

Distance-Learning Tips for National DPP Sessions

If you are new to facilitating groups virtually, practice to get comfortable with the tools and techniques mentioned below. The more you are relaxed, reassuring and engaging, the easier it will be for your participants to participate. Remember, the most important communication is the communication between participants!

Acknowledge the Difference

Acknowledge that participating in an online/virtual discussion is different than participating in an in-person discussion. Just as you would speak to a group who was around a table, use that same tone of voice with participants around the virtual table!

- Reassure participants that it will get more comfortable each time
- Encourage participants to say their name before they speak - especially if they are not using their web cam

Remember these DTTAC Principles

- Lifestyle Coaches serve as a group facilitator, not an expert teacher
- Group participants offer each other support, ideas and problem solving

Include Ground Rules for Virtual Participation

In addition to your traditional group ground rules, discuss specific expectations for the virtual space to set the stage for an engaged conversation. See example DTTAC virtual group discussion guidelines below:

- *Be engaged in the conversation just as you would in person – no multi-tasking!*
- *We will use technology most accessible to everyone in the group*
- *I might call on you by name for ease*
- *State your name first when you speak*
- *Use the mute button to prevent background noise interference if you are not speaking*
- *Use the parking lot for questions off-topic or the next meeting*

Display Group Member Names

Have a participant list visible so that everyone can see who is participating. This is important whether or not web cams are being used!

Use Ice Breakers

Ice breakers are a great way to warm up participants to speaking out loud on a distance platform and helps to connect them. You could even consider assigning a participant to come up with the ice breaker question of the week. The following are a few examples of easy ice breaker questions: *"I will call your name and I want you to share..."*

- *A hobby that you have now or had in the past*
- *Your favorite season and why?*
- *If you could have any special talent (singing, specific athletic skills, sewing etc.) what would it be?*
- *One-word "hashtag" for how your week has been (Eg. #busy!)*
- *If you could have a superpower, what would it be and why?*

Display CDC Curriculum Handouts

Having the handouts on the screen helps to focus the conversation and ensures that everyone is being exposed to the session content. ****Be aware of your temptation to read handouts or to fall into presentation mode. Distance-learning does not mean lecture!***

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Take Breaks

Our focus on virtual meetings tends to last less than in-person meetings. Take quick stretching, energizing physical activity breaks every 20-30 minutes, such as marching in place, or low-impact exercise videos on YouTube.

Send a Follow up Message

A brief, concise follow-up email that summarizes the meeting and goals for the week is more vital in distance learning to maintain connectedness. If you are able to record meetings, you can also send the link to the recording to the group after the meeting.

Use Group Facilitation Techniques

Have 2-3 questions “on deck” to facilitate discussion if it slows due to the virtual nature of the class. Some other facilitation techniques you can use include:

Carousel: Lifestyle Coach asks a question that will elicit a short answer and asks the group to go around in a circle to respond.

Example: “We are going to go around our virtual room and share one idea you have for sneaking in physical activity around your home/where you live. Renee, could you get us started and we can go down our list of group member names from there.”

Open Ended Questions: Avoiding yes/no questions will elicit a richer response that you can “build” upon.

Ping Pong: Throwing a question or idea back to the group rather than answering directly as the Lifestyle Coach.

Example: “...Dawn indicated that she is looking for physical activity options that she can do at home and that does not hurt her knees. Group, what are some ideas we can offer to Dawn to consider?”

Cross Questioning: Directing one participant’s question to another person in the virtual room.

Example: “Gary, you shared with the group that you have experienced knee pain, what type of activities have you found that do not bother your knee?”

Reflections and Summaries: Providing a summary statement, reflect what you have heard someone in the group say. Reflections and summaries help make connections between two participants or between the conversation and the CDC curriculum content

Example: “Pat, you’re not buying the chips that you usually have in the house reminds me of what we talked about in our session on food triggers! You intentionally removed a food cue from your environment!”

Silence: Resisting the temptation to answer a question immediately or to fill the silence after you have asked a question. Resisting the temptation to answer all of the questions is even harder in a virtual space.

*Example: “I’m going to ask everyone a question, and then I’ll be quiet and give you a minute to think to yourself about your response. What is an example of something that triggers you to eat when you didn’t intend to or eat more than you planned? **Pause for 5 seconds or so...** Ok, who has an example of a food trigger to share?”*

If no one speaks up, use humor when silence feels awkward:

- *“I sure know how to silence a room! Let me see if I can ask that a different way...”*