Wellbeing Through Counselling -project

from 6 April 2021 to 31 December 2023

TIPS FOR ORGANIZING AN ONLINE EVENT

How do I organize an online event? 

1. **Identify students’ needs**. Discuss with the students and find out what kind of events they need and expect. Do the students wish for study groups, peer support or events together? Think about what would be useful for the students and what kind of events would have demand. When the theme is decided, plan the content.
2. **Plan the course of the event carefully**. What do you want to accomplish during the event? Plan the timetable for the event precisely but leave room for flexibility. Do you want to

organise the event together with a friend? Agree on the division of tasks.

1. **Plan the technical implementation**. Who gives the instructions of what kind of technical skills are needed during the event? Make sure that you can use the technical features you need and that you know how to guide the participants. You do not need to be an IT expert, but you will get far with good planning and prior preparation.
2. **Plan a test event with a small group**. You can ask, for example, one or two friends to join the online event and test the plan together in advance.
3. **Market the event**. It is important that the marketing of the event is clear and active. Summarize in the advertisement:
   * what: what happens in the event, what is done?
   * where: in which platform the event is organized and where to find instructions to its use (at end of the file there are links to existing instructions)
   * when: which day and what time the event is organized
   * why: to boost the marketing and create interest, you can introduce a good reason to participate in the event.
4. **Ask and receive feedback**. At the end of the event, it is advisable to mention that feedback can be given. Remember that critical feedback does not mean that the event was unsuccessful, but the next time you can try to do something differently.

The importance of rules

1. The rules are told at the beginning
2. The rules are followed all times
3. Pay attention to
   * the cameras
   * the microphones
   * taking turns in talking
   * the course of the event
   * do not pressure to speak, but give space and encourage

Creating a safe atmosphere

Having a safe space is one of the most important things for the functioning of the group. It is worth investing time in creating a safe space.

1. Take into account the differences between people and value them, for example gender, ethnic background, age, life circumstances > verbalize and give everybody the permission to be themselves, leading with your example.
2. Consider cultural differences and differences in communication > ask, do not suppose!
3. Pay attention to individual differences: not everybody is social, and some participants might take too much space > notice all the members of the group and give them space equally.
4. Take everybody into account in the meetings, for example greet them by their name.
5. In a safe space, you have a permission to make mistakes and be human.
6. Give everybody space to speak and pause to genuinely listen.
7. Do not pressure anybody into something they do not want to do. Not everybody likes games or sharing personal stuff. In a safe space, it is good to remember that it might be hard for someone to join the activities even if they wanted to. There might be shyness or experiences of bullying behind this. Try to find alternative ways to participate.
8. You can lower the threshold to participate in online meetings, for example, by instructing how to use background images or to blur the background. In this way, nobody sticks out because of their lack of technical skills.
9. Remember that the internet creates polarization – there is no need to become provoked by the fact that the cameras are off or that participation is passive. The tutor group is still following you actively.
10. Bullying and bad behavior are easier online when one does not see the other person, or they are anonymous. The organizer should keep the discussion friendly and respectful.
11. The tutor’s example is strong. Speak appropriately about the school, studies, and staff. If you cannot find positive viewpoints, talk about them neutrally.

Ideas for creating sense of community online

* An informal round of greetings
* Lost on a Deserted Island
* Alias (different versions online)​
* “Bring Me” -game
* Werewolf online (mobile app, like mafioso game) ​
* Skribble-io (draw and guess)​
* Kahoot quizzes
* Presenting one’s keys
* Skibo
* Uno
* boardgamearena.com (a lot of online games)
* codenames.game (explaining words in teams)
* Sewing badges
* Cooking or baking night
* What are we all good at?
* Lifeline
* Challenges: encouraging students to spend time together outside the tutor group. For example, a challenge to “Ask a less familiar classmate to have a cup of coffee online during the next two weeks.” Can tutors create a challenge week to foster the sense of community?
* Taking advantage of small groups: if the student can create a relationship even with one peer student, it is easier to get to know others. Everything does not need to be done in a big group. Use alternating small group divisions.

Ideas to support online events

* Jackbox (paid)
* Jamboard​
* Kahoot​
* Flinga​
* Padlet​

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| *The Wellbeing Through Counselling (Ohjauksella hyvinvointia, OHJY) project promotes the wellbeing and sense of community of university students. The project is administered by Diaconia University of Applied Sciences; other participants include Kajaani University of Applied Sciences (KAMK), Metropolia University of Applied Sciences, Oulu University of Applied Sciences, University of Oulu, Turku University of Applied Sciences, and the student unions O’Diako, TUO and KAMO, as well as the organisation partners Nyyti Ry and Diakonissalaitos/VAMOS. The project receives funding from the Ministry of Education and Culture.* | | | | |