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Latin America &  
the Caribbean

# Taking CARE of our digital body

*Reflections of a virtual team*



## How do we place CARE in the center of the digital space?

In these times, when acting collectively can save lives, we want to share some reflections and tips as a virtual team with those defenders, activists and organizations that have the possibility of continuing to work from home for the defense of women's rights and trans people.

For 10 years, we have been working for Latin America and the Spanish-speaking Caribbean feminist movements, positioning CARE as our ethical-political commitment. At the end of 2016, we began to reflect as a team on how to expand the dimensions of CARE to the digital sphere\*, and by the end of 2018 we carried out the first pilot that helped us begin as a virtual team based in different countries of the region. Our concern was always to maintain the same spirit of CARE that united us in the physical office and, so not only to "work remotely", but to consolidate our **virtual team**.

It has been a collective process of great discoveries, and learning. Giving ourselves permission to make mistakes and learn together has been key. As well as understanding that not all of us started from the same point, that we all have different ICT-stories\* according to our "age", context, experience and relationship with technology. Talking about them collectively also allowed us to heal stories of

digital violence. By walking together in this process, we were able to create the basis for establishing comfortable virtual work dynamics.

In July 2019, when we had the platforms / communication channels that resonated with us and when the team was familiar with their use, we officially started working as a virtual team. Today, we are encouraged by the ways in which each organization creatively is seeking alternatives so that working virtually can be something that contributes to the personal and collective processes of their teams.

We have put together these tips, from our experiences, to continue the reflection on creating increasingly healthy and careful spaces for online work.

We hope you enjoy, share and adapt them according to your needs, contexts and organizations.



**Warmly,  
UAF-LAC Team <3**

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\* Recommended article Click on CARE: [https://fondoaccionurgente.org.co/site/assets/files/1433/care\\_at\\_the\\_center\\_web.pdf](https://fondoaccionurgente.org.co/site/assets/files/1433/care_at_the_center_web.pdf)

\* Result of a Team exercise to learn about our stories with information and communication technologies.

# 12 TIPS for virtual times

**1. You are not alone**, In the midst of the crisis, it might seem like a race against time to be able to manage and get to know all the ICTs\* available for virtual work. Many times, we assume that everyone on the team has used them before.

We recommend those platforms and communication channels chosen by your organization, to be the result of a collective agreement. Also, that those who have never used the tools before can be accompanied during the process.

On the other hand, it is important to ask for help so that others can build the bridges you need (remember that when you work virtually it might be more difficult for others to know what you are going through or how you are feeling).

→ **Let's open spaces to reflect together on our "digital habitats/lives"**. Let's encourage ourselves to talk about our relationship and history with ICTs. Let's create safe spaces, without fear and judgment, to talk about the anxieties generated by such technologies, self-censorship in the face of violence that we may find difficult to recognize, or even the impacts of permanent connectivity.



\* Information and Communication Technologies.

## 2. It is better to err by over-communicating than to remain silent:

It is critical to maintain the spirit of feeling close, and to have an assertive and fluid communication. It is always better to seek communication one-on-one if something is left unresolved, if it is urgent or if an unspoken feeling remains in your body.

 **Key:** Process things in a timely and direct way so as not to accumulate tensions.

In cases of tension, it is better to agree on the best moment to do a phone or video call to have a closer conversation. Creativity is a good ally to find channels, times and paths for active listening, since it is essential to maintaining community and feeling close to each other.

***Learning to listen to each other in the era of "virtual monologues" humanizes our online work!***



## 3. UBUNTU\*, I am because we are...

Is essential to build trust on a daily basis in the consolidation of a virtual team. Understanding ourselves as a vital interconnected network is important to value and trust the work of those who we do not see.

**Remember:** Your interpretations may not always be correct when reading chats or emails, so it is key to assume that the other person has the best intentions and give them the benefit of the doubt.

We also recommend using **positive emojis** 🤗 👍 😊 ❤️ 😄 to express what you are feeling.

**YES**, it is possible to strengthen links in the virtual space by making room for the "apapache"\* , to say hi and goodbye and check in how your colleagues are doing.

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\* UBUNTU is a South African ethical practice that comes from the Zulu and Xhosa languages and can be translated as "I am because we are". The traditional African concept is used to speak of loyalty and a sense of cooperation and solidarity between people.

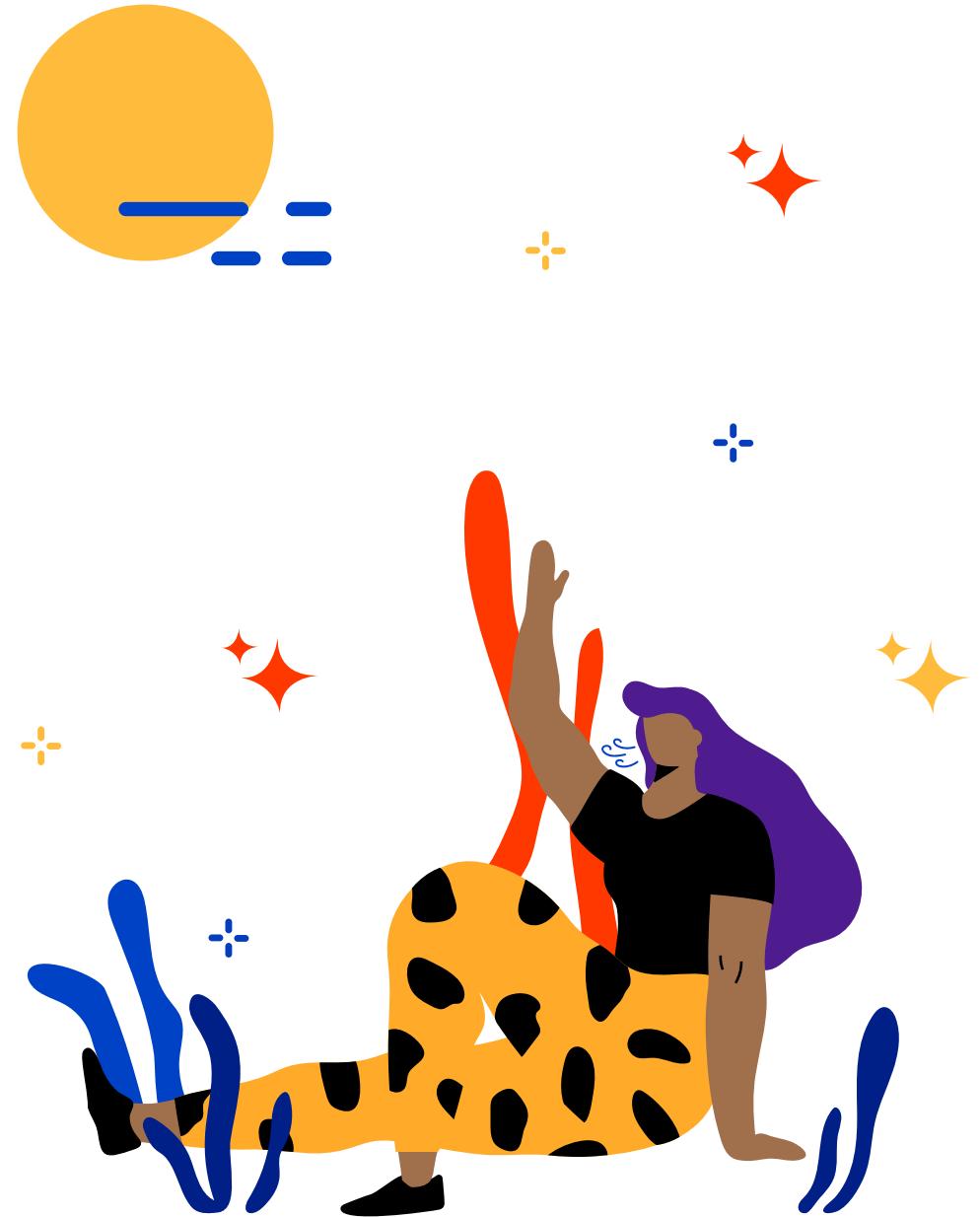
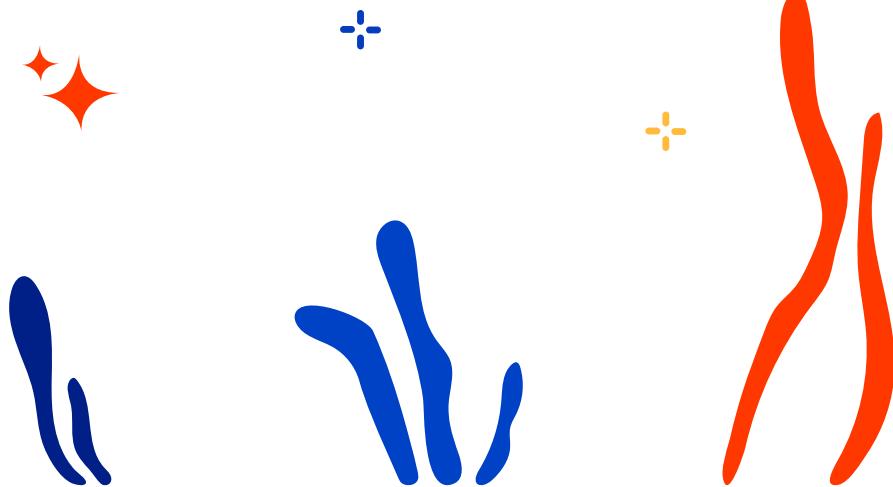
\*Apapache: word of Nahuatl origin that is used in Central America and Colombia, and although untranslatable, means to embrace or caress with the soul, and can be understood as spoiling, showing affection, pampering, and giving physical, emotional and / or spiritual comfort and relief.

## 4. PAUSE!

Many times when we work from home, we feel more pressure to carry on with our duties , perhaps more than when we are in an office or shared space.

Taking **active pauses** to stretch your body, taking your eyes off the computer, breathing, calmly answering a family call or taking care of the beings that live with us is vital.

We have seen that taking a pause, **beyond simply a personal inspiration, becomes an institutional initiative:** we suggest creating group chats with your coworkers where work topics are not discussed and you invite each other to pause, share light messages, memes, jokes, have a virtual coffee, or do other exercises collectively.



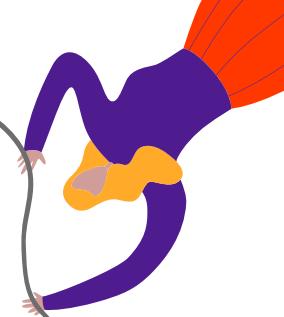
## 5. Awareness of our digital privileges:

Not all people have access or the possibility to autonomously choose their communication channels. Using free software, secure applications or encrypted emails **is not accessible for most people**. Therefore, if relevant information reaches you through any of these alternatives or lesser known channels, and if by sharing this information **you do not put anyone at risk, go ahead** and re-distribute it through digital platforms that may be more used by your groups or organizations.

- **Connect with different Latin American movements and voices that are politicizing our presence on the Web.** Look for collectives, organizations and groups that have a history of working for our digital rights – testing tools, advising on digital security, translating user and privacy manuals, training others. They are a reliable and a feminist source of information in these times.

- Some of them are:  
[La Clika](#), [TEDIC](#), [Ciberseguras](#), [Derechos Digitales](#), [Fundación Karisma](#), [The Engine Room](#), [EnRedadas](#), [Maria Lab](#), [Las de Sistemas](#), [Fundación Activismo Feminista Digital](#), [Cl4ndestina](#), [Cyber Feministas](#)...  
but there are many more!

In [this report](#)  you can find organizations in Latin America that are carrying out projects in the field of gender, feminisms and technology.



## 6. A call to be calm:

In these times of crisis, networks are overloaded by many users connected at the same time. The internet may slow down and uploading or downloading files may take longer. It may also happen that you experience days with intermittent connection – the virtual world is also moving and there is very little you can do about it.

**Be calm!** Do not despair. When the connection fails in the middle of a meeting or when it takes longer than normal to send an email, it is time to take a deep breath.

The rhythms of the digital space may vary depending on where you are, your internet provider and the policies of each country. We recommend that you share what happens with another colleague, writing or calling someone else to let them know that your connection has failed, so that you feel less stressed. You can also take the opportunity to briefly pause, stretch and move your body.

**Don't let your entire day be frustrated  
by a thing you cannot control!**

**7. Balance =** It is very important to agree on collective work times and listen to the rhythms of each person, seeking balance between institutional, personal and collective times.

For example, thanks to the fact that our time zones are more or less similar, we have agreed on certain hours in which we must all be online and we have flexibility with a few hours that are determined by the preferences of each person and their bio-rhythms. If you are an early riser you can start the day earlier or if you are more of a night owl you can start and finish later. ;)

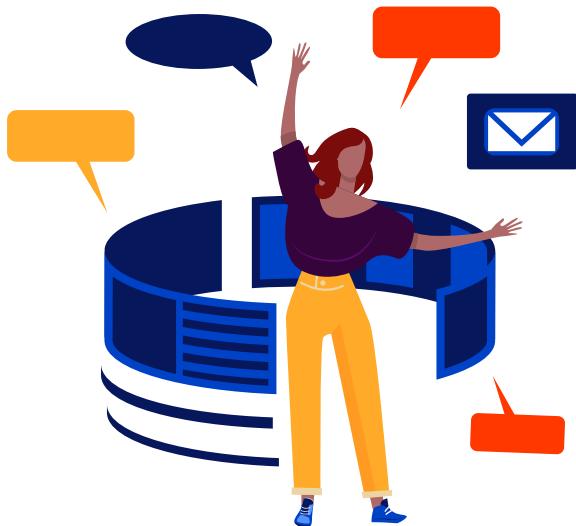


## 8. Digital Co-responsibility!

Beyond the tools and applications that offer us security to protect or defend ourselves against online attacks, it is key to understand that the risk doesn't only come from outside, but often comes from how we exist in our "digital habitat" and decisions we make when we use technology.

For example, we could put others at risk if we are not aware of our own limits or by giving control over our information to companies and governments, without analyzing the risks.

The management of many of the information we share is neither clear nor transparent by the companies or governments. As mentioned in Tip 5, we suggest that you connect with the organizations that work on this issue to learn more. <3



## 9. Sharing with security:

We are accustomed to using commercial platforms (Google, Facebook, Twitter) all the time because they make our lives "easier", but behind them are commercial interests and corporate profit that comes from our data. Starting to use non-private platforms is a long path. You can start to think as a team about what type of information is shared, how risky would it be if third parties have access to it and how to mitigate those risks collectively.

That is why we, as UAF-LAC, recommend using [SIGNAL](#) for encrypted instant messaging, and [Jitsi](#) for secure free video calls for up to 10 people on a call.

**Note:** In the current context, we recommend [Zoom](#) if you are sure that you are NOT going to share sensitive topics or files.



**10. Take lunch seriously!** Eating well is very important. Pausing to eat in a space far from the computer and cell phone is a practice that can make a difference.



**11. Embrace uncertainty with hope:** Maintaining and allocating time for face-to-face meetings has been very important for us. Thinking about when **we will hug again can be revitalizing.** The digital world connects us, but never forget that life happens through the skin and bodies...

## 12. Don't let the snowball catch you :o

In this moment we are calling on the hearts of activists and women defenders not to fill yourselves with too much information. It is important not to be hooked to the news all the time, to "detox" from social media and devices if you need to, or to take the time to listen to how your heart and your breathing behave when you are on one social network or another.

Today people are constantly proposing digital activities such as workshops, political conversations, conferences, classes, debates, birthday celebrations, parties, etc ... you don't have to participate in everything to feel socially active.

**Give space to SILENCE,** and to disconnection in these times. Nature is talking to us and she does not have Instagram to communicate her message ;)



**Listen to Mother Earth, feel her!**

# In the face of urgency *stay calm*

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