

Stanford WellMD

Commensality Groups: Starter Toolkit



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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 ^{1,2}

1. West CP, Dyrbye LN, Rabatin JT, Call TG, Davidson JH, Multari A, Romanski SA, Hellyer JM, Sloan JA, Shanafelt TD. Intervention to promote physician well-being, job satisfaction, and professionalism: a randomized clinical trial. *JAMA Intern Med.* 2014 Apr;174(4):527-33.
2. West CP, Dyrbye LN, Satele D, Shanafelt TD. A randomized controlled trial evaluating the effect of COMPASS (Colleagues Meeting to Promote and Sustain Satisfaction) small group sessions on physician well-being, meaning, and job satisfaction. *J Gen Intern Med* 2015; 30: S89.



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

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