Stanford WellMD
Commensality Groups: Starter Toolkit
Commensality Groups: What are they?

Structure:
Groups of 6-8 colleagues who agree to:
  • Meet monthly for 1 hour for 6 months
  • Discuss a pre-selected physician-specific topic

Purpose:
  • Build comradery
  • Gain perspectives from each other
  • Cultivate meaning in work
  • Promote empowerment and engagement in work

Impact:
  • Randomized trials suggest that groups increase professional fulfillment in physicians

Roles of the Commensality Leader

- Introduce the program to physician-colleagues
- Coordinate group sign up
- Schedule group sessions
- Notify group members of meeting times and locations.
- Gather question set from Stanford Medicine WellMD website
- Facilitate session, including:
  - Announce group guidelines at start of session
  - Select and pose 1-2 questions for discussion (using the question set)
  - Ensure all group members are able to share their experiences
  - Offer support to group members who may be in distress (privately, after the session)
Roles of Group Members

1. Join a group of 6-8 colleagues
2. Commit to attending at least 3 monthly meetings over 6 months
3. Meet for a 1 hour once a month with their group
4. Discuss a pre-selected physician-specific topic
Group Guidelines

- Choose 1 of 5 discussion questions to discuss for 1 hour
- Remember to maintain the confidentiality of all discussions
- Create a safe environment where all opinions are respected, and everyone feels comfortable sharing; welcome authentic curiosity
- Give every person in the group a chance to provide perspective
- The goal is to listen to colleagues and be respectful of opposing ideas
- Avoid problem solving unless someone asks for it explicitly; ask permission before giving advice
- Ensure everyone who wants to speak has the opportunity
Question Set

• The WellMD website will provide updated question sets at the start of each month

• Commensality Leaders should select 1-2 questions to pose at the start of the commensality group session
References


West CP, Dyrbye LN, Satele D, Shanafelt TD. A randomized controlled trial evaluation the effect of COMPASS (Colleagues Meeting to Promote and Sustain Satisfaction) small group sessions on physician well-being, meaning, and job satisfaction [abstract]. J Gen Intern Med. 2015;30:S89.


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