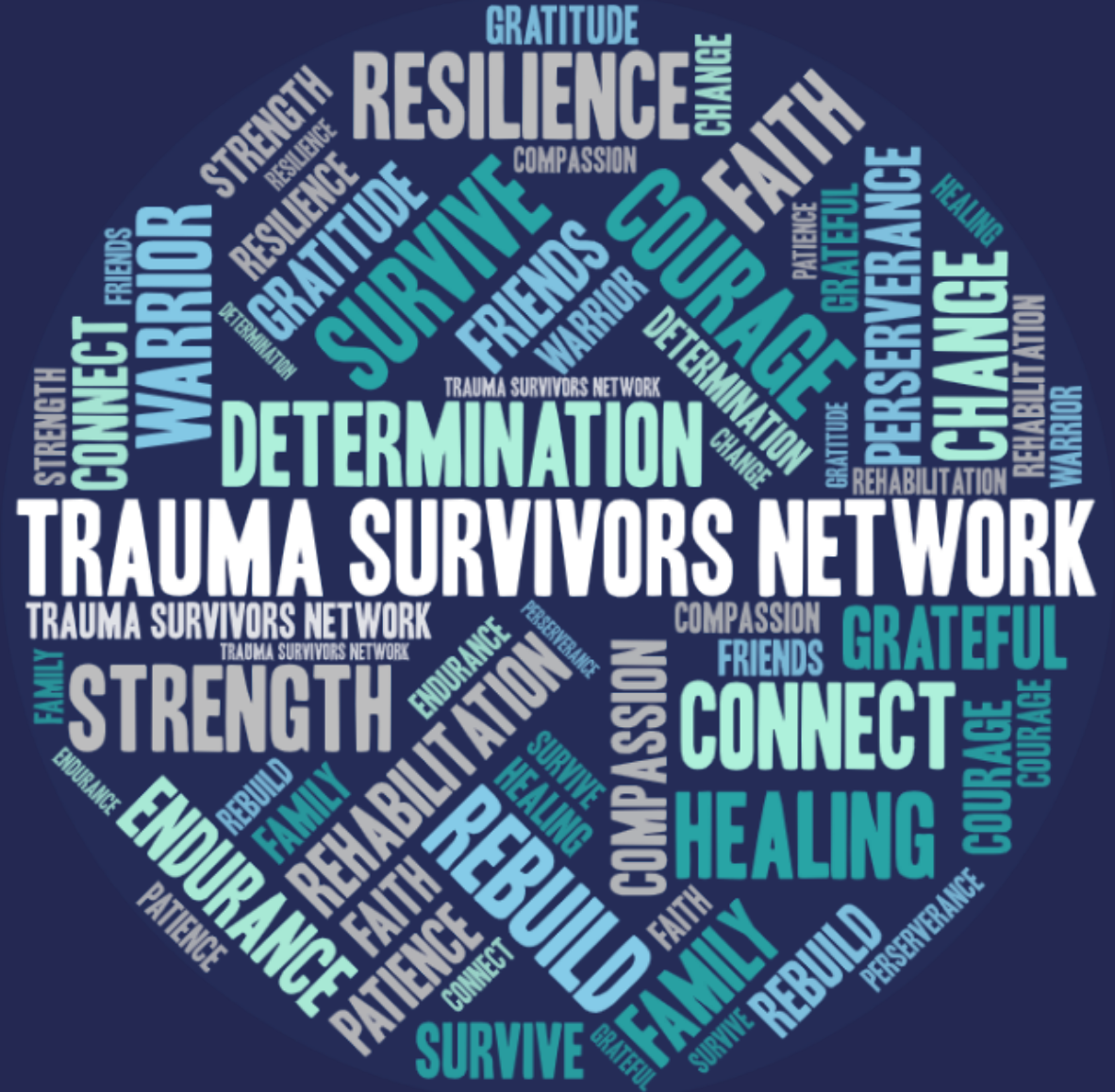# TIPS AND TRICKS FOR HOSTING VIRTUAL SUPPORT GROUPS

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PRESENTED BY

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YES OR NO:
I HAD AN IN-PERSON
SUPPORT GROUP RUNNING
PRIOR TO COVID

YES OR NO:
I HAVE PRIOR EXPERIENCE
RUNNING SUPPORT GROUPS

YES OR NO:
I HAVE UTILIZED VIRTUAL
TSN SERVICES AT MY SITE

OBJECTIVES

- "Legal, Privacy, Confidentiality, oh my!"

- "I'm working from home, how can I recruit patients AND not put more work on trauma staff?"

- "How do I distribute the call-in information wisely?"

- "How will I manage running the group and help people with technology issues?"

- "How do I make a warm safe place through the internet?"

- "If I'm looking at a screen with tons of people, how can I pay attention and respond appropriately to social context and body language?"

- "If someone expresses thoughts of harm to self or harm to others, what do I do?
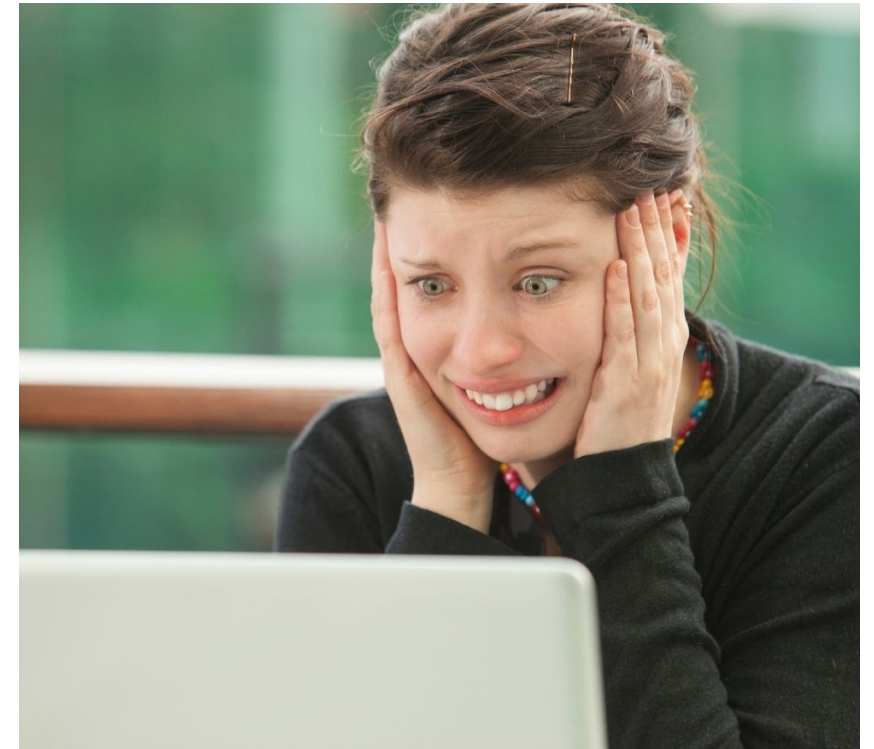
OBJECTIVES

1. Getting the word out!

2. Virtual Meeting Platform and Maintaining Privacy and Confidentiality

3. Tips and Tricks for Facilitating Support Groups

GET THE WORD OUT

Discharge Planning
- Handouts and brochures
- TSN information added to discharge instructions
- Ask patients for contact info to send TSN invites

Outpatient Clinics/Rehabilitation Centers
- Recognize patients that are a good fit for TSN services
- Develop a plan to refer patients to TSN program
- Advertise! (bulletin boards, brochures, posters)

Collaborating with Trauma Registrar
- Develop criteria to obtain contact information (LOS, discharge disposition, etc.)
- Email blasts or Mass Mailing

VIRTUAL PLATFORMS

Find a secure platform
- Most hospitals have secure meeting rooms
- Test it out!

Legal concerns
- Does your hospital require consent for participation?
- Do you need to develop a disclosure?
- Safety!

The Sign-up process
- Develop a strategy to screen attendees prior to passing out call-in information
- Collect information for attendees prior to joining group (name, mechanism of injury, email and city and state)

WHAT'S THE SAME?

In general, **basic rules of etiquette** that promote a safe, respectful and supportive group environment during in-person meetings **apply equally** in online settings. These include:

- Punctuality

- Civility and avoidance of profanity

- Sharing while being mindful of time and others' need to share

- Avoid interruptions: set up in a quiet, private space

- Dress as you would for an in-person meeting

- Avoid distractions: checking email, texts or having other screens, windows or browsers open while engaged in live online support groups decreases the benefit to all. Silence mobile devices.

WHAT'S NEW?

The virtual platform introduces new challenges and justifies the establishment of **new group agreements** and guidelines to address this new environment. Consider these topics:

- **Privacy**

- **Engagement**

- **Respect**

- **Distractions**

FACILITATOR ROLE – NEW TASKS AND CHALLENGES

Need for Tech Assistance

- Participants need to be oriented to technology
- Participants may show up promptly, but have difficulty "settling in" with tech glitches

Difficulty "Reading the Room"

- Managing *technology* AND *process* AND *emotions*: tracking non-verbal communication on tiny screen requires different attention
- Remembering who has spoken uses a different part of our brain – this is no longer positionally constant.

Screen Fatigue

- Heightened awareness of own presentation (smiling/focusing/attending) is more tiresome for many
- Facilitator is more active than with in-person groups

SUGGESTIONS TO MEET CHALLENGES

Start with Re-contracting

- If meeting virtually is new for your previously-established group, take time to review "What's NEW" with the group and agree on group guidelines that promote privacy, engagement, and respect, and limit distractions.

Get Help

- Assign a tech manager: teaching tech, monitoring chats, organizing breakout rooms. This could be a tech-savvy participant.

- Assign note taker to track who has spoken – type this into the Chat function

- Bring along a co-facilitator to focus on visual emotional cues who is comfortable "observing the observable."

SUGGESTIONS TO MEET CHALLENGES

Prepare More

- Prepare agenda to add structure to chaos
- Schedule breaks and breakout room activities

Engage More

- In a regular support group, you strive to be peripheral to the discussion. In the virtual space, you need to be "in the middle" of the discussion. Call on people to unmute and engage, rather than having people talk over each other.
- Before the group starts, ask everyone to rename themselves with the name they want you to use in ALL CAPS.
- Mute participants if their background noise becomes problematic.
- Participants may not realize they are being distracting, or are poorly positioned: engage them early and often to:
  - 1) model the agreements you have made with each other
  - 2) minimize disruption
  - 3) re-engage the group and disruptive participant.

SUGGESTIONS TO MEET CHALLENGES

Work it Out Together

- Encourage group input to identify best practices for zoom meetings: when we feel overly responsible for making the group successful, we take away the group's ownership of and responsibility for its own success.

Limit the Group Size/Plan for Set Up Time

- One benefit of online groups is accessibility – you may have more people signing up. Keep your group to 8-10 participants if you can.

- Ask participants to sign on 5-10 minutes before the group starts to work out tech issues.

SUGGESTIONS TO MEET CHALLENGES

Try these activities

- Introduce a go-round, "What helps you stay present in this format?" Repeat this from time to time – it may change.

- For the opening go-round, call on people (based on who you see on your screen) rather than waiting for people to raise their hand.

- Consider a visual icebreaker.

- Use the Chat Function to encourage shy people to engage: pose a question and ask everyone in the group to redirect their attention to the Chat answer the question.

- Online game: Everyone turns off their cameras. Facilitator calls out prompt; participants meeting prompt category turn on the camera. Follow this with discussion of the more relevant examples. Here is an examples:

  - Everyone who has a dog, turn on your camera!

Q & A