Let's Re-Group: Facilitating Effective Online Groups & Meetings

University of Minnesota
Center for Practice Transformation

Webinar (Friday, March 11, 2022)

Overview & Objectives

Participants will be able to:

1. Reflect on online group + meeting facilitating in the last 2 years

2. Identify 3 elements of (& be able to apply) the Community of Inquiry Model/Framework

3. Identify stages of (& be able apply) group development to online meeting facilitation

4. Identify specific practices, skills, & tools for effective online group & meeting facilitation

- *A list of online group & meeting facilitation strategies is included in the PowerPoint of this presentation*

Agenda

Noon – Welcome, Intro, Context, Poll Data

- 12:15 pm – The Community of Inquiry Model

- 12:25 pm – Stages of Group Development

- 12:35 – Facilitator Tasks, Skills, & Tools

- 12:55 pm – Wrap up/End

An educational **community of inquiry** is a group of individuals who collaboratively engage in critical discourse and reflection to construct personal meaning and confirm mutual understanding.

Community of Inquiry Theory (CoI)

The Community of Inquiry theoretical framework represents a process of creating a deep and meaningful learning experiences

through deliberate use of three elements:

1. *Social presence*
2. *Cognitive presence*
3. *Teaching presence.*

Origins of CoI Model

Garrison, D. R., Anderson, T., & Archer, W. (2000). Critical inquiry in a text-based environment: Computer conferencing in higher education model. *The Internet and Higher Education*, 2(2-3), 87-105.

- ***Teaching Presence*** is the design, facilitation, and direction provided by instructor/facilitator to create a meaningful learning outcome - & - their ability to project their role/personality in the process/space.

- ***Cognitive Presence*** is the extent to which learners are able to create meaning through reflection & discussion

- **Social presence** is the ability of participants to identify with the community, communicate purposefully, develop inter-personal relationships, & project their individual personalities in the process/space.
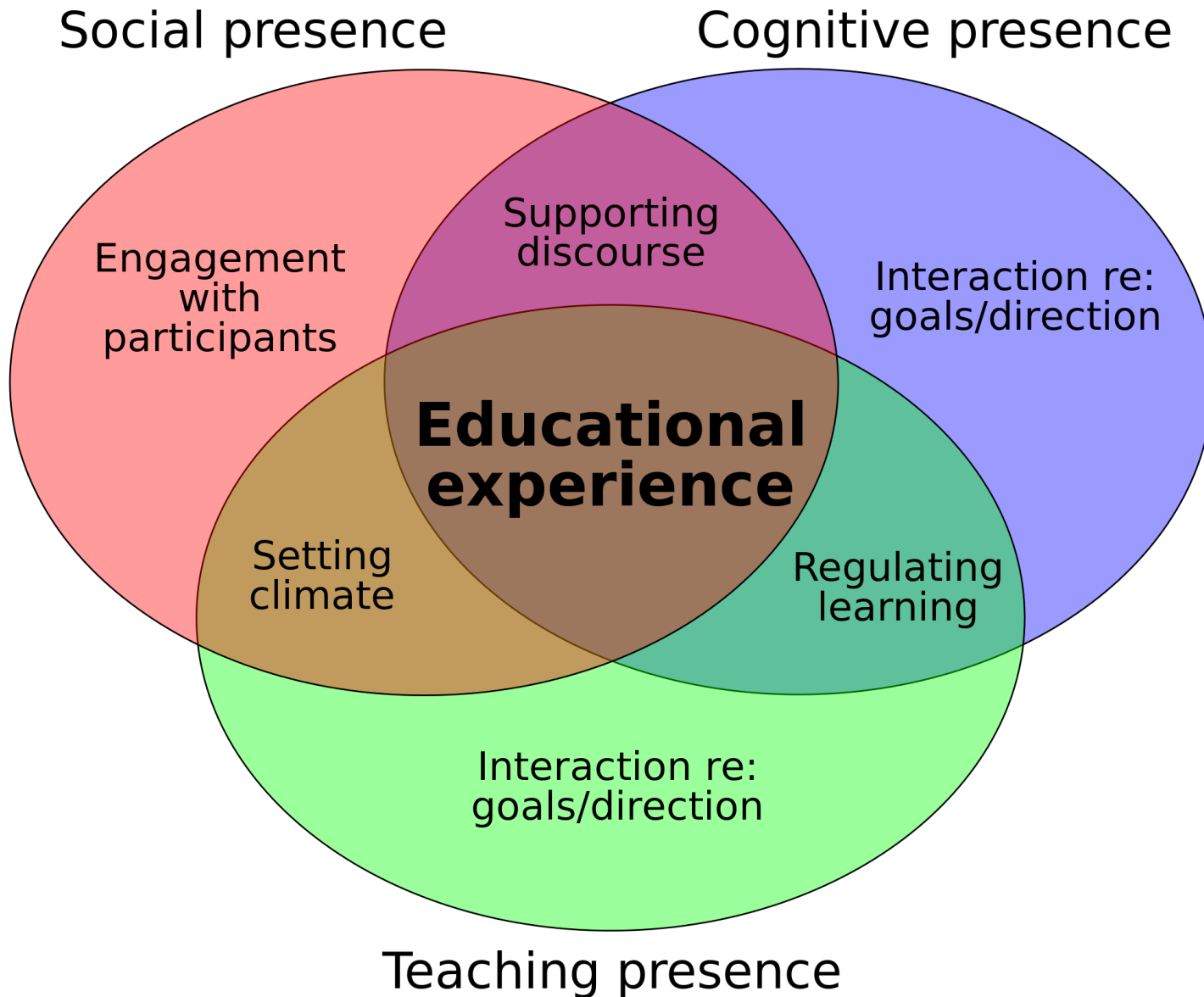
Stages of Group Development
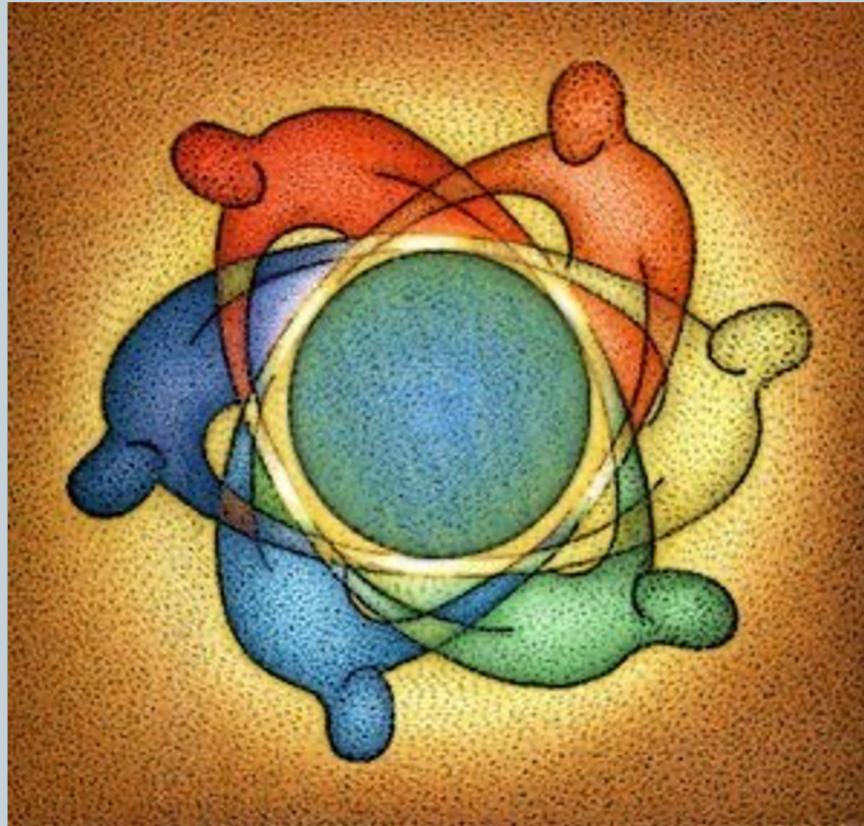
Adapted from Kurland, R., & Salmon, R. (1998). Teaching a Methods Course in Social Work with Groups. Council on SW Education)

Beginning Stage of Group Development

Participants are likely to do or feel:	What needs to happen	Role of facilitator
• Wary, anxious • Engage & keep their distance • Non-committal • Approach & Avoid • Want to connect • Want to be accepted • Want to know purpose	• Get to know each other & facilitator • Clarity of purpose • Preview & Orientation • Establish Norms & expectations • Support direct and effective communication • Create structure	• Help affect what needs to happen. • Be more active • Link member to member communication • Offer structures and activities that engage participants • Help members get to know each other • Foster investment in the group experience

Middle Stage of Group Development

Participants are likely to do or feel:	What needs to happen	Role of facilitator
• Test situation • Seeing where they fit (roles) • Searching for power • Participants willing to risk • Participants feel more valued • Participants see value & uniqueness of others • Less dependent on Facilitator	• Members know each other more • Clarity of purpose • Clear & direct communication patterns exist • Participants feel invested in positive outcomes	• Begin to encouraged more shared leadership and play a less active role than at beginning • Observe/assess group dynamics and respond accordingly • Offer structures and activities that engage participants • Foster investment in the group experience

Ending Stage of Group Development

Participants are likely to do or feel:	What needs to happen	Role of facilitator
• Feeling welcomed & connected – & begin to move apart & disconnect from group • Might be feeling ambivalent, relieved, or sad about ending group • Reflective about their progress	• Ending needs to be discussed • Identify gains • Identify next steps • Celebrate gains & progress • Evaluate group experience & faciliator	• Help affect what needs to happen - Be more active • Prepare participants for end of group • Offer structures and activities that engage participants in this stage • Allow participants to express their thoughts & feelings about ending

Tasks & Responsibilities of Facilitator

- **To Facilitate Process** by listening, asking questions, explaining the next task.

- **To Manage Technology** by screen sharing, explaining technology, recording, sharing links in the chat box, etc…

- **To Observe & Manage interpersonal dynamics and note participants' engagement** by watching for raised hands, reading the chat box, answering any direct messages.

Attend to Key Elements for Effective Online Group/Meeting Facilitation

- **Why host a virtual meeting, group, classroom, training?** Two primary reasons to hold a meeting, a support group, a therapy experience, a task group, a staff meeting, a department meeting include:
    - 1. to foster connection and
    - 2. to create time & space for collaboration.

- If you can send a memo to achieve your ends, don't hold a virtual meeting

- **Know your audience**
    - The group's stage of development
    - Individual developmental and situational needs

Attend to Key Elements for Effective Online Group/Meeting Facilitation

- Have clarity of purpose & ensure there is shared meaning between you & participants

- Establish group norms & shared meaning and commitment to norms

- Provide a clear agenda & structure – don't be afraid to direct traffic

Attend to Key Elements for Effective Online Group/Meeting Facilitation

- Step Back, Step Forward –
  - Recognize & acknowledge that there are numerous way to be engaged (beyond talking) – encourage talkers to pause & step back before responding – encourage quiet participants to step forward sooner than they typically do.

- Help participants choose to NOT multi-task – Help participants set intentions, get present

- Consider length of meeting, time of day, & take breaks

Attend to Key Elements for Effective Online Group/Meeting Facilitation

- **Starting your meeting is critical – how?**
- Have music playing as people enter the Zoom room
- Begin/End with grounding exercise end - silence, 3 deep breaths, ring a bell
- Ask useful, focused, relevant, check in/check out questions: For example: What do you need from today's meeting/what were you hoping to get at today's meeting?
- Fun check-in & check out questions
- Scaling questions (1-10) to get a barometer check of how participants are as they come to the meeting (or) as they are leaving the meeting.

Attend to Key Elements for Effective Online Group/Meeting Facilitation

- Be authentic and genuine

- Facilitate process w/a welcoming, engaging tone

- Be deliberate in your efforts to create a positive and productive "culture"

- Integrate visually compelling tools throughout the meeting

- Foster connections between participants (breakout rooms, pairs/small groups)

Attend to Key Elements for Effective Online Group/Meeting Facilitation

- Create space for the group to "do", to be active, to practice, to discuss (fishbowl, Jamboard, chat box, breakout rooms w/a task)

- Consider shared leadership

- Be creative & call out the creativity of your participants to set your course/do your work

- Include a variety of engaging processes

Attend to Key Elements for Effective Online Group/Meeting Facilitation

- Understand the legal & ethical implications of your setting & platform
  - (ie – HIPAA-compliant platforms, FERPA, Confidentiality)

- Understand the tools, limits, parameters of platform

- Practice (ahead of time) using the tools available on platform
  - (ie – polls, chat, white board, jam board, online games)

Presenter:
Mary Tinucci, DSW, LICSW
Think in Possibilities

651-983-8159 (cell)
marytinucci@gmail.com
www.thinkinpossibilities.com