

# Online Learning

As we all settle into online meetings and our new virtual environment, it is likely that we are missing our union family and the moments in classrooms where we watch participants bond and connect with their support systems moving forward.

While online learning is not ideal, there are still ways to build community, and here are some tips.

## **Practice**

There are a lot of tools you can use in the Zoom platform, and it will feel choppy at first. Book some time to practice putting people into groups, using the whiteboard, sharing documents and videos, etc. While it is not same as being in class, we can use our websites and online forms that we may not have had access to in the past, and we can use this to our advantage.

## **Give Clear Instructions**

While many of us have been using online meeting tools for months, that does not mean that our participants have. In order for them to be successful, we also need to make sure that everyone can participate at the same level. This includes explaining where to find the mute and hands up features and being clear on how speakers will be recognized.

## **Keep Those Cameras On (When You Can)**

Encourage participants to keep their cameras on. It will help you as a facilitator, but also other participants to know who is in the “room.” Of course, we should be mindful that people may not be working in the most ideal conditions, and may not be comfortable, but even being honest with participants on how seeing their faces helps you to connect may encourage more of the cameras to come on. You should also coach them through changing their names in their account if it does not match up with the person on the screen (iphone5 is not a person).

## **Screen Share Only When You Have To**

As soon as you share the screen, you lose sight of participants and you also cut off them from seeing each other. You cannot see who has their hands up and who may have a comment. If you are sharing screens, take it down when you are having large group discussion.

## **Ice Breakers and Energizers**

Sitting in front of a screen all day is tough, but you can break it up for some fun activities. If you see people fading, it may be time to find ways to use their environment to supplement the learning.

Examples:

- When you are teaching a module on global impacts, ask participants to find an object in the house and have others guess where it was made.

- In a health and safety workshop, ask participants to find the right to refuse and make it a speed race for the first to share their screen.
- Play Pictionary with the whiteboard using classroom themes (send the word to participants in private chat).

### **Breakout Groups**

Just like in an in-person class, some people participate more in small groups. Not only will the small groups increase participation, they will also increase participants' retention. Use these as much as possible and once again be clear with instructions

### **Breaks**

Don't go longer than 90 minutes without a break, even if it is five minutes to go grab a cup of coffee, stretch and rest their eyes.

### **Research**

There are a lot of resources on how to use Zoom and you can watch videos on how to use different tools before giving it a try. You can find some of them here:

<https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/206476313-Managing-Breakout-Rooms>

<https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/201362153-Sharing-your-screen-content-or-second-camera>

### **Share What Works and What Didn't Work**

If you have tried something new and it worked (or maybe didn't quite work), let your education co-ordinator know! We are also still learning and you can help us find ways to improve our programs.