

# How Not to Murder Your Spouse—while working remotely (*during a pandemic*)

By Chanta Rand

They say the true test of a relationship is to take a road trip together. I would argue that the real test is working remotely in the same house, while under stay-at-home orders—during a pandemic.

In fact, this can be downright traumatic for some spouses. So I'm sharing a few tips to help you keep your sanity and your marriage intact.



## Designate separate spaces

A few weeks ago, I was on a video conference call with my director when my husband strolled through the room wearing a T-shirt and boxers. In a move that would have made Usain Bolt proud, I made a mad dash to cover my webcam. I don't think my director noticed, but I was mortified.

My husband said he didn't realize I was on a video call. I have a naturally loud voice that carries (for miles). Plus, that day, I actually combed my hair and applied a liberal shade of red lipstick. So, I don't know how he didn't realize I was on a video call—but that's a story for another day.

My biggest tip for working remotely with your spouse is to set boundaries regarding space. Some things I recommend are:

- Utilize **separate rooms** with a door that can shut out distractions and ensure privacy. If necessary, post a *Do Not Disturb* sign on the door to minimize interruptions. Here's a clever one I found on [Etsy](#).
- If you don't have the luxury of separate offices, use a **folding room divider** (like the ones shown [here](#)). These work great for smaller spaces, studio apartments, or open floor plans.
- Share calendars and **respect schedules**. If you have a weekly Tuesday call with your project team, let your spouse know that you can't be interrupted during that time.

I've heard of people doing some insanely creative things to carve out a slice of privacy. One of my coworkers told me she had to take a conference call in her car just to get a little peace and quiet from her kids. Hey, whatever works!

## Use headsets/earbuds whenever possible



Another thing my husband likes to do (and I promise this is not a hubby-bashing post) is watch video tutorials on his laptop. While I can appreciate his quest for knowledge, I don't want to hear every word of the videos. And when we're in close quarters with both of us working remotely, I confess, I might be tempted to listen to his video while I'm supposed to be doing my own work! In some situations, both of us are viewing a video at the same time. As you can imagine, this cacophony can be quite disruptive.

Whether you're on a conference call or watching an online tutorial, be cognizant of how loud noises may affect other people. Use a headset or earbuds so you don't drive each other nuts. That way, you can crank up the volume without bothering the rest of the household.

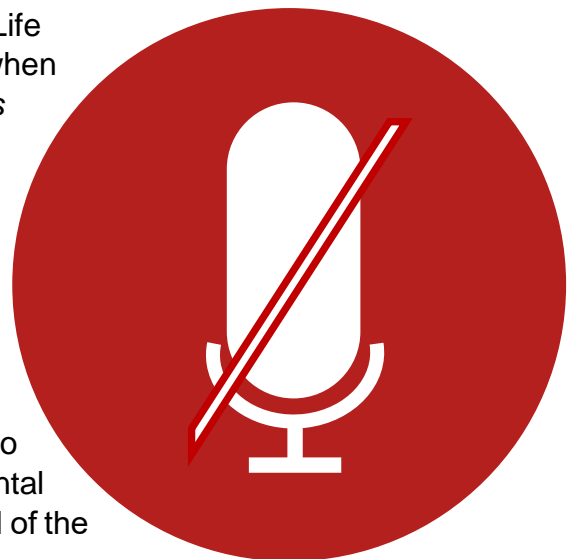
If you don't have a headset, check with your employer. Many companies will supply one because it's considered a work-related expense. Or if you'd rather buy your own, here's an approved list from [Consumer Reports](#).

## Embrace the Mute button

There are times when noise is simply unavoidable. Life happens. Kids run amuck. Smoke detectors go off when your teenagers are so busy watching *Fast & Furious* that they forgot they left a grill cheese sandwich cooking on the stove. Ahem, not that that has ever happened to me.

At any rate, you should always know where the mute button is located. Your phone, your computer, and most conferencing tools (Zoom, WebEx, Adobe Connect, etc.) have a mute button. I make it a general rule to keep myself on mute unless I have to speak. Not only does this avoid any accidental background noises on my end, but it's also respectful of the other attendees on the call.

There's nothing worse than hearing someone pecking on the keyboard, or whipping up a smoothie in the blender, or smacking gum in your ear while the presenter is talking. Don't be that person who contributes to the racket.



## **Give each other grace**

Even though working remotely together may seem stressful at times, try to focus on the positives. This virus won't last forever. Many states are already lifting their stay-at-home orders. In the meantime, you may never have another opportunity like this to spend time together. Some people don't have the luxury of working from home, so count your blessings.

And remember to cut each other some slack. Focus on creating good memories. My husband and I take walks together two to three times a week, and we try to eat lunch with each other as much as possible.

Working together is just like every other relationship in life: It's a series of compromises and being respectful of each other. If you keep these tips in mind, you might actually start looking forward to working remotely with your spouse during a pandemic—or any other time.