INCREASING VIRTUAL LEARNING ENGAGEMENT TIP SHEET

This Tip Sheet discusses how to leverage platform features and learning techniques to increase participant engagement and is intended for those who are coordinating or leading trainings, workshops, consultations, webinars or other virtual learning sessions.

Tech Check

Provide opportunities for participants to do a check of their technology. This can include brief webinars for participants to review prior to the meeting and/or live opportunities, which allow for questions to be addressed. Information can also be provided on apps or virtual tools that may be used during the meeting, as well as a check with participants to ensure they have downloaded worksheets or other handouts that may be used during the training.

Opportunities to address potential technology challenges and barriers to accessing resources ahead of the meetings not only allow participants to feel prepared and set expectations, but also helps to reduce time spent problem solving and going over instructions during the actual training.

Regular and Frequent Engagement

Include ways for participants to interact throughout the training. Providing these opportunities throughout the training helps to keep participants tethered to the session and increases their ability to stay engaged and absorb information. Here are some questions that can be asked to check on participants' knowledge gain, experiences, and retention of the material:

On a scale of one to ten, how relevant is this content (training?) to the work you do?
Raise your hand if you have experience with this.
What are you excited to try with your own clients?
What barriers do you anticipate when trying to implement this into your practice?

Be sure to wait for participants to respond. This keeps participants engaged and helps them to know that their consistent involvement is important and valued. In addition to asking questions at regular intervals throughout the training, check in on participants' knowledge about a topic before the content is presented. This allows for adjustments in time spent on a topic and helps to determine how much dept needs to be provided.

If the audience is experienced on the topic, such as delivery of a certain treatment component, the discussion can instead focus on anticipated challenges to implementation. It can also be helpful to ask participants for their feedback on what information would be most helpful to them. Demonstrating that feedback matters helps learners engage for their own benefit rather than just the presenter's.

Breakout Sessions

Breakout sessions provide a great opportunity for supporting collaborations and more intimate interactions between patients. However, they can also be awkward if participants do not engage, and/or used as opportunities for a break. One way to minimize these potential issues is to allow for a 10-minute break before moving into smaller groups. Additionally, be sure to set clear expectations of the activities for the Breakout Sessions, consider assigning leaders for each group, and have trainers 'pop in' to the small groups to observe and provide feedback.

Breaks

Breaks are crucial to keeping engagement and minimizing "zoom fatigue." A rough rule of thumb is to plan for 10-minute breaks each hour, and allow for at least 30 minutes for lunch. This can reduce the likelihood that participants will multi-task since they know they will have the opportunity to respond to email or make a phone call during the scheduled breaks.

During breaks, it can be helpful to display a timer on the screen and play relaxing music to give participants a visual and auditory signal about the time frame and when they are expected to return to the session. When the session resumes, take a minute to check in with participants to get feedback on how the training is progressing. For example, questions can include: "What have you found to be most helpful so far?" or "What about this next section are you looking forward to learning about the most?"

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