

ZOOM guidance for meeting hosts

It's really hard to run a meeting without a host. Good hosting is the key to an effective and enjoyable meeting for everyone.

At large meetings it can help to have a 'co-pilot' to support you, to take note of any action points, and to keep an eye out for anyone who needs support.

At most meetings though, you will be the only host.

Starting off

Before you start - remind everyone to mute their microphone. This cuts down on background noise which can become very intrusive and disorienting. The larger the group the more important this is.

Introduce yourself if there are people who don't know you, or who might need reminding who you are. At the same time you should explain what the meeting is about, unless it is a regular meeting and everyone has been before. (...and sometimes even then)

At a new meeting, or if new people join, you'll also need to remind people of the key rules of the meeting:

- Take turns to speak as instructed by the facilitator.
- Respect each other and each other's viewpoints.

Anyone agreeing to these rules is welcome at the meeting. The implication here is that anyone who can't agree, or who breaks the rules may be asked to leave the meeting. You might want to avoid pointing this out unless you have to.

You will find a short list of 'rules' agreed with people with dementia at the end of this guide.

Introductions

If there are people at the meeting who don't know each other, then allow time for introductions.

For informal meetings like our Dementia Diarists meeting, we always go round asking people how they are getting on. By asking "Steve - how are you doing this week?" it not only gives Steve a chance to update us, but also reminds everyone that this is Steve.

During the meeting

Taking turns to speak

We encourage people to use their yellow 'I want to speak cards' as they are bright and visible. Anything bright and visible to the facilitator will do.

Facilitators should keep paper and pen handy to make a note of who wants to speak and stick to the running order where possible....

.....BUT you might want to vary this if:

-someone has problems 'holding that thought' and routinely forgets if they wait for too long. The better you know people the more you will tune into this, and in our experience other participants are usually happy to give way. It can be a delicate balance though and you will need to make sure that it isn't too disruptive.
-someone makes it clear that they are wanting to respond to what a speaker is saying (rather than introduce a new point). Waving their 'I want to speak' card wildly has become the accepted way of communicating this at the Dementia Diarists meetings.

Again there is a balance to be struck here. By not allowing people to cut the line to respond, you risk a dislocated discussion with someone coming back to a previous conversation that some will struggle to recall. By allowing it too much, or if people use it to introduce their own new point then you risk a free-for all.

The better you know the participants, the easier this will be for you.

Moving from topic to topic

In informal meetings like the Dementia Diarists ZOOM, we usually have no agenda. Asking people about their week generally throws up plenty to talk about.

This can mean that we cover quite a few topics in one meeting. Try to make sure that before you move on from one topic to the next, you ask if everyone has anything they want to say.

Dealing with strong emotions and conflict

The vast majority of meetings are perfectly friendly and civil. In fact, most are enormous fun.

But there can be times when tricky subjects are broached, and this can give rise to strong emotions.

This can be difficult for the person experiencing the emotions and for other participants.

This doesn't mean that tricky subjects should be avoided. Far from it. But it might mean that we have to take steps to make sure that the meeting remains a safe and comfortable place for everyone.

Here are some thoughts on this:

- If, before the meeting, you know that a subject is coming up that a particular participant might find difficult, then raise it with them. Agree how best to support them and what should be done if they experience a strong reaction. This can include leaving the meeting for a short time to have a cuppa and take stock.
- If you know that the meeting is going to touch on tricky subjects, then it is worth considering a 'co-pilot' to support participants who might be struggling. This can be done via the CHAT function.
- Strong opinions forcefully expressed are welcomed, However, there is a point at which this can tip over into disrespectful behaviour toward other participants. Again, this is a careful balance to maintain, and the facilitator will need to be looking out for the other participants whilst simultaneously supporting the speaker to have their say.

BUT - there may come a point when a speaker has to be asked to desist from a certain approach. This can be done initially over CHAT, but you may have to mute the speaker and ask them to stop. If it happens again, then its a yellow card. After that, the person should be blocked for the duration of the meeting, or for a cooling-off period.

If this happens - you will need to check in both with the other participants there and then - and with the participant who has left as soon as you can after the meeting. (or there and then if you have a co- pilot)

- If people have been upset by what has been discussed, do check up on them after the meeting to make sure they are OK.

At the end of the meeting

Make sure that you give warning 5 or 10 minutes before the end - this gives people a chance to get ready to disengage, rather than being left hanging.

Always, always make sure you stay on until the last person has gone.

Any one who has presented during a more formal meeting, or who has co-facilitated should be offered a de-brief.

Then breathe - if you were doing your job properly then that will have been really hard work, Even very casual meetings can be exhausting.