

Covid-19 HR guide – learnings and good practices

1. Remote leadership and communications (tips, recovery, remote apathy)
2. Occupational health and safety responsibilities and corona (obligations, corona guidelines, insurances, GDPR, etc.)
3. Adjustment situations and change leadership (temporary changes to law are no longer valid)
4. HR team's tips and useful links

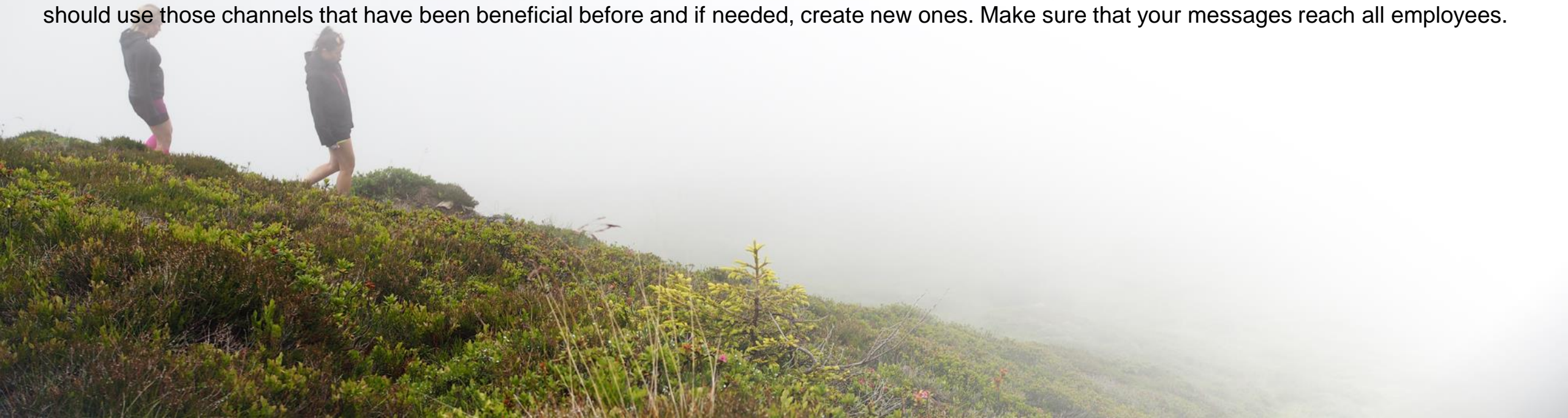


HR guide for the corona time – learnings and good practices

We received compliments from our customers about the HR guide we published last spring for the corona time. At the time, we talked about culture, communication, and adjustment measures as well as the temporary labour legislation amendments. The corona time continues. It has already changed the working life and will certainly continue to do so in the future too. We know that remote work is here to stay, and it will affect many HR practices, especially building and developing culture.

During the corona time, it is the everyday leadership that is of great importance – what kinds of remote work practices we create and how we are present tell a lot about the organisational culture. We need to make sure that everyone knows the direction and goals, and at the same time, take care of employee wellbeing and ensure that everyone is actively involved in the operations. In addition, we also need to take care of complying with all statutory obligations. All these go hand in hand.

Adjustment measures could not be and cannot be avoided, which also requires successful and timely communication. In communication, you should use those channels that have been beneficial before and if needed, create new ones. Make sure that your messages reach all employees.



1. Remote work, leadership and communication

A couple of tips for remote leadership that strengthens trust

1. **Listen and be present;** ask and find out how people are really doing. This is of course more challenging via video connection but worth it – and turn the cameras on!
2. **Offer help;** ask what you can do to help others succeed. Sometimes just talking is enough, sometimes more is needed.
3. **Make sure that the goals are clear and motivating,** and that the communication channels are known and in active use. In remote work, the importance of goals and clear communication is even greater than usually.
4. **Schedule time for meetings without an agenda;** You might be surprised what comes up in the conversations.
5. **Take care of yourself;** take breaks, eat regularly, exercise, and sleep enough. Respect your free time.



1. Remote work, leadership and communication

Work-life balance in remote work

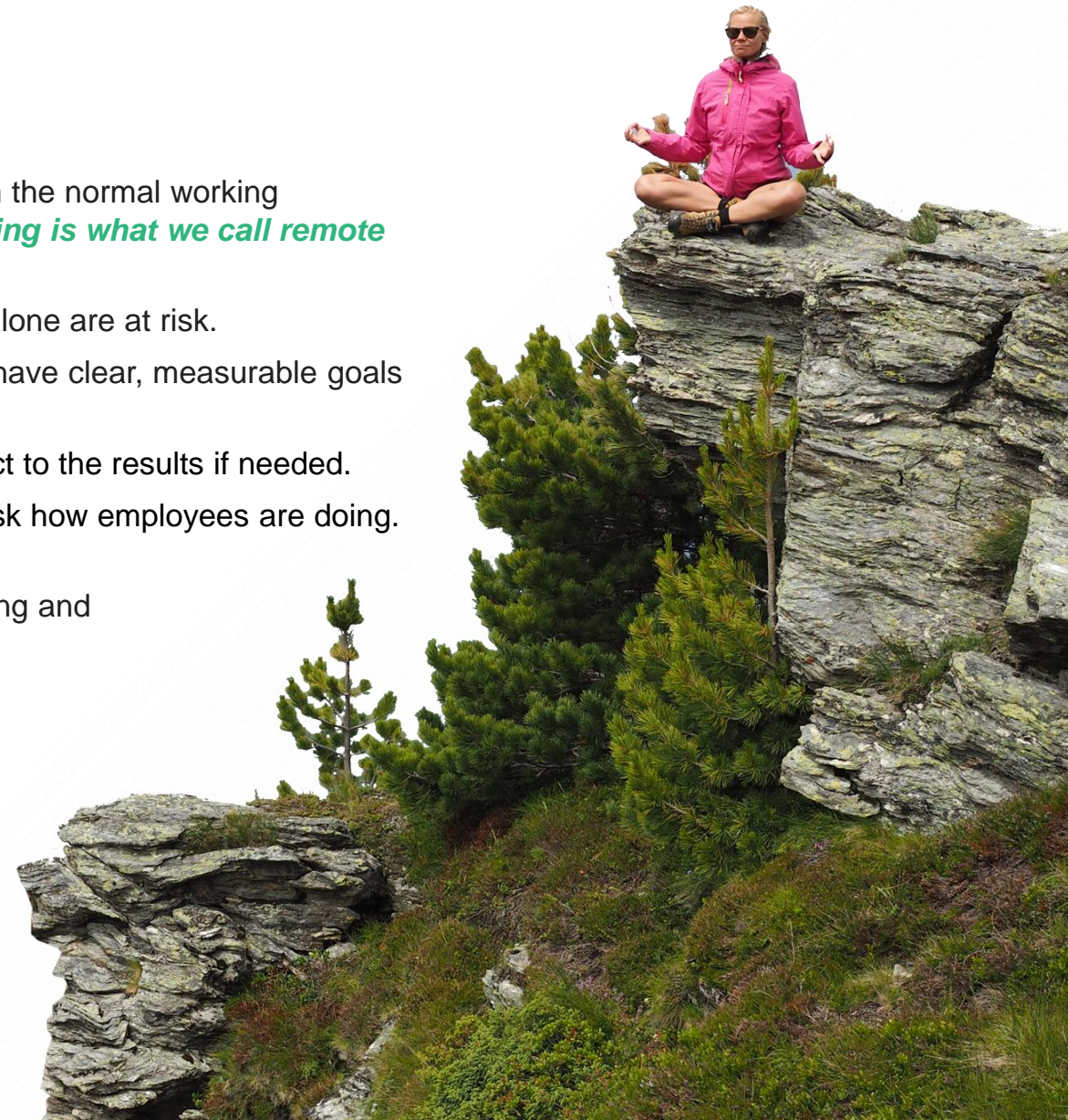
- The importance of recovery is emphasized at a time when you may not notice the boundaries between work and free time.
- None of us are safe from the possible remote apathy – supervisors and top management also need to remember to take care of themselves and not just others. *By helping yourself as a supervisor, you are also helping others.*
- Supervisors' work has changed and requires learning new things, such as communication and IT skills.
- Adopting new technical equipment rapidly can be burdensome for some, *so ensure your own and your employees' competence level.* Help and support.
- Regional and national restrictions and recommendations affect companies differently and it is good to consider them in communications and guidelines.
- Make sure that everyone's different kinds of situations at home are taken into consideration according to your company values and also review and possibly adjust your guidance regarding working time, working equipment, benefits etc.



1. Remote work, leadership and communications

Tackle remote apathy

- According to studies, *remote work is generally perceived as a positive thing.*
- The word apathy is in fact not related to remote work itself but to being distant from the normal working environment where we normally have variability and social relationships. *This feeling is what we call remote apathy.*
- No one is safe from remote apathy but, in general, young people and those living alone are at risk.
- Because of the distance, leadership requires closer follow-up: employees need to have clear, measurable goals that are easy for everyone to follow.
- *Employee wellbeing can be monitored with pulse surveys* and you should react to the results if needed.
- Also *ad hoc calls without a specific agenda work well* and are a good way to ask how employees are doing.
- Now is a good time to reflect on *what kind of feedback culture you have.* You can ask employees how, how often, and what channels would be good for giving and receiving feedback. Be active as a leader and give feedback actively.



1. Remote work, leadership and communications

Tackle remote apathy

You can also learn self-leadership. Offer support for your employees in this and invest in your own self-leadership. Here are some tips for getting started:

1. **How do you start your day?** Do you let e-mail guide your priorities by opening it first and responding to the e-mails or do you take time to prioritize your work first?
2. **Do you know how to say no?** If not, it would be good to practice.
3. **Do you schedule time for actually doing the work, or do you only mark the deadline?**
4. **Do you take breaks?** Very important for your wellbeing, to your brains, mind and body.
5. **Do you know the best ways for you to recover from work?**
 - Do you take time for daily recovery?



1. Remote work, leadership and communications

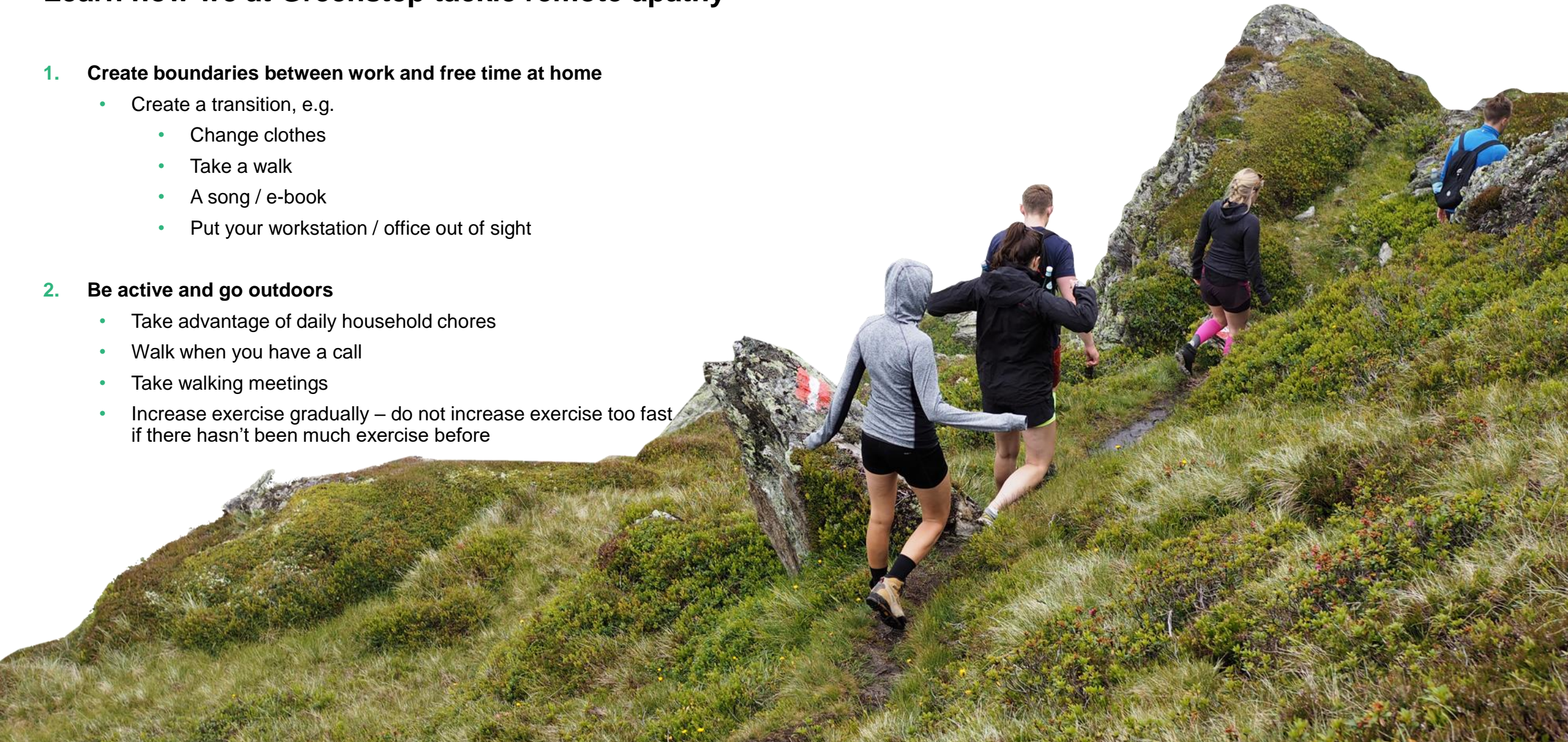
Learn how we at Greenstep tackle remote apathy

1. Create boundaries between work and free time at home

- Create a transition, e.g.
 - Change clothes
 - Take a walk
 - A song / e-book
 - Put your workstation / office out of sight

2. Be active and go outdoors

- Take advantage of daily household chores
- Walk when you have a call
- Take walking meetings
- Increase exercise gradually – do not increase exercise too fast if there hasn't been much exercise before



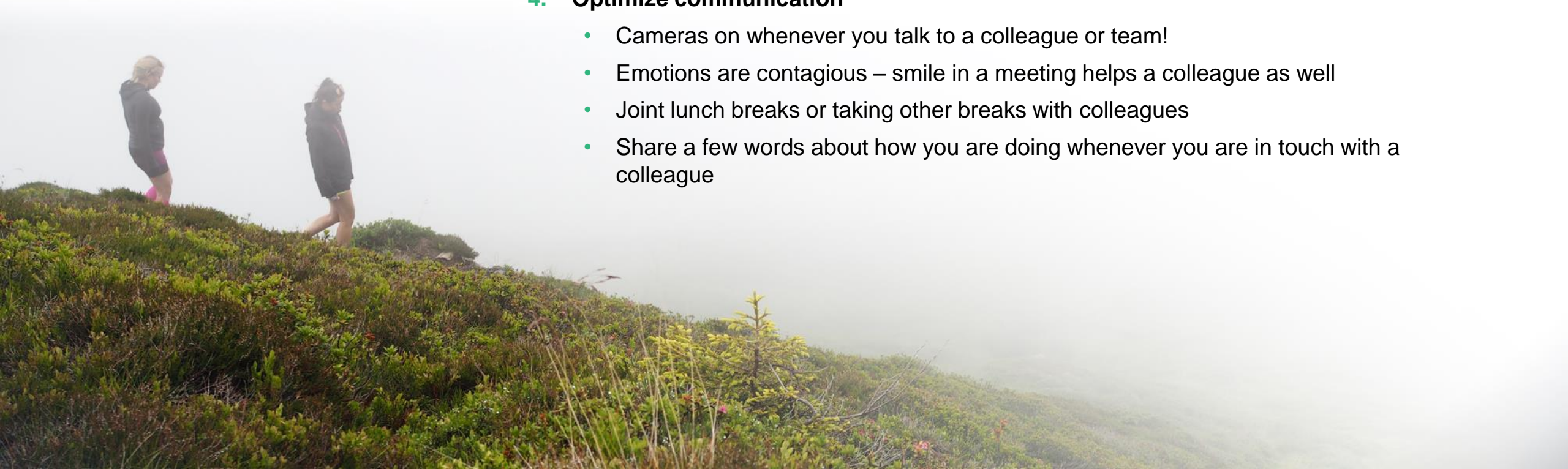
1. Remote work, leadership and communications

3. Eat regularly and get enough sleep

- Remember lunch every day!
- Prepare food more at once to make heating easy
- Schedule lunch if it's otherwise hard to remember
- Sleep is needed every day of the week – weekend is not a substitute for weekdays

4. Optimize communication

- Cameras on whenever you talk to a colleague or team!
- Emotions are contagious – smile in a meeting helps a colleague as well
- Joint lunch breaks or taking other breaks with colleagues
- Share a few words about how you are doing whenever you are in touch with a colleague



1. Remote work, leadership and communications

5. Plan your day and take breaks

- Schedule beforehand – take time for also other things than just meetings
- Make work visible -lists
- Do the most difficult things first – they put the most strain on your brain
- Respect your own and colleagues' schedules
- Test different working time management techniques (e.g. Pomodoro)

6. Try something new every day

- Prepare food that you haven't made before
- Wear "non-standard" clothes on the workday 😊
- Evening tea/coffee/cocoa to the thermos and out!



2. Occupational safety responsibilities and corona

The law requires to act

- Workplaces are different. In some companies the entire personnel has worked remotely for almost a year now, and in some companies, presence is required in which case the work-related risk for Covid-19 exposure is greater.
- It is the responsibility of occupational safety to update the risk assessment according to the company's situation and consider the factors that may affect employees' coronavirus exposure.
 - Occupational health care can advice on how to protect employees who belong to a risk group
 - Tyosuojelu.fi and ttk.fi are great information sources regarding the responsibilities and how to act
- **Remember to inform your employee about the corona guidelines regularly as well as through different channels.** Tips on the content of the instructions on the next page.

Important statutory requirements:

1. **Update the risk assessment** to reflect the current situation in the workplace and in remote work
 - The risk assessment must take into account e.g. the nature of work, the regional infection situation, the possibility for remote work, the number and duration of close contacts, and the possibility to use personal protective equipment
 - The need to travel and the resulting risk of infection must also be considered
 - THL has written guidelines for safe working at the office and what specifically should be considered in the **occupational safety risk assessment**: <https://www.ttl.fi/en/fioh-guidelines-for-workplaces-to-prepare-for-the-coronavirus-epidemic/>
2. **The employer must keep a list of employees** who have been exposed to coronavirus or other hazardous biological factors at work. This applies to all industries.
3. **The act on occupational safety and health requires that employer takes initiative to reduce the risk caused by workload factors.** It is important to prevent harmful workloads and not just react to the consequences that have already occurred. The psychosocial stressors refer to factors related to the content and organization of work and the social functioning of the work community.

2. Occupational safety responsibilities and corona

Internal communication and instructions are important

- Write or update guidelines and ensure that all employees know how to act in each situation and where to find the instructions and guidance.
- Follow the instructions of the authorities regularly (weekly) and consider possible regional differences.
- **Remember to communicate regularly**, in all the necessary languages.
 - **Engage supervisors.** (Remote) team meetings and/or morning coffees are excellent ways of reminding about the company's corona guidelines and practices, as well as to discuss any concerns.

It's good to communicate regularly at least about the following:

- Remote work (does the accident insurance cover remote work?)
- Working at the office – if allowed, what should be considered
- Travelling for work
- Exposure (own or family member)
- Taking a Covid-19 test, where and how (is the testing included in the occupational health care agreement?)
- Illness (own or family member)
- Self-quarantine
- Quarantine imposed by the authority
- Illness / quarantine of a child
- Travel policy
- Company sick leave policies

Note!

- What are the practices for working with customers?
- What are the practices for other visitors at the office?

2. Occupational safety responsibilities and corona

Internal communication and instructions are important

Note!

GDPR matters need to be considered carefully – more details on next page!

Examples of practices

- Many workplaces haven't prohibited employees from working at the office but there are detailed instructions to prevent infections.
- Just like everywhere else, it is of high importance to adhere to the 2-meter safety distance at workplaces whenever possible, wash hands frequently, use hand sanitizer, and maintain good hygiene.
- If an employee feels sick or any of the symptoms that are typical for corona virus, the employee should stay home. This applies also if there is someone with symptoms living in the same household.
- It is recommended to take the corona test with low threshold (either the employer pays for the test through occupational health care or the employee is guided to the public sector), and the employee should not come to the office before a negative test result.
- The employees are recommended to avoid public transportation and the employer may offer face masks to the employees.
- Team meetings should not be organized face to face unless being outside, if the team size is more than 6 persons.
- The same practices and guidelines apply with customers and other visitors at the office.

2. Occupational safety responsibilities and corona

Privacy policy in working life and corona

- *Health data is specific personal data*, and the information needs to be protected with particular care.
 - Information that a person has become infected with the coronavirus is such health information.
 - Belonging to a risk group of the coronavirus is also health information if it is handled to assess health status.
- In addition to the general EU data protection regulation, the processing of employees' personal data is subject to the act on the protection of privacy in working life.
- The infectious diseases act and other legislation related to occupational safety may also be applicable.
- Health information may not be disclosed to third parties without the express consent of the employee or other legal grounds.

Note! If an employee is diagnosed with a coronavirus, the employer may not, in principle, name the employee.

- The employer can generally inform other employees about the infection or possible infection and instruct them to work from home.
- The infected person can tell others about their coronavirus infection or exposure. The information can also be shared upon request. If the questioner doesn't record the information, the data protection law does not apply to the situation

The employer is bound by professional secrecy about the employee's health records.

3. Adjustment measures and change leadership

In adjustment situations, communication and acting according to the company culture is crucial.

Especially if larger adjustment measures need to be taken, your employees will most certainly be concerned – concerned for the shared future, for their own workplace or for a colleague.

- *This concern is important to address and must be considered in all actions and communication.*

Bigger changes will affect the employees for several months and the more you are able to communicate about them regularly and in a timely manner, the more sustainable foundation you will build from now on.

Communication and leadership are important at all times, even as the situation improves or after larger adjustment measures have been taken. Remember to still communicate regularly, as if the communication stops, it will cause confusion and unnecessary speculation.

It is important to be actively (virtually) present and make the future as concrete as possible.

Let's face people as people and not just fulfil the requirements of the law.



3. Adjustment measures and change leadership

Facing personnel adjustment measures?

In case of facing the need for personnel adjustments that could result in terminations, lay-offs, or changes to terms of employment of one or more employees due to economic or production related grounds, it is important to remember the following factors

- A company that regularly employs more than 20 employees must comply with the act on cooperation within undertakings <https://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/alkup/2007/20070334>
- The act obligates the employer to arrange employee cooperation negotiations before any decisions are made that might have an impact in employments.
- A company that regularly employs fewer than 20 employees does not need to comply with this act but can operate through streamlined adjustment procedures.
 - Employment contracts act: <https://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/ajantasa/2001/20010055>

- The cooperation negotiation proposal is submitted to TE office at the latest when the negotiations start.
- **Cooperation negotiations must be conducted for a minimum of 14 days**, when the planned terminations, lay-offs, or employment term changes apply to less than 10 employees or the lay-offs last for a maximum of 90 days and apply to at least 10 employees.
 - The employer must comply with the 14-day negotiation time even if the measures apply to one employee only. If the employer estimates that the lay-offs would last for a maximum of 90 days, the negotiation time is always 14 days regardless of to how many employees the lay-offs would apply.
- **The negotiation time is 6 weeks** if the considered terminations, lay-offs of more than 90 days, or employment term changes apply to more than 10 employees

3. Adjustment measures and change leadership

Lay-offs

Lay-off means that the employer **temporarily** suspends the contractual work and salary payment. Otherwise, the employment remains in force.

The employer can lay off an employee on two grounds:

- The employer has an economic or production related **reason to terminate the employment contract** – the lay-off may be made for an indefinite period.
- The employer's potential for offering work has diminished **temporarily** – the lay-off can be made for a fixed term period of up to 90 days. New cooperation negotiations must be conducted if there is a need to continue the lay-offs after 90 days or there is a need for terminations.

Both scenarios require that there is no other work or training to be offered to the employee.

Lay-offs for economic and production related reasons must be notified to the employees according to the notice period:

- The lay off notice must be given **no later than 14 days** before the start of the lay-off
 - **Note!** Also check the applicable collective agreement to see if the notice period has been agreed on differently.

Note!

- In case of full-time lay-offs, the benefits are also generally cut off (telephone benefit, lunch benefit, car benefit etc.)
- In part-time lay-offs, benefits often remain valid at least according to the part-time hours.

Employees with fixed-term contract cannot be laid off, unless they are substituting for a permanent employee.

Remember the protection for shop stewards and occupational safety and health representatives.

3. Adjustment measures and change leadership

Terminations

- The negotiation proposal must be submitted **no later than 5 days before** the start of the co-operation negotiations.
- Co-operation negotiations must be conducted for a minimum of **14 days** and a maximum of **6 weeks** (see page 15)
 - The negotiation can be shorter upon agreement
- The cooperation negotiations have a starting meeting, a needed number of meetings to fulfil the negotiation requirement, and the ending meeting.
- The cooperation negotiations include discussion on the grounds, personnel effects, alternatives, and the plan/principles supporting re-employment.
- The notice periods can vary from 14 days to 6 months, according to employment agreement and collective agreement.

Note!

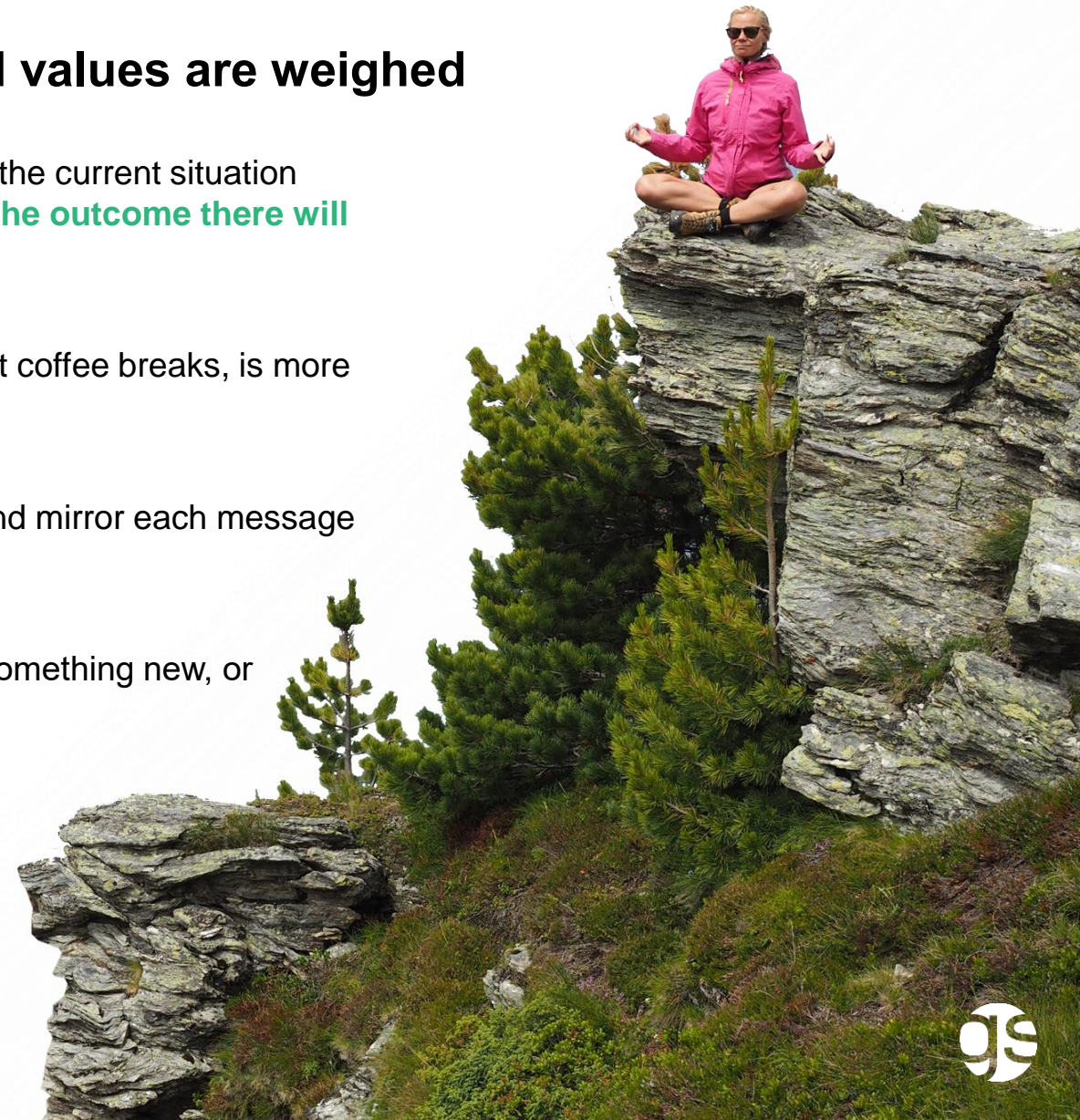
Remember the **obligation to offer alternative work** and **re-employment obligation** for dismissed employees if you are planning to recruit new employees.

Remember the protection for shop stewards and occupational safety and health representatives.

3. Adjustment measures and change leadership

In adjustment measures, the company's culture and values are weighed

- The cooperation negotiations, as the name implies, are all about discussing the current situation together. **The more we do together through open discussion the better the outcome there will be**, no matter what the situation is.
- **Keeping track of employee wellbeing**, e.g. through pulse surveys and joint coffee breaks, is more important than ever in this situation.
- You can use your **company's values** as the basis of your communication and mirror each message and action to the values.
- **Communication** is really important – whether it's repeating the old, telling something new, or building a sense of togetherness.
- When there is a need for adjustment measures, remember to highlight **the human aspect** in your communication instead of the “by-the-book” actions (though this can't be forgotten either).



To conclude, our HR-team's tips & some useful links

1. Invest in **internal communications**: repeat and make sure that the message is received.
 - The most important thing is to ensure that the organization's direction is clear to everyone and that important messages are easy to find. In this way, everyone knows what is expected from them.
2. Ensure and enable **recovery**, for yourself and the entire organization.
 - Support, act as an example, and focus on clear leadership, managerial work, and jointly agreed practices and policies. Clarity creates wellbeing.
3. Focus on **feedback culture**:
 - Thank often. Thanking improves wellbeing and reduces conflicts.
 - Feedback culture is one of the most important elements of culture, including intervening in unwanted actions or behavior. If we don't intervene, we accept.
4. **Be truly present. People value humanity.**

Useful links:

[The Finnish Institute of Occupational Health's guidelines for corona time](#)

[Coronavirus update by the Ministry of the Interior Finland](#)

[Coronavirus instructions by the ministry of social affairs and](#)

Thank you! Our Greenstep family of 400+ professionals supports you also during Covid-19.

If you need additional support for example for your corona guidelines, occupational health and safety responsibilities, internal communication, lay-offs or cooperation negotiations, our HR team is ready to help you as an hourly work, project work, or part-time collaboration.

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to back our clients up with *clarity*,
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