



Best Practices to Reduce Trauma and Fatigue in Zoom

Zoom, Skype, Microsoft Teams and other online synchronous and asynchronous work platforms are becoming more normalized as we move our work and classes online due to the ongoing pandemic. It is important to be intentional in our choices when making this change and take into consideration the advantages and limitations of the technology. This guide was designed to help improve the online experience for yourself, your co-workers, students, and the communities we are forming.

Embrace, and Design For, the Technology

The technology used will change how your class or meeting is run. Embrace the change and don't just try to place your current in-person content online.

- Engage people across a variety of methodologies the platform offers.
- Adjust your goals and objectives for the time. Focus on one to two of the most important goals and cut the rest down.
- Spend time on building community. This is important to learning as well as mental health of participants.
- Have someone always available to help with the technology, let others know where to find support.
- Where possible, have a producer on hand to handle in the moment technology issues that occur. They can also help run polls, chat, and other functions.
- Where possible, cut the time for meetings down to avoid fatigue and trauma response.
- Consider implementing 45-minute meetings that block the entire hour but start 5 minutes after the posted time and end 10 minutes before the end.
- Practice integrating pre-work as routine.
- Read aloud what people are typing into chat. If a private chat to you, you can read aloud without a name attached.

Ground Meetings/Classes in a Clear and Consistent Format

Setting a regular format and rituals for your class and meetings grounds people in the familiar and can help decrease some of the anxiety of online meetings.

- Have clear goals, objectives, and an agenda for each class/meeting made visible to all participants and provided ahead of time.
- Have clear rules for your sessions such as muting everyone who comes in, use of cameras, how to make a comment and add to the conversation (whether that is calling on someone or open dialogue).
- Have a clear opening, middle, and ending.

- Open with a connectivity or community building exercise. This can include a breathing or meditation exercise, dancing, sharing a positive event of the week, sharing of personal item or pets, or other connection exercise. In large groups, you can rotate who leads the exercise or shares each session.
- Have a consistent ending to the meeting – this can be sharing a quote (or rotating who will share a quote for the session), a phrase all say at the end, putting on a song to ‘play people out’ or other action. In large classes and meetings, you can rotate who closes the session.

Plan to Mitigate the Inequities Online Environments Highlight and Increase

Zoom has been shown to increase inequities in populations already marginalized in our society.

To help mitigate the effect, we recommend the following:

- Don't require cameras (they can show inequities in living situations people may not wish to share). If using cameras is important allow the use of backgrounds and allow flexibility for those who still cannot keep the camera on.
- Engage people in multiple ways (polls, chat, dialogue, question and answer).
- Don't always go with the first raised hand, work on inviting all voices to participate.
- If minutes are taken, change who takes minutes each session.
- Have notes visible during the lesson for those who may need them.
- Use accessible technology or the accessibility options for the platform you're using.
- Where possible, have someone else whose role is to check chat and other features to ensure all voices are being heard and amplify those who are using chat or less visible aspects of the technology.
- Ask people what they need!
- Acknowledge the humanness of the situation, that there will be bumps everyone will experience, including yourself.
- Limit interruptions but be prepared for them to happen. It's fair to ask people to not look at their phones during the session, but women are often the main caretakers for

their families and with children at home. When living in small apartments and homes, certain groups will have more interruptions. Acknowledge that they may happen, and it's okay when we're trying to juggle all our domains in one physical space.

Zoom Increases the Trauma Response and Fatigue, Plan for It

Zoom increases the trauma response, putting people into a state of dysregulation. We are used to social cues from a variety of sources in our classes and meetings to regulate how we are being received by a social group and our place in it. When we only see faces and these are not looking directly at us, our body goes into dysregulation and we maintain a low-level trauma response. Technical glitches such as voice and lips being unsynchronized, frozen images, and other items also compound this dysregulation. People who have been bullied or exploited in an online environment who suddenly find themselves constantly in one may also be re-traumatized. Staring at the screen intently for so long causes eye strain and fatigue. Together, this can lead to disassociation, headaches, tiredness, irritability, and a variety of other symptoms. Below are recommendations to address these issues:

- Have clear goals, objectives and an agenda for each class/meeting made visible to all participants.
- Increase body movement and visibility – through exercises throughout the session or in the opening.
- Incorporate breathing and stretching into the practices and format of your sessions.
- Take breaks. Take more than you think you might need – this can be a few seconds away from the screen, or by having people write on paper to the side or increased general use breaks.
- Follow the 20-20-20 rule. Every twenty minutes look at something 20 feet away for 20 seconds. This helps decrease eye strain and allows the eyes a chance to relax.
- Check-In! Plan time to check-in with everyone and follow-up with people. This can be as simple as asking where someone is on a scale of 1-10 (and following up 1:1 with those who score themselves low)

- Check-In throughout the session to see where engagement is lagging. You can use polls, emojis, chat, or just look at who is more active on the screen.
- Don't have fans (ceiling or otherwise) on and/or visible in the screen. They lead to digital sickness and increase data usage. Where possible, encourage people to stabilize their laptops to decrease movement and 'jumpiness' on their screen.

Be Open About Your Experiences, and Embrace Humanity

Times have been stressful for all of us. We are in the middle of a worldwide pandemic and racial pandemic within the United States. 2020 has become a punchline to dark jokes for many and 2021 is proving no better. Jobs have been lost and lives destabilized.

- Express how you are feeling and give time for others to do the same.
- Give room for grief and loss.
- Acknowledge that stress decreases attention spans, and we're all stressed now.
- Acknowledge and embrace the ambiguity we are all living in and lean into the uncomfortableness.
- Include time to share pets, or to show images of cute animals. Looking at a cute animal for thirty seconds relaxes an individual, releases endorphins, and increases focus.
- Include time to share the good, and the bad that is happening.
- Reexamine deadlines and extend where you can.
- Acknowledge that we are feeling a range of emotions, and that none are good or bad, they are there to let us know how we are reacting to and receiving events in our world and lives.
- Validate the lived experiences of everyone in the room. Do not deny someone's reality (for example, if someone says they are stressed about something, don't say you don't get why people let little things like that stress them out or that everyone is stressed).
- Reach out to campus resources for support and encourage staff and students to do the same.

Diversity & Inclusion Educational Workshop Checklist

(ZoomEngagement)

Below are a list of items considered best practices to include in education/trainings, and some are specifically for synchronous online trainings, such as those done on Zoom. We ask you to use this worksheet to build your programming, and in updating programming for the online environment.

ITEMS THAT MUST BE IN ALL TRAININGS:

Category	Item	Included in Training (Y/N)
Pre-Session	The agenda/outline is clear and provided ahead of time	
Introduction	There is an introductory participatory activity. (introduce self in chat, opening question, breathing, exercise, ice breaker, etc.)	
Introduction	The expectations/rules of engagement are discussed in the beginning of the session	
Introduction	Land Acknowledgement is present and read aloud	
Curriculum	Objectives are clear and at the beginning of the session	
Curriculum	Objectives are at the appropriate learning level for the educational session/workshop	
Curriculum	Material is appropriate for the participant level (or mixed participant level)	
Engagement	There are pair/share and small group discussions	
Engagement	There is a 10 minute break every hour (50 minutes learning, 10 minutes break)	
Engagement	There is time for large group discussion	

Engagement	There is a participant guide/supporting materials that are actively used in the session	
Engagement	There is dedicated time for questions	
Engagement	There is time for reflection by participants DURING the session	
Engagement	There are multiple ways to join the conversation (chat, in person, sending to leader, white board/annotation)	
Group Dynamics	Breakout room timing takes into account length of time to GET into breakout room	
Timing	There is a break from the screen every 20 minutes (can be group talk, writing on paper to the side, quick stretch, breathing)	
Timing	The material is appropriate for the length of time (not overloaded with slides that you skip routinely at the end)	
Timing	There is a clear closing to the workshop (quote, music, etc.)	

ITEMS RECOMMENDED FOR ALL TRAININGS:

Category	Item	Included in Training (Y/N)
Pre-Session	There is Pre-Work	
Introduction	Reaction tools are discussed and part of the training/activity	
Engagement	Improv or Role-play is utilized	
Engagement	There is time to read aloud/participants read aloud during the session	
Engagement	Case studies/Scenarios and/or Problem Based Learning is used	
Engagement	Participants co-lead or present during the training	
Engagement	There are projects begun/completed in the training	
Engagement	There are polls	
Engagement	Whiteboard is used	
Engagement	Annotations are used	

Group Dynamics	If department leadership is in the same session as their departments (for open enrollment or non-department specific training) they are not in the same breakout rooms as their departments	
Ending	Participants have time at the end of session to write down their goals/something they learned this session	
Ending	participants are given materials/suggestions for next steps	

References

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