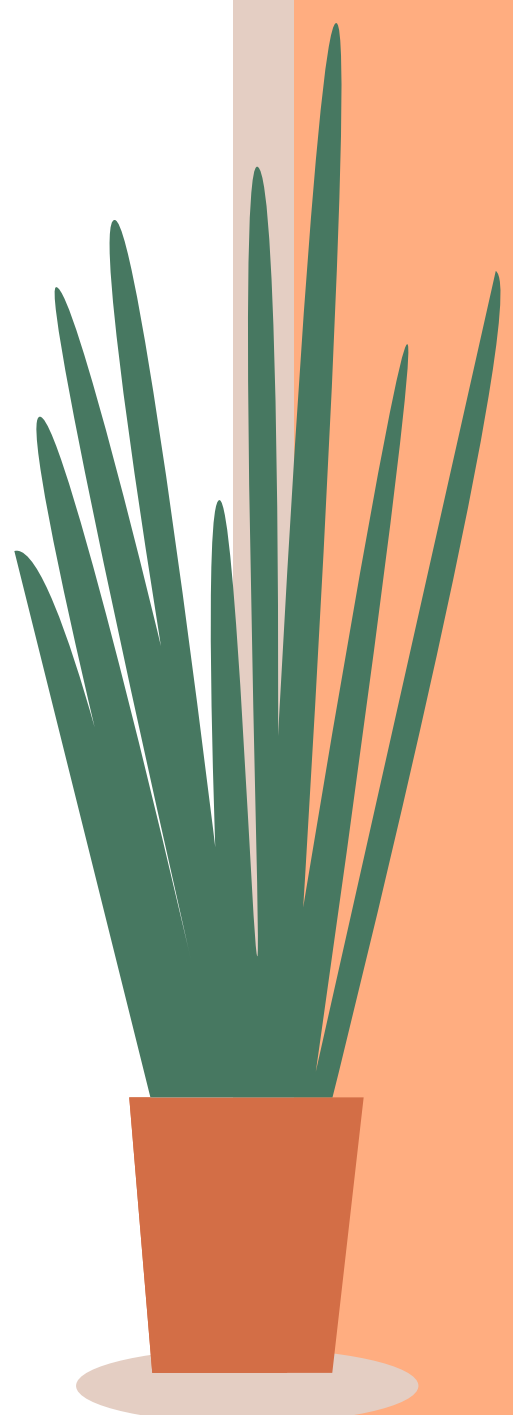
Different teams have their own routine, rituals, roles and assignments. It's important to align a set of norms and strive towards common and clear goals. Alignment helps people to know where they are going, which also generates trust. Following are some tasks and behaviors that might come with different roles.

FACILITATOR, TEAM LEADER

- Lead by example
- Create a safe environment
- Align the team culture: values, goals, practices and behaviors
- Align communication and information
- Encourage collaboration over competition
- Create an agenda for meetings, activities and 1:1, and facilitate them
- Promote and encourage learning activities
- Offer and ask for feedback

REMOTE WORKER

- Be mindful and present
- Apply team culture: values goals, practices and behaviors
- Define your own routine and daily goals
- Practice collaboration
- Engage in the set learning activities and values of the team. Ex. Checking in with the team & give feedback.
- Let your team know when you are leaving or if you need a break

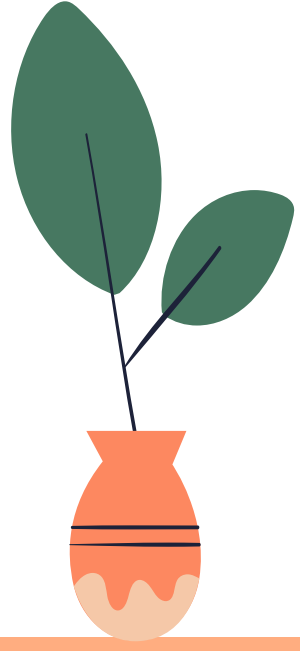


TEAM IS EVERYTHING!

Take care of each other

DEEP DIVING
INTO
REMOTE WORK

MANAGEMENT TOOLS



It's easy to spend too much time thinking about which tool is better. Especially when a *better* use of your time would be to pick any tool and move on to the hard work of *using* it. So look no further down below is a list of tools that could be useful for your team.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Spacetime - Helps fully-remote teams to stay connected and keep track of all the different time zones we work across. The **Slack** integration makes it easy for us to schedule meetings without doing mental time zone gymnastics. **Link: [Spacetime](#)**

Todoist - Easier way to move your to-dos on mobile. Manages to toe the fine line between simple enough to use quickly while still boasting a ton of customizable options. **Link: [Todoist](#)**

Trello - a great tool for project and task management but also leading remote product feature prioritization sessions! It's got a great mobile app, too. **Link: [Trello](#)**

Serene - Made for remote workers and teams. You define a single goal for each day, which can be broken down into multiple tasks, and block out distractions. **Link: [Serene](#)**

DEVELOPMENT & DESIGN

Coda - Helps you combine documents, spreadsheets, and app features like Kanban boards and mini databases, Coda's main focus is on detailed documents. You make one document and share that with your team.

Link: [Coda](#)

CodePen - Write and share HTML/CSS & JavaScript on the fly! Share with your remote team members and preview your code/get feedback in real time. **Link: [CodePen](#)**

GitHub - GitHub houses all code-related project management.

Link: [GitHub](#)

Skitch - Allows remote teams to annotate, markup, and quickly sketch out ideas. **Link: [Skitch](#)**

BREAKS & ENERGIZERS

Simple ways to form an emotional connection that will help people bond. Also don't forget to take a break when needed.

Coffee break - How about a virtual coffee break? Plan regular breaks, together with the rest of the team or alone.

Hyper Island - Check out hyper islands tool box, everything from energizers to ideation tools. **Link: [Hyper Tool Box](#)**

Mural - Provides warm ups and energizers that are ideal to introduce new team members and get participants to learn more about each other. **Link: [warm ups](#)**

Joke/riddle: Have everyone tell a joke/riddle or funny story about themselves on a break.

OTHER STUFF THAT MIGHT BE USEFUL

Mood Meter App: tool to build self-awareness and learn effective strategies to manage feelings and build more compassionate relationships. **Link: [moodmeterapp.com](#)**

Remote work tools: [hyperisland.com](#)

Remote work tools: [toolboxtoolbox.com/](#)

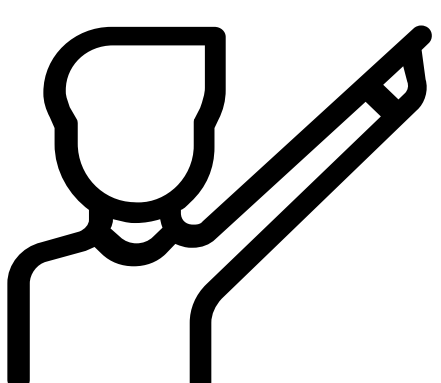
Check-in/Check-out questions: [tscheck.in](#)

Loom: Effective tool to send your messages in a visual way. Pre-record presentations and instructions.

Link: [Loom](#)

HEY BTW! Did you know that we already have an other PDF out on "Free Tools and services"? No? Check it out!

Link: **[Free Tools and Services](#)**



THE DOWNSIDES OF REMOTE WORK

- Keep the downsides in mind & leave no one behind -

Just because something has downsides doesn't mean that we cannot make it into something positive. But there are important things that need to be addressed and thought.



DON'T OVERWORK YOURSELF

Remote workers are more likely to overwork. When personal life and work are both under the same roof, it's harder to switch off. To avoid burnout and exhaustion, please be aware of your limits and remember to take breaks. Establish a routine, set reasonable daily goals and stop to work when it's done.



OVERLOAD OF DIGITAL INPUTS

Technology has made it so easy to communicate through so many sources that it's harder than ever to be focus on only one task. The number of Lives, webinars, mails and virtual meetings just increased the amount of information we are consuming which impacts our focus ability on a single task. Which leads people to work longer hours and sacrifice that important work-life balance just to stay a float. Be aware of the amount of information and screen time you are exposed to!

Source: [Hbr.org](https://hbr.org/virtualnotdistant)
[virtualnotdistant](https://hbr.org/virtualnotdistant)



LACK OF SOCIAL CONNECTION

Remote workers are not just cut off from interactions that contribute to Maslow's foundational need of love and belonging, but also distanced from the social opportunities that being around other people provides. Social isolation increases health risks and can be twice as harmful to physical and mental health as well as increases obesity risks. Feeling lonely? Engage in social activities and talk to someone about it.



POOR BODY POSTURE

Rather than office desks and chairs, most people are having to choose between sofas, beds, kitchen tables or the floor when working remotely or from home. This could have a devastating impact on our bodies. Take breaks, stretch yourself and walk between rooms. We give you some ideas later on!



BE MINDFUL THAT SOME OF YOUR TEAM MEMBERS MIGHT BE SUFFERING FROM:

STRESS | BURNOUT | ISOLATION | POOR MENTAL HEALTH | PHYSICAL PAIN | LOW QUALITY OF LIFE

PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY IN REMOTE TEAMS

It can be hard to build and maintain trust, connection and the well being of team members remotely. However, through psychological safety practices it is definitely achievable.

01. Use the buddy system

To start building and nourish relationships on remote teams, by rotating people through informal online chats. You can make these chats less stressful by limiting them to 15 minutes and encouraging people to actively listen to the other person's story. Asking simple questions like "how" and "why" to get them to open up. Here is a really great bot that makes the task easier! [donut](#)

02. Redefine goals and expectations

Take the time to redefine and align goals, expectations, roles and rules with the team while working remotely. It might take some effort but brings alignment and productivity. Here is an interactive Team Canvas that the team can fill remotely. [Team Canvas](#)

03. Set up regular 1:1s.

Make sure you meet regularly with each member to discuss progress on goals, engagement, professional development, questions or concerns. Be mindful to listen actively and share your own experiences in order to build up the relationship and provide support.

04. Start the work day

By doing a **check-in** with the entire team. It is really important that everyone speaks and open up about their thoughts and state of mind. Some days might be intense and some other pretty relax! See some examples here [Questions](#)

05. Make a communication tool- box

(we will help you with that on the next page)

06. Feedback and Reflection

doing regular weekly feedback and reflection sessions allows the team to express thoughts, feelings and opinions about a shared experience. This helps to build openness and trust. Learn more here: [Feedback & Reflection](#)

07. Don't forget to celebrate

Working remotely makes you miss the small celebrations and feel isolated. How about you have everyone order in a pizza, paid by the company on someone's birthday? Eat together virtually, play some games and have a good time!





COMMUNICATION TOOL BOX

Without effective communication, a message can turn into misunderstanding, frustration, or even disaster by being misinterpreted or poorly delivered. Make sure to develop clear, direct to the goal and transparent communication with your team. Good communication is a Key to Teamwork!

01. ESTABLISH COMMUNICATION ACCESS POINTS

Do you follow up on a task by email, text, apps and phone? Using all of them can be annoying and inefficient. Keep it simple! Just agree on using one or two things; Slack, Whatsapp groups or Google Docs.

03. ASK MORE THAN TELL

Judgment and criticism escalate personal conflict, which can lead to disengagement and stress. Instead of judging someone, start an neutral exploration of the situation:

- Ask questions. Ex: why do you think that?
- Understand where the person is coming from
- State the problematic behaviour.
- Put different opinions on the table
- Come up with solutions together.

02. CREATE COMMUNICATION RITUALS

Create an agenda to schedule touch points (meetings & activities) with your team. It is important to let the team know in advance so they can organize their time and tasks.

04. MEETINGS, CHECK INS, AND ACTIVITY, CALLS...

Starts every meeting/call exposing and aligning the agenda. Share what is the purpose of the meeting, goals, expected duration, roles (who should record/take notes?) and desired outcomes. Open a Q&As at the end of a meeting. Good tool: [IDOARRT](#)





COMMUNICATION TOOL BOX

05. AGREE ON COMMUNICATION HOURS

Teams and clients could agree on communication hours or define a time where everyone should be online. This allows people to create a routine and take care of personal stuffs as well. Ex. No meetings before 9am or not emails after 6 pm.

06. SHOW EMOTIONS

Written communication takes away body language and emotions. Don't be a robot! Using emojis and Gifs can help with bringing life to your messages! Let's avoid misinterpretation try to be clear about the tone of a message.

07. SPEAK HUMAN TO HUMAN

Remote communication can be hard. When you feel angry, keep in mind that respect is key, reflect, before any attitude, and put yourself in the other person's shoes before speaking. Ex: This person has hopes, anxieties, and vulnerabilities, just like me.

08. SET UP COMMUNICATION NORMS

Remote teams get tons of digital communication. Set the expectations of the emails by using acronyms like:

4HR (4 hour response),

NNTR (no need to response),

TYT (take your time). Create your own according to your needs!



"NOTHING WILL
WORK UNLESS
YOU DO"

- Anonymous

WORKING FROM HOME

- Daily routines -

Okey okey! Sometimes you just want to be comfy and relax. Taking a few days to stay cozy can be good for your mental health during these stressful times. But for longer periods of time it might be good to establish a routine. New routines can sometimes free up more time and inspire productivity. Acknowledge that an unhealthy habit or way of thinking will be challenging to get rid of.

01. DO SOMETHING FOR YOU BEFORE WORK

Mornings are the most important time of the day to jumpstart your productivity. Even if you are not a morning person that does exercise, you can still do something rewarding for yourself like read a book, listen to music or a podcast that you love.

02. GET DRESSED

Let it be a good idea to get dressed up for work even if you're not in the workplace. It normally helps our brain to go through the motions and prepare for the day ahead.

03. ORGANIZE THE WORKSPACE

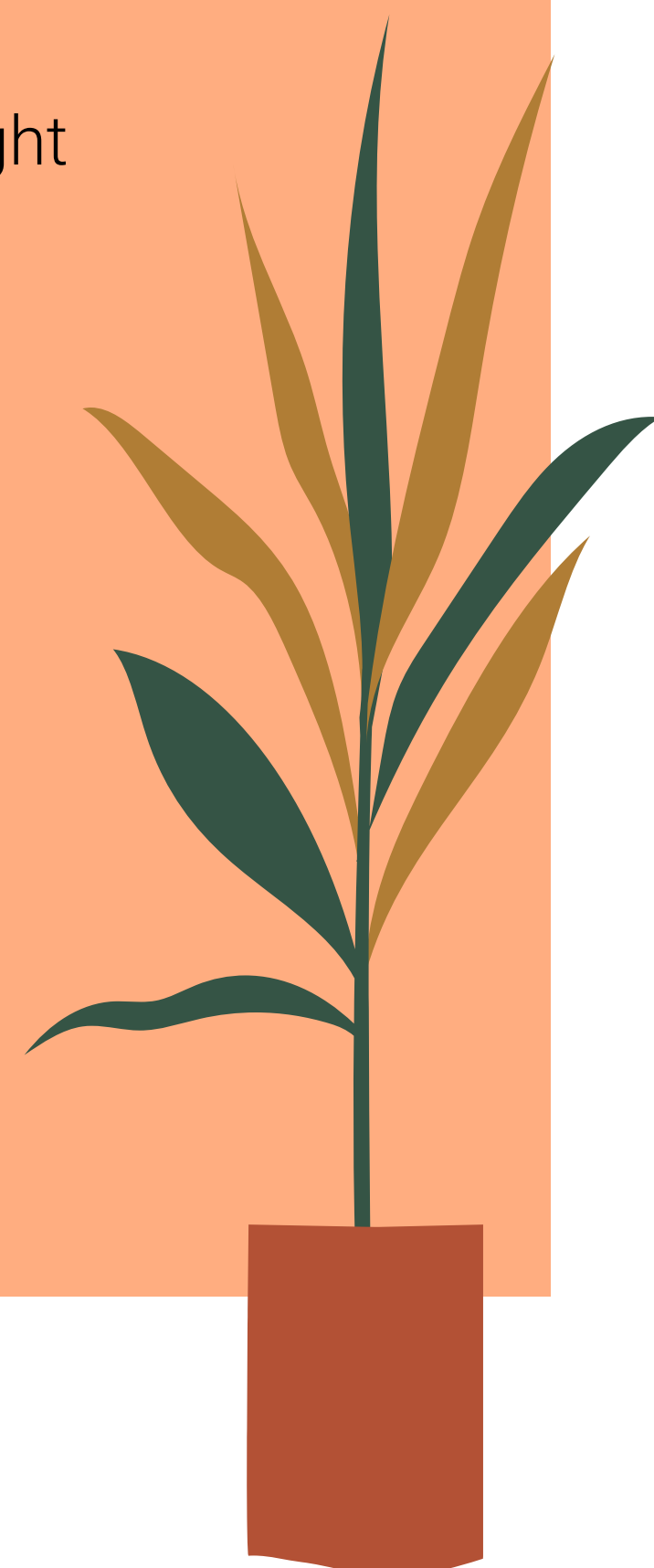
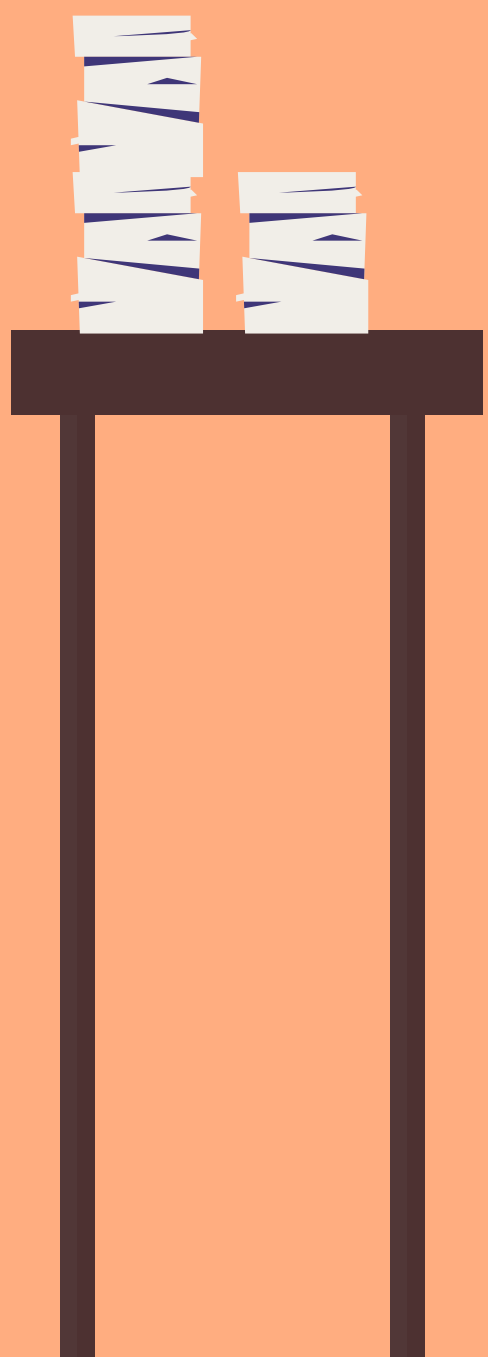
Set up a space or place to work in. This will allow you to easier separate work life with regular life, and also help you set a work life balance. Remember, working from home doesn't mean working from your bed.

04. CHECK THE TEAM

Keep in mind that even though you feel great other colleagues might be feeling down. Ask people how are they feeling regularly and if they need any help with work or life, that can minimize loneliness and stress.

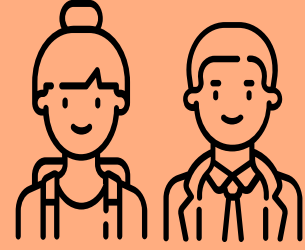
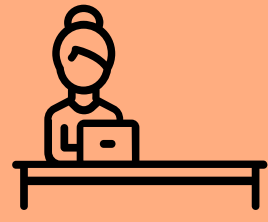
05. TAKE A BREAK

Remember to take breaks and exercise. Might be a good idea to schedule them as calendar notification. This will force you into new routines. Also, establish regular food habits. Set of time for breakfast, lunch dinner and healthy snack breaks in between.



SET UP A SPACE

-Things to think about before heading into a video call-



01. SET YOUR SPACE | 02. CHECK YOUR FACE | 03. MAKE A CALL

01. PLACEMENT

Keep it at eye level. If you place the camera too low or high it can be both unflattering for you and your potential friends and distracting for the other parties.

02. LIGHT

Always think of having decent light in your room and make sure that there isn't a bright sun outside the window shining right into the camera.

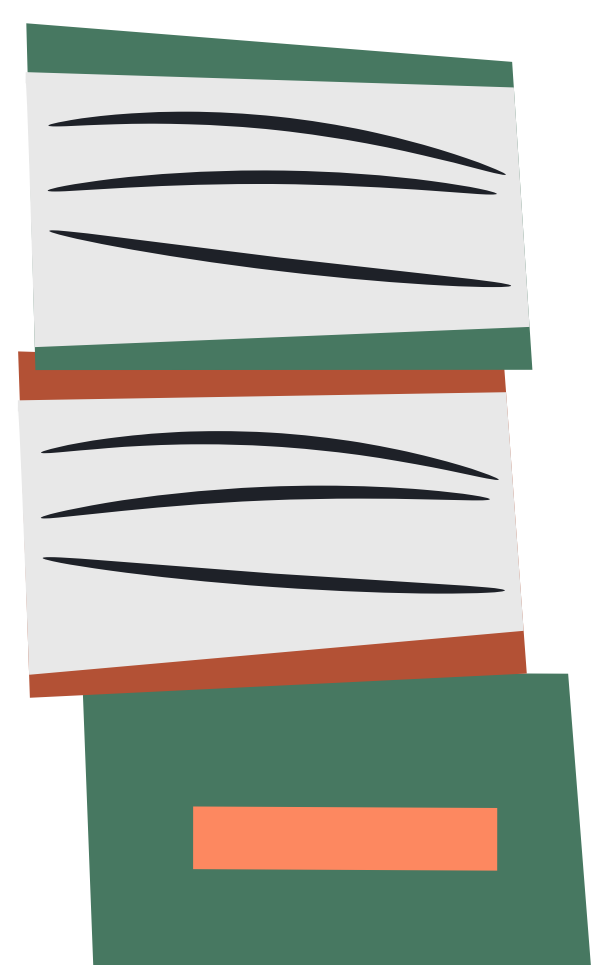
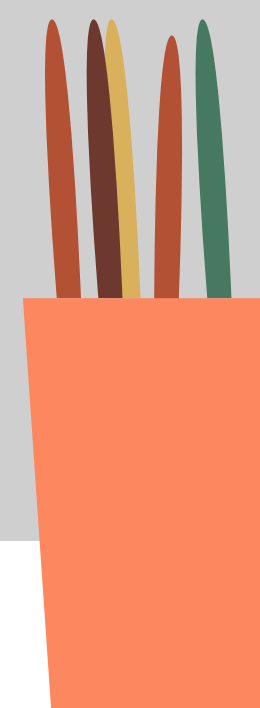
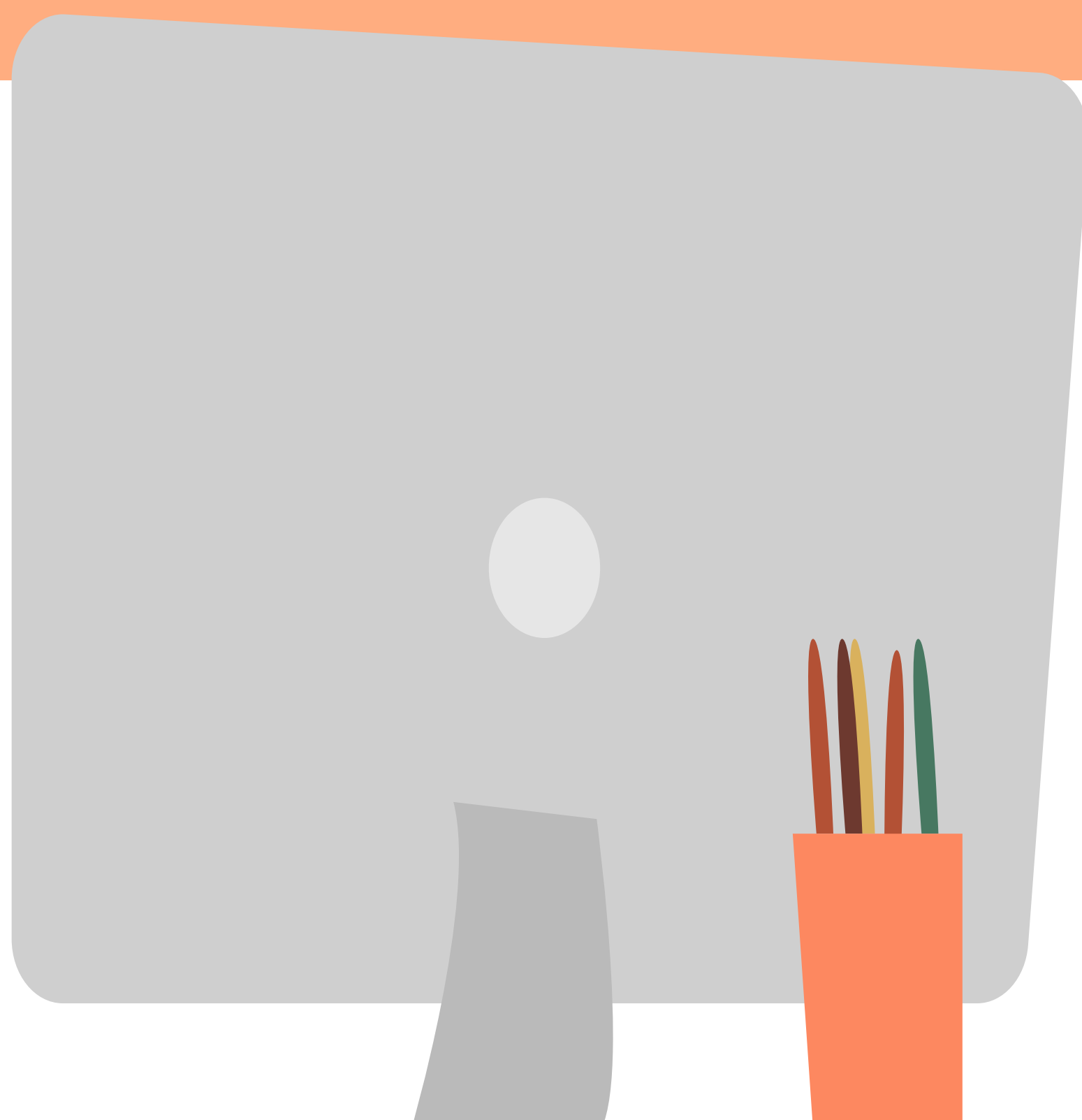
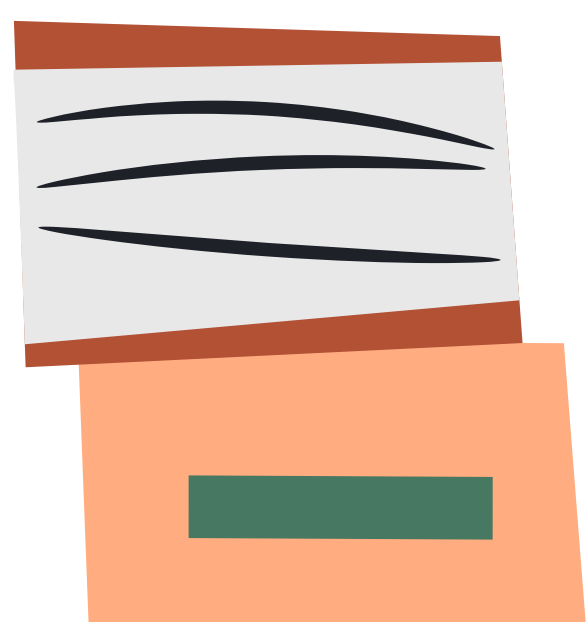
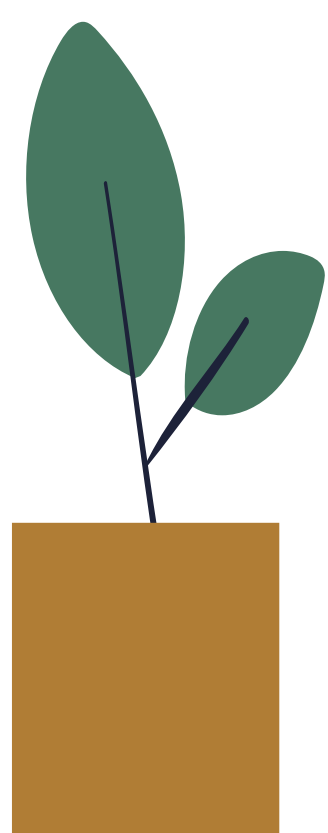
03. COMPUTER

Have a quick check that you aren't running tons of applications on your computer. You probably need the processor power for your meeting.

04. SOURCE

Check which sound and video source your computer uses before you start the meeting.

Source: Konftel



ARE YOU READY FOR A VIDEO CALL?

- What to think about when being in a video call -

As a facilitator, team leader or someone who's inviting to a conference call with more than two people. It might be a good idea to set some rule to make the conversations easier. Following are some suggested rules:



HEY YOU!

MUTE THE SOUND WHEN EVERYONE IS AROUND

Sometimes background noises and unexpected happenings can be distracting. Might be a good idea to mute your sound when you're not talking.



WAIT A LITTLE WHILE

If you're not on mute, remember that it's a lot easier to accidentally interrupt on a video call. Wait for a few moments of silence before speaking up in case there's a sound delay.



GIVE ME A SIGN!

Having a hard time connecting when your on mute? To avoid interrupting a meeting or randomly leaving a conversation for the bathroom. How about implementing some easy to use hand gestures. Following are some examples. Don't be afraid to come up with your own!



YES/ THAT'S GOOD



OKEY/LOOKS GOOD



NO/ NOT GOOD



TOILET BREAK



SUPER HAPPY/ LOVE



CAN'T HEAR YOU

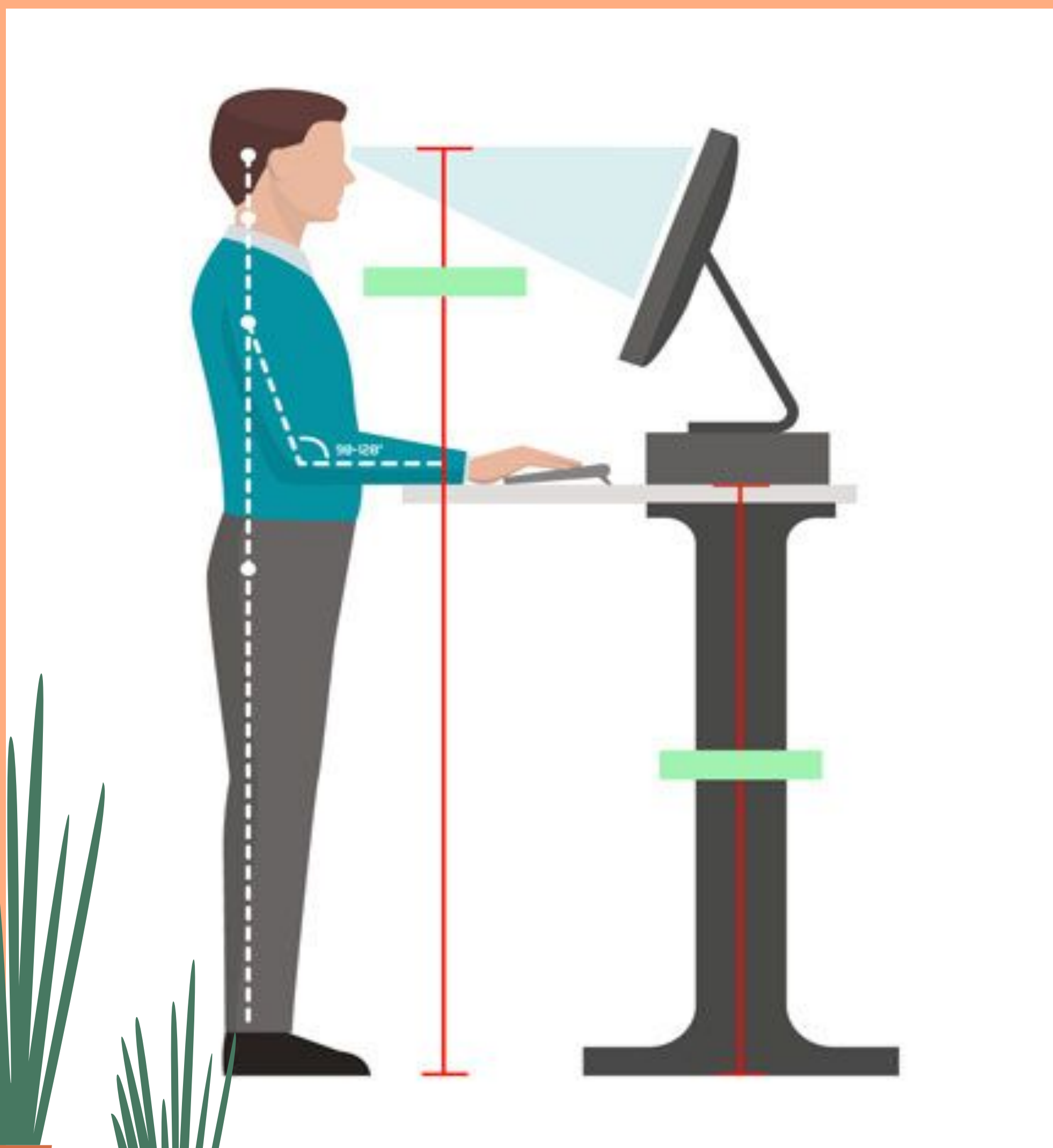
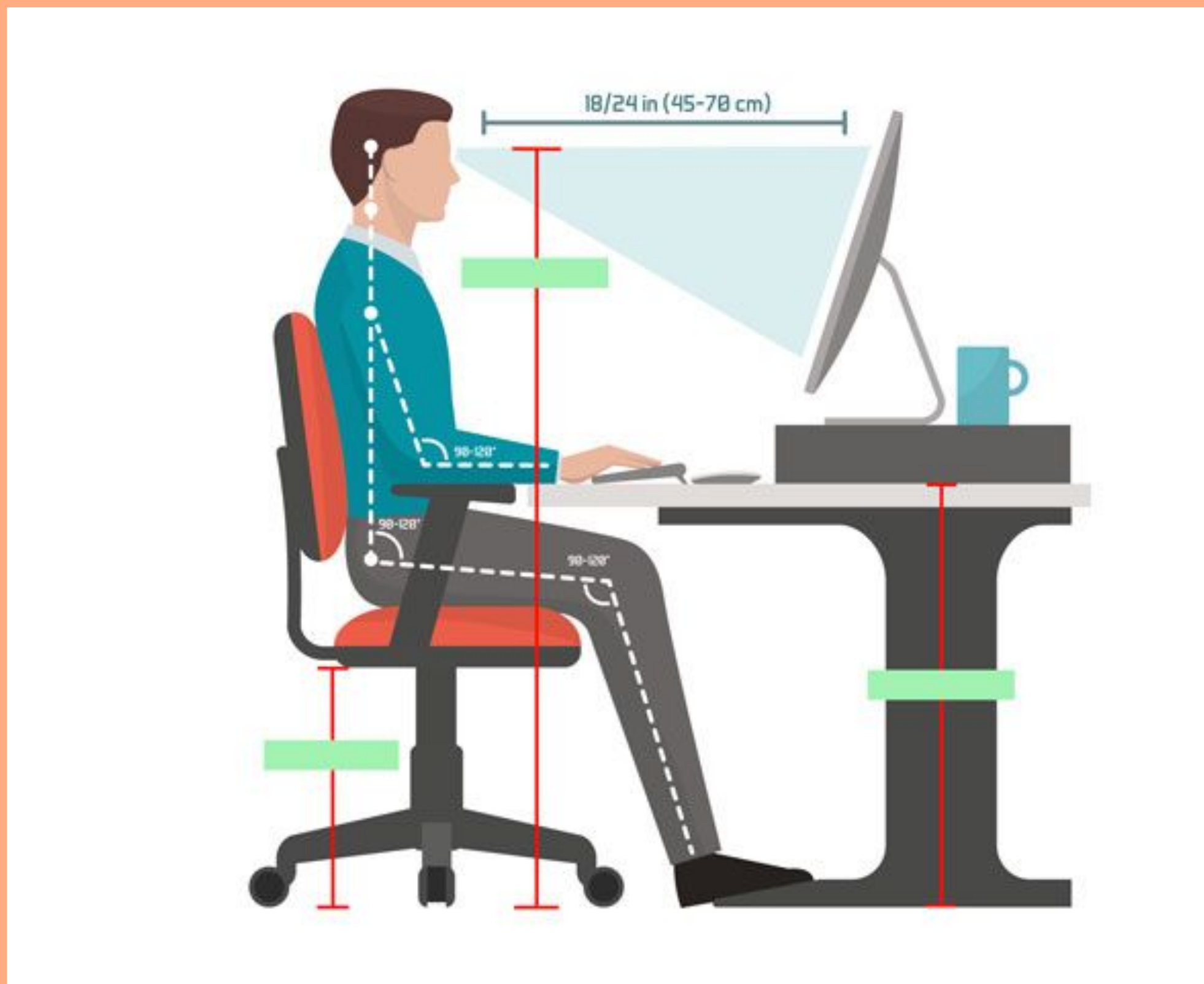
Wanna know more about hand gestures? Take a look at [Abracademy](#). They've been putting up workshops online trying the [shared language of gestures for remote meetings](#).



HAVE YOUR BACK!

Remote work life leaves most people to choose between sofas, beds, kitchen tables or the floor, moving less than ever before in smaller spaces. Working remotely can be hugely rewarding, but only if you keep your productivity up and take care of body and mind.

Remember poor posture hurts your health more than you realize. Following are some things to literally save your back.



Like most people, you probably don't have a height-adjustable desk at home – and that's okay. Try to adjust your chair instead. Bring your elbow height in line with the work surface. Ensure your feet are still comfortably flat on the floor. In case they aren't, find something to put under them – a small stool, a laptop bag, etc. – to keep them supported.

- Adjust the chair height so your feet are flat on the floor and your knees are in line (or slightly lower) with your hips.
- Sit up straight and keep your hips far back in the chair.
- To help your neck stay relaxed and in a neutral position, the monitor should be directly in front of you, a few inches above eye level.
- Relax the shoulders and be aware of them rising toward your ears or rounding forward throughout the workday.

Take frequent breaks to get up and stretch. Alternating work areas might provide some relief, too.

Important! Poor posture forces you to overwork the muscles in your neck and back. Your immune system's efforts to heal those muscles spur inflammation that – over time – can lead to arthritis in nearby joints.

Psst! Placing a thin pillow underneath your seat can go a long way to making an ordinary chair a lot more comfortable. Or if you're someone who struggles with lower back pain, and don't have a fancy pillow rolling a towel and placing it between your chair and lower back works wonders.



TAKE CARE OF YOUR BODY

- Simple yet Effective practices -

While working from home offers numerous benefits, it also makes it easier to slip into a sedentary lifestyle. When your commute is from your bedroom to your home office or living room, you need to proactively plan movement and exercise into your day. Following are some exercise tips.

Eat & Drink: Eat regularly, healthy and well. Healthy eating habits are fundamental to good health and well-being. Don't forget to grab a glass of water every 25 min.

Sleep: Aim to get around eight hours sleep a night to ensure you have enough energy the following day. When you work from home, it can often be tempting to lie in later or stay up working.

Exercise: Exercising regularly can help a person age well and stress less. This may not seem important now, but your body will thank you later.

Workout/Stretching Videos:

Check out these following videos on youtube to get a little office workout stretch.

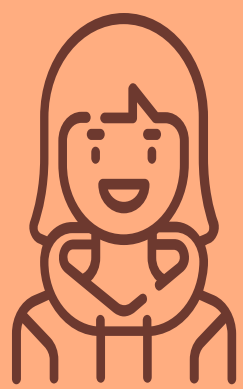
Neck Stretch: [Click Here](#)

Back Stretch [Click here](#)



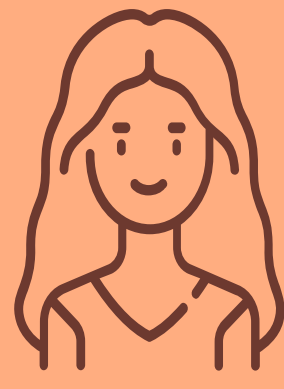
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