



Working with Group Dynamics

- Consider the number of people who you feel comfortable having in a virtual meeting. There is no hard and fast rule. However, having more people than you are able to see on one screen will make it more difficult to have an effective experience.
- Create an atmosphere where everything is an invitation, using inclusive language.
- Greet people by name as they enter the space.
- Read the guidelines at the beginning of each meeting. This allows you to reference them if you need to intervene during the group.
- Use round robin for introductions or other topics where everyone will have a chance to speak and then call on people in order of how they appear on your screen.
- Model meaningful participation and virtual etiquette.
- Give the group time. It may take time for the group to bond as their only time together is in the virtual meeting. Think of creative ways to help the group members get to know each other.
- Develop methods to provide space for everyone. Zoom allows there to be one conversation. There is no ability to have side conversations. Though this helps keep people tuned to the group conversation, it can also mean that those who are more vocal may dominate the conversation. You will not be able to pick up on someone sighing or showing other signs of irritation or desire to speak. Pay attention to who speaks first and often. Create space for everyone to speak by occasionally saying such things as "Let's pause here and invite those who haven't spoken share their thoughts."
- Watch for people who unmute themselves. This can be a clear indication that they want to speak. You can invite them directly into the conversation.
- Use Zoom tools or hands to gain consensus. There may be times that you want to get group consensus. It may not be as easy as looking for nodding heads. Ask for everyone to use the Zoom thumbs up or down to "vote" or ask members to put up their actual thumbs.
- Help the group refrain from giving advice. This is not unique to virtual groups but bears repeating. Advice giving can be detrimental to the structure of the group.
- Gently help the conversation stay on the topic of grief.
- Help members with reading the group. It can be hard for the participants to read body language and to know when people are finished speaking. Provide space for those who need an extra moment of silence to gather their thoughts or feelings before they continue. Use encouraging statements that also help the group know to wait such as "John, take your time ... we are all here for you and will wait till you are ready" or "Just a minute, Jane, let's make sure John has a chance to finish what he was saying."
- Avoid asking the group broad questions without guiding the conversation. If you ask the group "How is everyone today?" there will likely be silence followed by several voices chiming in. Instead, guide the conversation with something like "Let's check in with each other. Who would like to go first?" And then look for hands or other ways people indicate that they want to speak.
- Encourage members to articulate their needs to the group or to the facilitators.
- Invite participants who may feel unsettled or have lingering emotions that they would like to talk about to stay behind or to contact facilitators separately.
- Consider using a check-out right before a closing ritual or reading. This may help ease members out of the group and into their lives.
- Let your personality shine. The group should begin to get a good sense of who you are as a person and you can trust your instincts as a facilitator.