

Hosting a Video Conference

Tips for Support Group Leaders

We're all trying to adjust to video conferencing. Whether for support groups, appointments with doctors and therapist, or as a way to see your friends and family, we're lucky to have this technology. But using it can be tricky, especially for people with brain injury who may struggle with processing delays, speech impairments, solving problems and being flexible. This tip sheet is designed to provide hints and reminders about how to make the most out of your meetings.



Meeting Technology

- Practice with whatever technology you use. Practice, practice, practice. The more familiar you are with it, the better prepared you will be to troubleshoot any technical issues that come up. They will arise because no technology is perfect.
- Offer to help test/practice the technology. Send a link to the platform's instructions for reference – most platforms offer this. Encourage participants to review this information in advance to help them feel more comfortable.
- Whatever platform you use, send participants simple, clear instructions for accessing and participating in the meeting including date and start/end time. E.g. review the bottom of your screen and click on the red microphone icon to mute or unmute yourself. Click on the video icon to start your video camera.
- If possible, appoint someone as your tech back up – one person is the meeting facilitator, one person is tech support – troubleshooting, etc.



Getting Started

- Provide an opportunity for everyone to introduce themselves verbally, and call on them one by one so they know who goes next. Give them some guidance about what to say. i.e., name, whether they are someone with a BI, or a family member and one other item, such as if this is their first time in an online meeting, a word to describe their mood.
- Ask people to mute their microphone if they're not speaking.
- Before the end of the group, ask if people came with something they hoped to get support for. If any urgent needs arise, save other topics for the future.



Holding the Meeting

- Show and review the group's ground rules, and remind participants about them when you need to. For example, if someone appears to not be focusing on the group, make a general statement such as "There may be other things getting your attention right now, so remember one of our ground rules is staying present in the group while we're together."
- Be prepared for some uncomfortable silence after asking a question; sometimes people forget they're muted.
- Remind and encourage people who are shy about speaking to use the chat box if they have something to say or ask, and make sure to monitor the chat box.



Wrapping It Up

- Summarize the topics that were discussed and alternatives that were chosen. Highlight any positive observations or solutions that came up.
- Ask those who have been quiet if they have any thoughts or observations to offer the group. Sometimes all it takes is an invitation to speak, but participation is voluntary and everyone can choose to just listen.
- Before everyone leaves, offer a way to bring the group to closure. You might ask everyone to say a word or something they are feeling about attending the group. Be sure to invite people to come back and give the dates/times for next meeting.



Facilitator Tips

- Keep the phone number and access for the meeting handy, in case you need to call in because of poor audio quality or an unstable internet connection. If you call in while staying on the computer video, turn your computer 'speakers' off. This is different choosing 'mute'. If you're on both the computer and the phone there will be a loud echo that will make it impossible for people to hear each other.
- As people introduce themselves, write down the name that goes with the identifier that is showing on the screen, since these might be phone numbers or something other than a name. This will you use people's names and facilitate everyone getting a chance to speak.
- If too many people are try speaking at the same time, mute all and ask people to raise their hand (virtually or by waving their hand) and unmute them one by one. Tell the members you are doing this.