

Digital Best Practices



BASICS TO MEETING DIGITALLY

COMMUNICATION

- Communicate with your group early and often.
- Send weekly emails or text reminders regarding group meetings, and let your group know you are there for them.
- Turn off any potential distractions ahead of time, so you can be fully engaged.
- Check in with your individual group members often. Ask: How are you doing? How is the digital format working? How can I pray for you? How can I help?
- Utilize a chat app as well like GroupMe or WhatsApp to keep the communication and encouragement going between Group Meetings.

BEST SOUND

- Since background noise can cause feedback and static noise on your call, ask group members to mute themselves when they are not talking to eliminate feedback.
- Everyone wearing headphones helps people sound their best as well. Encourage all to utilize headphones while on the call.
- If you have others in the home (e.g., roommate or spouse) who are not in the group, please consider using headphones to maintain confidentiality.
- Inform the group members that in order to keep conversation as clear as possible, that you will be using the mute and unmute feature while others are talking. Stating this prior to each call is respectful and courteous.

BEST VIDEO

- Download the video-conferencing platform you chose ahead of time and test it to become familiar with it.
- To ensure the integrity and safety of your digital group, please make your meeting links password protected, create a waiting room, or make the meeting invitation only.
- Go online early before each meeting to ensure your video and audio are working.
- Sit close to the screen, so it appears you are sitting across from them. Be mindful of the camera angle and what is behind you.
- Good lighting goes a long way. Place lighting behind your computer or phone, not directly behind you, so it brightens your face. It can be helpful to purchase a light ring as well, which are cheap on Amazon.

DO NOT MULTITASK, WHEN POSSIBLE

Multitasking requires more of you and adds to the brain drain. Each time you switch to something else, it takes time to adjust to the new thing and then to readjust back. No wonder we're fatigued! (This includes getting coffee or running to the bathroom!)

CLARIFY THE ORDER

One of the bigger frustrations with digital platforms is talking over one another. To combat this, put in place a system to help clarify the order:

- When people are responding to questions, call on people by name.
- Have them utilize the raise-hand option and call on them.
- Utilize the chat feature and engage with the answers from there.

START ON TIME/END ON TIME

This one goes under expectations. Remember, met expectations = safety and comfort

SET ASIDE TIME FOR GROUP

Just because you will be on a Zoom call doesn't mean you should be driving somewhere or doing other things. Treat it like an in-person group meeting. Carve out the time for your relationships and spiritual growth.

PUT ALL FACES ON THE SAME SCREEN AS YOUR CAMERA

Some people use two screens for their computers. Make sure you do not get distracted with the second screen if this is you. As much as possible, use only one screen during your meeting and put the web call on the same screen as your camera so you are looking directly at people and not off to the side. Ask all people to do the same.

Looking off to the side to the second screen is disengaging and distracting. Also, try and talk to the camera so that everyone on the other end feels more like you are talking right to them.

FIGHTING ZOOM FATIGUE

Have you had the thought, *I simply cannot do another one of these Zoom calls!?*

Your eyes are glazed, your head aches, and your whole body is tired from doing . . . well, nothing— but sitting. in. front. of. the. computer. You are exhausted. Zoom fatigue is a real thing. The great news is that we have some ways to help.

SHORTEN GROUP TIME

In Person Groups typically meet between 1.5–2 hours. For Zoom meetings, we recommend you reduce the time to about an hour as any longer and people begin getting zoom fatigue.

HAVE A PLAN

There's enough uncertainty in the world. Let's have a plan! Having a plan helps to set expectations and met expectations = safety and comfort. Online Groups that consistently go with unstructured time often lose momentum and people lose the desire to be on the calls.

BUILD IN TIME FOR CONNECTING

Just like you would in an in-person group meeting, spend a little time connecting with one another on the front end. This helps people feel more comfortable and helps with adjusting. It can be as simple as asking a question like: If you could only have three apps on your phone, what would they be? Or, what is your favorite quarantine snack?

MAKE IT FUN

Include fun icebreakers, check-ins with silly pics, or giveaways. Check out some more resources to help with the fun factor.

MIX IT UP

Use other types of communication (GroupMe, texts, phone calls, and emails are great for prayer requests and check-ins to help build in touch points throughout the week)