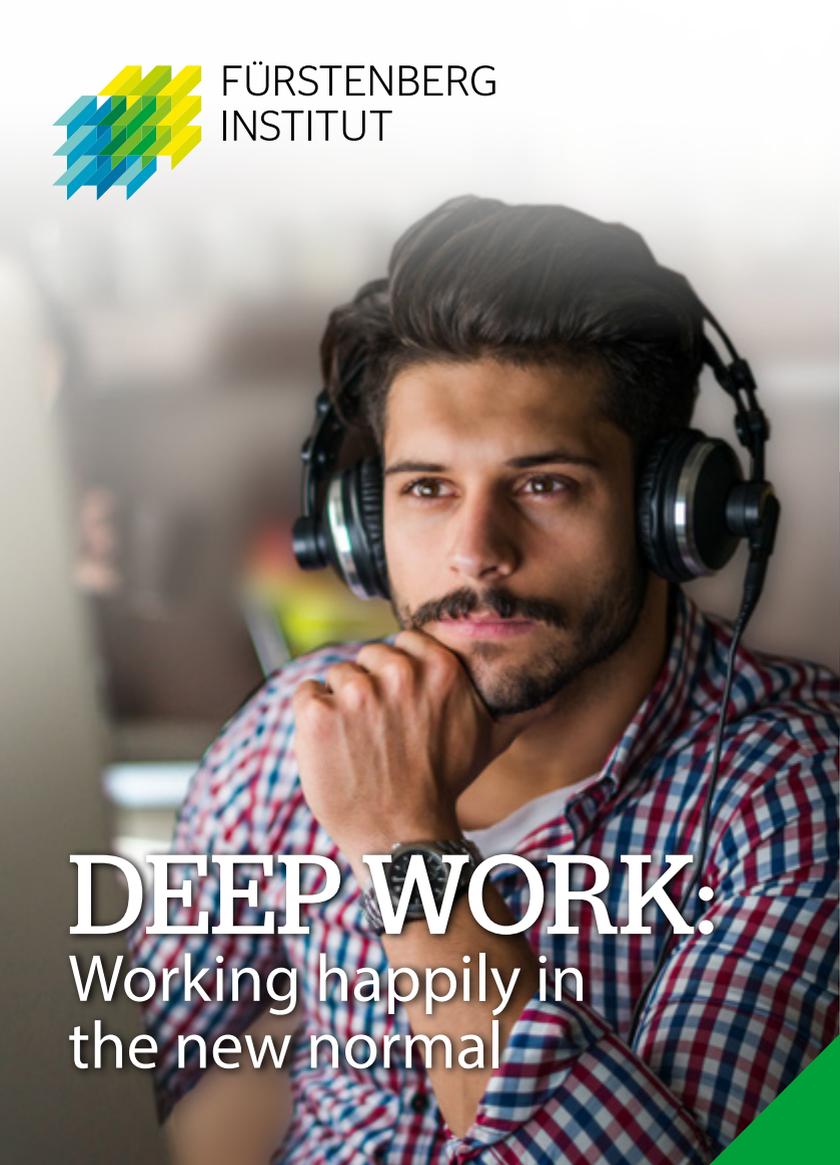




FÜRSTENBERG  
INSTITUT

NEWS

September | 2020



# DEEP WORK:

Working happily in  
the new normal



**How love works**  
relationships and partner-  
ships in challenging times

Dear reader,



In the past few months, life has become much more intense for many people. The lockdown left us with considerably less diversity and distraction. What already existed beforehand is now more obvious. For example, people who were already quite relaxed have been able to enjoy times of relaxation even more. Problems simmering away in relationships have led to much more serious conflict. And those who tended to feel lonely or down have had such feelings compounded by greater isolation. The advantage is, however, that such things have now come to the forefront so that people can grasp them and make changes. During the corona time, many people have developed a better idea of what they want and, in particular, what they no longer want. Every day in our counselling work, we see how people realign both themselves and the various aspects of their lives. True change generally happens for two reasons: because we want to change or because we have to. Corona has led to both.

This newsletter touches on many issues that affect us today. From successful relationships, to focused work (Deep Work), and through to managing your digital legacy.

I hope you enjoy reading it and wish you a wonderful autumn!

With best wishes,

Reinhold Fürstenberg

## DEEP WORK:

### Working with concentration, efficiency and satisfaction in the new normal

Is it possible to work without distraction? For several hours on a project with no interruption? Can you focus deeply on a complex subject matter? For many people, the time spent really concentrating on work only makes up a fraction of their daily working life. That is a pity because such phases of work often lead to better results and make people happier.

We are not the only ones to benefit from this, as it is good for our team and the entire company too.

#### What is Deep Work?

Deep Work means concentrating on professional activities without distraction. While doing so, people's cognitive powers are fully utilized and focused on the result. This path leads to meaningful results at work.

The best thing is that Deep Work also makes people happy! According to the flow theory, people find it particularly enriching when they undertake work that challenges them. In addition, Deep Work helps people to learn difficult things quickly. Well-known "deep workers" have already shown us how it's done. Researchers like Charles Darwin, psychiatrists such as **Carl Gustav Jung** as well as many authors and political thinkers withdrew to low-stimulus environments when they needed some peace and quiet to focus on major works. Deep Work is therefore a tried-and-tested strategy for excellence! However, this doesn't mean spending your working hours in isolation or only com-



municating with others during strict “telephone times”. But it is certainly highly beneficial to integrate working blocks into your daily work and accept this from your colleagues too.

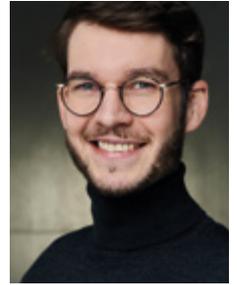
In that case, why is it so difficult these days to be able to concentrate on something at length? To begin with, this is due to the increase of external stimuli, such as digital communication. Many people spend more than 60% of their time with electronic communication and internet searches. This figure is even higher during corona times, with people working from home. An unhealthy “always-on” mentality dominates in many companies today. The reason for this is the human need for quick solutions. When we have to wait for answers, we cannot finish what we are doing. We have to plan better. The other side of the coin is that many team members and managers spend the day in their inboxes or in update meetings and feel productive by doing so. Instead of deeply immersing themselves in topics and pondering different solution scenarios, they are constantly checking their inboxes and answering e-mails spontaneously. The result is often a feeling of stress, confusion, frustration or triviality. Unfortunately, this kind of activity is still misunderstood by some as an expression of productivity.

The fact is that chronic distraction and chronic multitasking can be addictive and cause people to forget how to concentrate properly. Distraction sometimes leads to quick successes, which is why we understandably feel the urge to switch our attention to something more superficial and simple. Many people fight all day long against the desire for distraction in the form of food, sleep, breaks, e-mails, social media, searching the web, and so on.

Just like muscle power, stamina and concentration are things that can be trained. Self-management and Deep Work succeed when you manage to integrate routines into your daily working life in an effort to boost concentration at work. This also includes the deliberate reduction of superficial work (fewer meetings and e-mails) and allowing yourself to be supposedly “unproductive” once in a while.

## What could Deep Work look like in your daily working life?

- 1. Organise and train Deep Work in your team and for yourself.** Discuss with the others how you can arrive at concentrated phases of work with little effort. For example, before a Deep Work phase, take another look at your e-mails and diary and ask yourself what else you have to think of. Collect your first ideas and write them down.
- 2. Talk to your team about which places are best suited for Deep Work.** Are there any focus spaces in your company or can you occasionally work from home? Accept that your colleagues and managers do not wish to be disturbed, answer the telephone or respond to messages during Deep Work phases.



**Author:**  
**Moritz Hagedorn,**  
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**3. Some teams also try working together in silence.** Imagine you were all in a big “meeting” where everyone had to work on a specific topic in full concentration.

**4. Think about whether you would like to switch off your e-mail and chat features on an hourly or daily basis within your department.** Would that be acceptable in your company? With your colleagues, consider if additional communication channels like chats and spontaneous video calls really create added value for everyone in the team, or if there are areas or times where they are not required because they only distract.

**5. Agree with others to reduce superficial work and stimuli.** Decision-making and meetings are important, but are there also any time slots that are kept free?

**6. Suggest starting meetings with a “minute of silence”.** One person can keep the time while everyone else stays quiet and uses the time for observation. Might you be more organised afterwards and willing to tackle the items on the agenda with greater concentration?

**7. If you can divide your time by yourself, make sure you take breaks from focused work by, for example, planning for times when you can be distracted and do some of the more superficial jobs.** Think about when and how often you are willing to be distracted. Regardless of how many phases of distraction are planned, the Deep Work phases must be distraction-free.

**8. Switch off. Find rituals to end the day with or to deal with unfinished tasks.** Share your experiences with your colleagues. There may be a place where unfinished, less urgent work can be (symbolically) stored or you could think up a phrase that you can say in the evenings such as, “My work is over for today”.

For further reading it is recommended here: **Deep Work: Rules for Focused Success in a Distracted World** by Cal Newport (2017)



**in  
german**

## Webinar

**Deep Work - successful and concentrated work in a world full of distraction**

**Thursday, October 8th, 2020 | 11:00 o'clock**  
**Speaker: Moritz Hagedorn**

Registration via our customers login  
[www.fuerstenberg-institut.de/kundenlogin.html](http://www.fuerstenberg-institut.de/kundenlogin.html)

## How love works relationships and partnerships in challenging times



My circle of friends includes a couple in a long-term relationship in highly unusual circumstances. The man is a sea captain who leaves Hamburg on his container ship every 3 to 4 months and spends lengthy periods at sea.

They have two small children and believe that they have a mostly happy relationship.

I asked them how their relationship works when one of them is at home with the children, while the other is sailing to the other side of the world. They don't call each other either, preferring to write letters every 4 weeks. They say they don't need many words, can write whatever they like and feel close to one another in this way. This is their way of dealing with the situation and coming to terms with it.

Many people wonder how satisfying relationships work. Or they ask themselves what is needed to stay happy throughout a relationship.

There are countless guidebooks for couples and relationships. I would like to present you with the integral perspective based on the quadrant model by Ken Wilber. This involves observing oneself and one's relationships from four perspectives.

The quadrants influence each other, are mutually dependent and can sometimes not be 100% separated from each other.

This model is often used in organisation consulting, but I will use it here for relationships.

### Quadrant model by Ken Wilber

	Interior	Exterior
Individual	Attitudes, beliefs	Verhalten
Collective	Values, culture	Structures, processes, joint rituals

## Interior/ Individual (or: taking a look at yourself)

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The first perspective observes thoughts, feelings, as well as one's own attitude and values.

### **I would like to offer you an example for this.**

During one's life, everyone develops their idea of the perfect partner. We think that this other person is responsible for making us happy. In the relationship itself, we then experience disappointment if the other person does not behave in the way we had expected or imagined. We relate this disappointment to our partner.

In actual fact, we are disappointed that our own ideas of how a partner should behave do not hold true. In relationships, this can make us sad or dissatisfied.

With this kind of attitude, we surrender responsibility for our own happiness to our partner.

There are, therefore, some points that form the basis for making a relationship work. This is self-awareness, which means being aware of one's own thought patterns and assumptions, beliefs and values.

## Exterior/ Individual (or: what each person can do)

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The second perspective relates to a person's visible behaviour, knowledge, skills or physical condition.

### **This can also be explained by way of an example of a relationship in action:**

Do you know the feeling of being so afraid of the dentist that you no longer attend the annual check-up and stop having your teeth cleaned by the dentist? When you finally attend an appointment after several years, it may be much more painful than the small, regular appointments you missed. This is also true for certain aspects of our relationship that we are not particularly happy or satisfied with. It takes courage and inner strength to say to your partner, "I love you and I want to be with you, but I don't like the fact that we argue, don't do things together, no longer have much of a sex life, etc.". Discussing the state of your relationship can make you closer to your partner again.

## Interior/ Systemic (or: what is the couple's relationship culture?)

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The third level refers to the internal aspect of a relationship. This could be the relationship culture, the feeling of being a team or the sense of togetherness.

In my work as a counsellor, I have met many couples who develop together and have built a life with each other. This is mostly decided spontaneously and depends on the situation, because it's simply "time". My experiences here are that these decisions are integrated into daily life and then no longer questioned or changed.



**Author**  
**Nadja Verspohl,**  
counsellor,  
Fürstenberg Institut

This could involve, for example, the division of tasks and responsibilities within the relationship or the organisation of joint celebrations and rituals. It could also refer to rules that apply within the family. Or to the couple's everyday togetherness.

Every couple should sit down together at regular intervals to clarify if joint decisions can still be carried out in the same way as before. If there is any confusion or dissatisfaction, this can be changed without having to question the entire relationship itself. By consciously influencing and controlling seemingly fixed routines, a partnership can, on the one hand, grow while, on the other hand, the two people involved experience a deep satisfaction as a result of their ability to take action.

The basis for these discussions could be questions like, "What do we do well together? What are our strengths? Which rituals do we want to continue in the same form, and which ones do we want to change? What rules apply in our relationship? Which topics do we avoid in our discussions? What are the good things that we have experienced together and what else do we want to experience?"

### **Exterior/ Systemic (or: how can the couple live this culture?)**

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The fourth and final level deals with the external conditions, resources and structures of a relationship.

When a couple takes the time to think and make a conscious decision about how they want to live and what roles they want to play, they then have work out how to implement these plans.

So, the decision on having a relationship of equal rights will have the consequence of the couple sharing, for example, the housework and childcare. Or the wish to spend time actively together will mean looking for a joint hobby. The desire to talk to each other regularly will result in going out to eat once a week and taking the time to discuss things. This point is all about implementing rituals.

The time we are currently living in is something special that has never existed before. Old and subconscious coping strategies and patterns might not be working any more. Many couples have experienced this during the pandemic and the lockdown. Corona has forced it on us, but there is now a great opportunity for people to review and adapt their relationships – for an equal and happy partnership.

Do you feel that any of these points address you? If you like, you could ask yourself the following questions for self-reflection and self-development.

In which of the quadrants does your relationship need to adapt or improve?

### Here are 3 questions for each area:

#### **Interior/ Individual (or: taking a look at yourself)**

- How do I imagine a relationship with another person?
- What expectations do I have of my partner?
- What beliefs/attitudes help me to love myself and my partner?

#### **Exterior/ Individual (or: what each person can do)**

- How did I last show/tell my partner that I am happy to have this relationship/person in my life?
- How was I able to empathise with my partner's concerns/worries/issues and how did I behave?
- When was I last really able to forgive my partner without feeling resentful?

#### **Interior/ Systemic (or: what is the couple's relationship culture?)**

- How do we want to interact with each other?
- What spirit should characterise our life together?
- Which values are important to us and which ones should guide us in our relationship?

#### **Exterior/ Systemic (or: how can the couple live this culture?)**

- Which structures do we want to live in?
- What rituals are there in our relationship?
- What are the framework conditions of our life together?



Let us return to the captain and his wife whom I mentioned at the beginning of the article. They both act according to the quadrant model, even if they don't realise it. They have thought about what each person needs to be able to cope well with the other person's absence and about what they both need together. They came to the decision to stay in contact during the time spent apart and to do so by exchanging letters. So now they write to each other in order to make the large geographical distances between them seem smaller.

## Forever offline ...

### Digital legacy: what will happen with my data?



Many people have a will that determines who should inherit assets, a house or personal belongings after they pass away. But people also leave behind their traces across the digital world, whether on Facebook or Instagram profiles, in an e-book library, online games, cryptocurrencies or fee-based music downloads. According to a survey by the digital association Bitkom, only 13% of people have made arrangements for their digital legacy. This topic has now been examined in a study entitled "The digital legacy" by the Fraunhofer Institute for Secure Information Technology and the Universities of Regensburg and Bremen.

#### The main recommendations are as follows:

- Arrange in good time who should take care of your digital protection and your digital heritage, and decide what should happen with your individual accounts and data when you are no longer able to manage them yourself.
- It makes good sense to entrust someone you have full confidence in with all activities regarding your digital life. Make an official record of this in a power of attorney.
- In addition, draw up a list of all accounts together with usernames and passwords for the person you have entrusted. Our examples of a power of attorney and list from the consumer advice centre will help.

in  
german

#### Further information:

[www.verbraucherzentrale.de/wissen/digitale-welt/datenschutz/digitale-vorsorge-digitaler-nachlass-was-passiert-mit-meinen-daten-12002](http://www.verbraucherzentrale.de/wissen/digitale-welt/datenschutz/digitale-vorsorge-digitaler-nachlass-was-passiert-mit-meinen-daten-12002)

## Collective strength

### – what to do in the event of prejudice, racism or discrimination at work?



More than a third of German workers claim to have experienced or observed discrimination at the workplace. Whether it's disadvantages due to skin colour, age, gender, sexual orientation, right-wing rhetoric or hostility towards religious groups – exclusion comes in many forms in working life.

These range from insults, unwanted comments and inappropriate jokes through to the deliberate marginalisation of people or preventing them from doing their work by, for example, choosing not to pass on certain information or deleting important files.

But what should you do if you witness such events or are verbally attacked or excluded yourself? First of all, it is important to know: in accordance with the General Equal Treatment Act (AGG), companies are not allowed to tolerate discrimination and are obliged to act against it. It is generally accepted that diverse teams, with their different perspectives and approaches, are better at coming up with new ideas and are more innovative, creative and successful. People will go nowhere fast if they only rely on their own experiences to make their way in this world, or if they view life from their subjective perspective and fall back on time-tested evaluation patterns. Recognising and living diversity requires people to come to terms with "others" and what it means to "be different". They also need to be willing to regard this as an enrichment. Old knowledge and years of experience combine well with new viewpoints, different approaches and fresh (technical) expertise, and this mixture bodes well for the future success of the company.

If a discriminating incident occurs, companies are legally obliged to protect their employees and take corresponding measures. If companies do not comply with these obligations, the persons concerned have the right to take a stand. In certain conditions, they could even claim compensation or damages from the company. Furthermore, they are entitled to make use of their right to withhold performance, i.e. they can stop working without losing any pay, provided this is necessary for their own protection.

So what is the best thing to do if you become the victim of discriminating comments or actions? "Respond immediately!", recommends XY from the Fürstenberg Institut. "Contact the people involved directly, either by e-mail or speak to them about the behaviour that you find insulting, and insist that it stops right away."



Then take a note of the date, time, location and witnesses, as well as what the other person said or did, and also record your own reaction. These notes will help you if the harassment continues.

Of course, there may be borderline cases in some situations, whereby different people have different perceptions and levels of tolerance. The general rule here is: a form of behaviour or action becomes offensive if it doesn't stop even after the person has become a victim and has stated that the behaviour in question is undesirable.

If you want to ask yourself if your own behaviour or that of others is acceptable, you can do a check on yourself: "Would I feel embarrassed if my family or my friends saw or heard me making those comments?" and "Would I be angry if my child, partner or other relative was treated in the same way?"

If you are discriminated against yourself, do not let things stand. You should immediately speak to someone you trust. This could be your manager, the works council or someone from the HR team. As part of their obligation to provide protection and care, your manager is duty-bound to help you. Managers are usually aware of the legal and company-related framework in the event of discrimination and know how to offer you support and trust, as well as what the next steps are with regard to the other people involved.

Should you be accused of discrimination yourself, your manager will be legally obliged to investigate the complaint against you and help the person affected. The first step in the event of an infringement against the AGG is to hold a meeting. Based on the gravity of the offence and the degree of blame, there may be a threat of disciplinary measures such as a warning, a transfer or, in serious and repeated cases, dismissal.

There will certainly be a range of preventive measures in your company too. This could include setting up a complaints office. All employees should also be fully informed regarding the topic of discrimination. This can be ensured by way of leaflets, notices or e-mail communication. Customised workshops and training sessions for employees and managers can also make sure that the topic is taken seriously in the company and is positively implemented in the corporate culture.



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