

zoom Best Practices

Mentoring in the Great Plains UMC

By Ashlee Alley Crawford

As your meetings shift from in person to meeting via Zoom, there are some important things to keep in mind to create a space of high engagement through this medium. Here are some things for you and those in the group to take into account as you're building community in this new and virtual space:

1. **Think about the best space to bring your full attention to this meeting.** Just because you *can* meet from your recliner doesn't mean you *should*. The old maxim, "Know thyself" rings true. Create an environment that allows you to focus well on the meeting at hand. Turn off notifications and silence (or remove) your phone. Make sure your Wi-Fi signal is strong and set up your meeting space in a place that has privacy applicable to the meeting at hand.
2. **Use Mute and Video appropriately.** Mute is especially helpful in groups of 10 or more people or in meetings in which you are primarily listening. It's also essential if you're in a space that has a good bit of ambient noise (ie., your "co-worker" barks, cries, or frequently makes requests of you). However, if the meeting requires regular back and forth conversation and you don't have noise around you, leave the mute off. Also, about vide: many of us do not enjoy seeing ourselves on screen during meetings, but it's very helpful to engage video in order for others to feel connected to you. Except for extenuating circumstances, plan to turn your video on for the meeting, but use the "Hide Self" feature to remove your own video from your screen.
3. **Manage your emotional energy by using the most conducive features on Zoom.** Does the background where you're meeting stress you out? Consider using a virtual background, either for fun, or to "hide" your spare bedroom mess where your workspace is located. Also, consider using "Speaker View" instead of "Gallery View" (think Brady Bunch opening Montag) to highlight only the person speaking.

Mentors, as you lead meetings, keep the following things in mind:

4. **Find ways to connect with others personally.** When hosting a meeting, log on 5-10 minutes early to be ready for participants who are early. Treat this meeting like an in-person meeting and say hellos to individuals. Also, feel free to use the chat feature to greet individually, or to the group if others are sharing in conversation.
5. **Check out various features of Zoom.** Zoom has some wonderful capabilities in personalizing a meeting experience. If your name isn't correct, click the three dots in the upper right corner of your picture to "Rename." If you're the host, enable screen sharing to share video, documents, or slides (be sure to "Share Computer Sound" if your item has sound). Also, for meeting in sub-groups within the meeting, send people to "Breakout Rooms." Find out how to do these things and check out other cool features here: <https://blog.zoom.us/category/how-tos/>
6. **Don't check your good facilitation skills at the computer.** Everything you do in "real life" is important to do here: be hospitable, pay attention to each person present, manage time well, connect personally, don't fill the silence with chatter. Managing the energy of a Zoom meeting is

different, but give yourself some time to learn the nuances. Actual connection really is possible, and in some cases, easier, in this virtual space.

7. **Have a plan for security and confidentiality.** While Zoom has done important things for securing the meetings, you can ensure the meeting's privacy by either including a password (which you can customize) or enabling a waiting room and only admitting those who are supposed to be there. Meetings can be recorded, but be sure to let others know that it's being recorded and take care not to record things that are meant to be kept confidential. When you record, you have an option to record to your computer or to the "Cloud." If you record to the Cloud, a link will be emailed to you at the end of the meeting to retrieve the video and/or audio.

Do you have specific questions about how to navigate Zoom for the purposes of Mentoring? Don't hesitate to reach out to Ashlee at aalleycrawford@greatplainsumc.org.