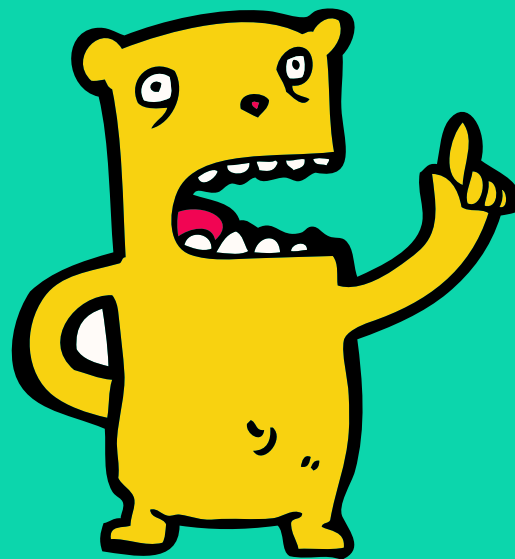


# DEMYSTIFYING DEATH WEEK



## HOSTING A DIGITAL EVENT



10-16 MAY 2021

#DEMYSTIFYDEATH

## **HOSTING A DIGITAL EVENT**

For many of us, gathering together online feel less intuitive than meeting up face-to-face.

However, holding an event online can be more than a chance to impart information – it can also be a chance for participants to build a sense of connection with others, share their own experiences and learn from the experiences of others.

## **IDEAS, TIPS AND TECHNIQUES**

By setting a friendly and respectful tone, establishing ground rules, keeping conversation flowing or bringing it to a close, and maintaining an awareness of how individuals are responding to the discussions, facilitators can create a safe, accessible and welcoming space for everyone.

This booklet brings together some ideas, tips and techniques that might be of use if you're thinking of hosting an online event.



### **PLANNING A DIGITAL EVENT**



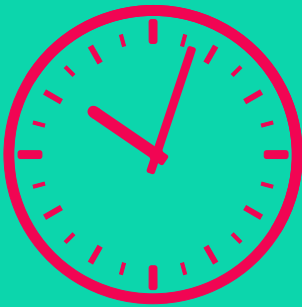
### **FACILITATION SKILLS**



### **RESPONDING TO ISSUES**

## PLANNING A DIGITAL EVENT

### HOW LONG SHOULD YOUR EVENT BE?



Online events tend to be shorter than face-to-face events, and most people find 50-90 minutes a good length of time for an online meetup. People seem to find video-conferencing more tiring than meeting in person, and attention spans are generally shorter.

If you have a lot of material to get through, rather than organising one long event, you could break your event up into a series of shorter events.

Many people find that addressing a large group over Zoom is uncomfortable, and that conversation in large groups can be stilted, or dominated by one or two individuals.

You may therefore wish to plan in time for smaller group discussions, using breakout rooms of 4 or 5 people. This can help facilitate a more natural and relaxed discussion.

### USING BREAKOUT ROOMS



## PLANNING A DIGITAL EVENT

### AVOIDING TECHNICAL HITCHES

Most people worry about there being technical hitches during their online event.

It can help to have at least two people involved in the meeting - one person to welcome people and do the talking, and another person to deal with technical matters.

You may also want to have someone who's job it is to keep an eye on any comments raised in the chat.

Prior to your event, you may wish to practice:

- Sharing your screen
- Sharing video (you need to make sure you have the settings right, or people won't be able to hear the video sound)
- Administering breakout rooms.
- Using the chat function for private and group messages.



## PLANNING A DIGITAL EVENT

### CREATING A SAFE SPACE FOR DISCUSSION



A 'safe space agreement' is a list of informal rules that will help to create an environment where everyone feels comfortable and included. You can share this with participants at the start of your event.

PERSONAL  
STORIES  
STAY IN THE  
GROUP

THERE'S NO  
PRESSURE  
ON ANYONE  
TO SHARE.

IF YOU NEED  
A MOMENT,  
TURN OFF  
YOUR VIDEO

TRY NOT TO  
LOOK AT  
YOUR PHONE  
OR CHECK  
EMAILS

EVERYONE  
IS  
WELCOME  
TO SHARE

IT IS OK TO  
FEEL  
EMOTIONAL  
OR UPSET

LISTEN TO  
EACH OTHER

## PLANNING A DIGITAL EVENT

### LOOKING AFTER YOURSELF



No matter how experienced you may be, facilitating events where sensitive matters are discussed can bring up unexpected emotions and stress.

It's important that you take time to look after yourself, to recognise that the event may bring up things that affect you, and that you think about what may help you to manage that.

This is different for everyone and could be going for a walk, doing some yoga, writing in a journal, having a cup of tea or doing something creative; or something completely different that works for you.



## FACILITATION SKILLS

### TIMING AND PACE



Depending on the format of your event, it may be important to keep an eye on time, and to feel confident moving discussions on so that participants are getting the most out of the session.

Maintaining a steady pace, planning ahead with rough timings per topic, and establishing how the sessions will work will all help to ensure a good pace and that no-one feels rushed or that too long is spent on particular areas.

Having a facilitator or facilitators to guide discussion can help with the timing and pace, make sure that everyone feels included and listened to, and avoid having overly dominant voices in a group.

Setting up your safe space agreement at the start will help with this.

### GUIDING DISCUSSION



## FACILITATION SKILLS

### SUMMARISING



Giving a quick summary of what you think someone has said can help consolidate your understanding and can also help to bring other participants into the discussion, or to move the discussion on (eg. “That’s a really interesting point, Joe – what you’re saying is [summarised point]. Does anyone else in the group have a similar experience they’d like to share at this point?”). If it’s a key point, writing this on a flipchart or virtual equivalent can be helpful so the whole group has a visual reference.

To actively listen we need to suspend our own thought processes to really hear what someone is saying. This helps us avoid making assumptions, projecting our own experiences and feelings, or daydreaming; instead, we focus on hearing and understanding someone’s story and what that means for them.

### ACTIVE LISTENING





## FACILITATION SKILLS

ENTHUSIASM,  
INTEREST,  
POSITIVITY



It's important that participants know that the host wants to be there and is interested in and enthusiastic about the topic.

There is no one way to do this – you just need to be yourself and bring your own personality to your event.

Though it is good to try to maintain a positive energy, when dealing with end-of-life issues and often with direct personal experiences, many different emotions, such as sadness or anger, can surface. This is okay!

The facilitators' role here is to help to balance the emotions, and this means allowing room for the negative ones.

You may have times when you feel sad or upset, and this is okay too. By being open about this and by discussing the positive and the negatives of situations, you are allowing others the space to be open about their feelings.

## FACILITATION SKILLS

### INCLUDING EVERYONE



Not everyone feels comfortable speaking in a group and it may take some people longer than others to feel able to contribute.

The host should try to be aware of who is contributing and how much and make the effort to create space for everyone to speak, should they want to.

Quieter participants may not always take this space right away, but it's important to keep it there for them throughout.

People will have different experiences, different feelings and different perspectives.

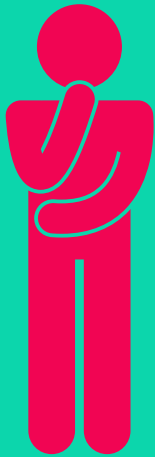
It is important for facilitators to acknowledge this while maintaining group cohesion.

### ACKNOWLEDGING DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES



## FACILITATION SKILLS

### READING BODY LANGUAGE



During group discussions via Zoom, it will be important to keep an eye on participants' body language and expressions.

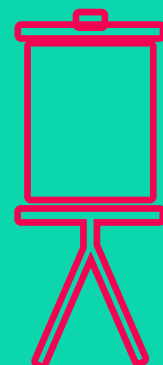
On a screen, it becomes obvious when someone is looking at something else, like a phone or a different window on their screen; this may be because they're feeling upset and need a distraction, or they are bored.

You can check in with them at an appropriate point, or you can send a private message through the chat.

If your event is discussion-based, creating a 'parking space' might be helpful – somewhere facilitators can park discussion points that have come up, but that you don't have time to explore fully at that moment.

This allows the group to acknowledge an important point, and move on to the next issue.

### PARKING IMPORTANT POINTS



## RESPONDING TO ISSUES

### DOMINANT PARTICIPANT



People can dominate in different ways – being talkative, being overly kind, always having advice. Often it's coming from a place of anxiety, or perhaps the person is trying to be helpful by contributing.

However, dominant people can do this at the expense of others, so it's important for facilitators to manage it sensitively.

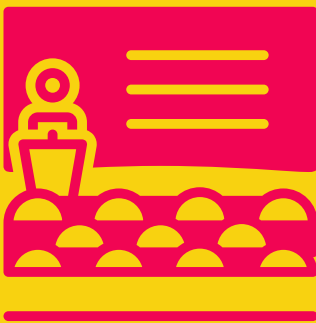
Having your safe space agreement and your parking space will help with this.

It can also help to not offer further response to the person speaking; and it is perfectly acceptable to interrupt someone, and move things on or invite others to join in.

You could also share something new on the screen to move things along.

## RESPONDING TO ISSUES

### LOW NUMBERS



You may find that the number of people at your event is lower than you had expected.

It might help to be open about this, and talk about your options.

You could suggest making the session shorter, so participants don't feel pressure to fill the time. Ask them what works for them.

The host may need to talk more than they would usually – it is good to have something extra ready to share if you need it.

Don't feel you have to stick religiously to the planned format or the time – it's more important to make it a positive experience for the participants there.

## RESPONDING TO ISSUES

### IF SOMEONE GETS UPSET



Emotions like sadness or anger may come to the surface.

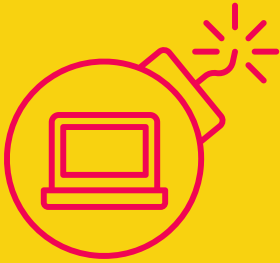
It is important that any distress is not ignored, and that people feel that they are in a safe and non-judgmental space.

You will have covered this with your safe space agreement, and all participants should know that it's okay to be upset, and that they have the option of turning their camera off or stepping away for a moment if they feel the need to.

If you are concerned you could check in directly with them and ask if they need a break or to have a private chat.

## RESPONDING TO ISSUES

### ZOOM PROBLEMS



Some issues may arise that are specific to online meetings:

- You don't have the same eye contact as you would in person.
- There is often a time lag, which can lead to interruptions or awkward silences.
- Not knowing who's going to speak first.

It is a good idea to acknowledge this at the start, so everyone knows that these are issues and it's not just them - and you could see if the group has ideas as to how to deal with these types of issues too. What would help them feel more comfortable?

To avoid interruptions and long waits you could come up with a method for people showing they'd like to contribute, for example raising their hand.

It's never going to be perfect but being open about it and introducing a bit of humour and creativity will help.