WOMEN GATHERING ONLINE

A toolkit for growing online gatherings of resilient women

We are a proudly feminist organisation supporting the creation of equal, just and resilient regional communities that are safe and healthy for women, girls and gender-diverse people.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are intersectional in our approach and are proud to stand beside generations of great women whose work has brought us closer to equality for all.

We acknowledge the wisdom, living culture and connection of the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which we work, and acknowledge the profound disruption of colonisation and the Stolen Generations on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

We believe in shared and just cultural transformation that embraces diversity, and these acknowledgements are part of the ethical principles that guide our work and conduct.

This toolkit was developed by Women's Health Goulburn North East, as part of the Mental Health and Wellbeing Coronavirus Response Package by the Victorian Government. We acknowledge the contributions of our partners, as well as the development and evaluation work by the creators of the original Women Gathering model, in supporting the development of this toolkit. We acknowledge the ongoing collective work of Women's Health Services in Victoria, including in the promotion of women's mental health, in order to create an equitable future for all Victorians.

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INTRODUCTION
A BACKGROUND TO WOMEN GATHERING

In 2006, Women's Health Goulburn North East (WHGNE) commenced the *Women Gathering* journey with the <u>Women Gathering Literature Review</u> that identified obstacles to developing closer relationships with women in north-east Victoria and the Goulburn Valley:

- confidentiality or lack thereof;
- gossip;
- not being listened to or feeling heard;
- a pressure to conform;
- staying with the 'pleasant'; and
- not knowing when to refer on when there is a real problem.

"Belonging to a social network of communication and mutual obligation makes people feel cared for, loved, esteemed and valued. This has a powerful protective effect on health."

<u>(Wilkinson & Marmot 2003, cited in VicHealth 2005</u>)

The Women Gathering model was developed by WHGNE in 2008, providing a space for women affected by the Millennium Drought to share their experiences, grow stronger and develop friendships with other women to support them through the healing process. Following two successful iterations of the model – Women Gathering in Dry Times (2008) and Women Gathering After Fires (2011) – WHGNE has adapted the model to online delivery following the impact of COVID-19 on community gatherings.

RATIONALE

Women living in rural areas of Victoria experience poorer mental health than their metropolitan peers.[2] In rural communities, women experience higher levels of social isolation, due to geography, family networks living in other areas and a lack of reliable transport; meaning that many women may be without a strong support network.[3,4] This is of particular concern among older women. Social isolation has been linked to mental illness, emotional distress and the premature development of dementia.[5]

PROJECT AIM

Women Gathering Online aims to equip women with the skills to establish and grow a strong network of women who regularly meet using online platforms. Group leaders will be upskilled to be able to reach women from across the region and engage with them through regular interactions. In this context, this will take the form of online structured support groups around a shared interest or theme, such as the local food movement. The project aims to establish deep social networks among women in north-east Victoria and the Goulburn Valley, based on sharing, listening and mutual understanding.

PURPOSE OF THIS TOOLKIT

This toolkit has been developed to support group leaders to facilitate online groups with women, around a shared interest or purpose. The Women Gathering Online toolkit outlines the underlying principles of the initiative and suggests ways to support gathering using online technologies. A number of templates and examples have been included for group use.

OPPORTUNITIES THAT HAVE EMERGED IN THE ONLINE AGE

In 2020, the COVID-19 global pandemic prompted a rapid shift in the way we interact with friends, family and colleagues. Despite physical distancing restrictions and state laws governing our movement, we began to let more people into our homes than ever before. A strange blend of work and home life was created as household pets snuck into corporate meetings and parents were tasked with teaching mathematics and literacy to their children between work commitments.

At WHGNE we noted that many in our community have embraced this transition and the way it quickly dissolved many barriers faced by rural women in accessing programs, resources and services. It's within this context that the Women Gathering model has been reinvigorated, using online platforms to bring women together and grow new connections, without the need to travel great distances to the closest regional centre.

THE PRINCIPLES OF WOMEN GATHERING

Create an inclusive space where diversity is welcomed and embraced.

Respecting women's confidences.

"Just getting together" because it's important.

Ask "who else could be here?".

(WHGNE 2015)

"As human beings we need each other. Some people even believe we are created for relationships. And the evidence is packed against us: Social isolation is a moist breeding ground for mental and other health struggles.
What a tragedy when we realise that isolation isn't really a matter of geography but is mostly an emotional and spiritual separation from each other." (WHGNE 2006).

WOMEN GATHERING ONLINE
A TOOLKIT FOR GROWING ONLINE NETWORKS OF RESILIENT WOMEN

LEARNINGS ABOUT GROUPS FROM WOMEN GATHERING

- Relaxation and conversation occur over structured or semi-structured activities. Even in an online format, you can participate in activities 'side-by-side' or work on a project together. For example, your group may choose to have a virtual 'dinner party' where each person prepares a shared recipe while chatting with the rest of the group.

- Meeting together regularly for a minimum of six weeks is essential to building trust and getting to know each other.

- Every group has at least one woman who is committed to bringing the group together. They are enthusiastic and motivated, and able to devote time to this.

- Group ownership is important – successful groups are those where all members are a part of decision making and organising.

- A group agreement (p. 21) is an important way to frame rules and expectations for members. Examples include confidentiality, equal opportunities to speak and be listened to, and embracing differences.

- Celebration and fun are important

- Food can be a powerful connector. In the absence of a physical meeting space, encourage women to bring snacks and share stories 'over a meal'.

(WHGNE 2006; 2009; 2011)

LEADING YOUR GROUP

QUESTIONS TO ASK TO HELP PLAN YOUR GROUP

- Who will be invited?
- Who could we invite who might not attend other events or groups?
- How will people be invited?
- What barriers or reasons could exist that might stop women from attending this group?
- What will we need to do to help them to be able to attend?
- What focus or activity will bring this group together?

A social justice cause, i.e. climate justice

A wellbeing activity, i.e. yoga

A shared experience, i.e. women in bushfire affected areas

A project, i.e. advocacy piece for food security

Another activity, i.e. cooking

An opportunity to develop a skill, i.e. leadership

A space to just be together and share women's stories

A shared interest, i.e. gardening

A discussion group, i.e. online book club

- When will we meet and how often?
- What online platforms will we use to connect as a group? For example, the group may choose to meet only once per week using Zoom, or may like to start a group WhatsApp to chat between meetings. See page 24 for more information.
- Will we always meet online? Or will we meet for informal catch-ups in person too?
- What will we do if we can't meet at the decided time, due to internet outage or technical issues? Is it possible to have a phone call instead? Or to reschedule?
- What rules and agreements (p. 21) might we have in this group?
- How will we 'break the ice' and encourage conversation, particularly in the early days?
- How will we share the leadership of the group?
- How will we all be able to participate in or contribute to the organisation of the group?
- Where will we go for advice or support?
- How will we resolve technical issues, and who is responsible for doing this?
- How will we establish a safe and private space in an online format?

TIPS FOR RUNNING AN EFFECTIVE GROUP

THE FIRST SESSION

- Introduce yourself and your role as the group leader. Use an icebreaker activity (p. 23) to help the group get to know each other.
- Set a group agreement together (p. 21).
- Discuss themes, topics or activities of interest that could be incorporated into future sessions. It is great to have a 'game plan' for the full program but allow space to bring in suggestions from other members of the group.
- Confirm meeting dates and times with the group.
- Give your group members a reason to come back. Follow up with each member individually after the session - perhaps with a text message or phone call - to thank them for being a part of the group. If you have extra information about the next session, let them know so they know what to expect.

CREATING A SAFE AND COMFORTABLE ONLINE SPACE

Each member of the group is responsible for the comfort and safety of other group members. Some ways to do this include:

- Allowing others to speak and listening to them when they are sharing.
- Set yourself up in a private space if possible, away from distractions and where your conversations will not be overheard by other people. Using headphones may be needed.
- Turning your video off or minimising your screen if someone enters the physical space around you, and you think this might be impacting privacy.
- Demonstrate respect to your fellow group members by listening deeply and acknowledging what they have to say. It is important to respect personal information, ensuring it is not shared beyond the group.

> "In order to feel connection, we need to allow ourselves to really be seen."
>
> (Brené Brown)

BEING AUTHENTIC AND VULNERABLE

Being vulnerable and putting your true self forward requires courage but is central to developing strong connections with other people. There is some risk in sharing the 'real you', but we encourage you to be authentic and offer up your story with openness to your group. Not only will your group feel more deeply connected with you, but it will encourage them to do the same in their story-telling. We recommend watching The Power of Vulnerability (YouTube) from Brené Brown – you may like to share it with your group too.

ACTIVE LISTENING

Speaking to a room – or a screen – of blank faces can be intimidating. Active listening can be the comforter that many people need to be able to share their story with a group. Nonverbal cues can be powerful, even over a video call; these may include head nods or smiling. Verbal cues may also be appropriate and can encourage the speaker to tell you more.

ENCOURAGING DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

A core principle of the *Women Gathering* model is asking, "who else could be here?"

When seeking to engage diverse groups of women, such as women from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, it is important to understand their needs and wants. The best way to do this is to ask them. For many women living in rural and regional areas, there are numerous factors that prevent them from accessing services and programs – we call these 'barriers'. By finding out what some of these barriers, and community-driven solutions to them are, you can make it easier for women and gender-diverse people to be active members of your group. Take a look at this guide from Our Community on how to become more inclusive.

REFLECTION

Reflecting with others can be a powerful way to better understand and challenge yourself. In each session spend some time reflecting as a group or in pairs on a shared experience or activity, or on something that is relevant to the group members in that week. This may be as simple as introducing a reflective aspect to the weekly check-in – such as asking the group to share a highlight from their week and why it meant so much to them.

CELEBRATION

Encourage fun and celebration in all of your group's sessions. Celebrate birthdays, accomplishments or significant cultural events for individuals, or find new and unique things to celebrate with your group, such as acknowledging an individual who has stepped outside their comfort zone in sharing.

PROVIDING SUPPORT FOR GROUP MEMBERS

As a peer support person, your role is to listen carefully to the member of your group who is seeking support and engage in a conversation, drawing on your own experiences.

It is important to acknowledge where your capacity for support is limited and when to refer on to professional support. See page 40 for a list of local and statewide support services for mental health and family violence. Use this resource for information on how to respond to disclosures of family violence.

RESOURCE

GROUP FACILITATION

This resource may be useful in giving you the language to help you to communicate with your group. Try some of these phrases next time you meet.

SETTING OF GROUND RULES

- "Our purpose today..."
- "What is the purpose of our meeting?"
- "What would be the ideal outcome?"
- "What would you like to have achieved by the end of the session?"
- "What do you need to relax?"
- "Everyone's opinion is valued, there are no wrong answers"
- "All ideas are valued"
- "It's an honour to work with you"

- "That's an excellent thought. You are very [*sincere praise, i.e. thoughtful*]."
- "That interests me, say more"
- "Thank you for sharing"
- "Great- good- I like it- excellent- spot on"

ACKNOWLEDGING PARTICIPANT CONTRIBUTIONS

PROBING

- "Say more..."
- "Tell me about a time when you...?"
- "Tell me more about that..."
- "Yes, please go on."
- "Please tell me more about what you mean when you stated..."
- "I don't understand, could you help by giving an example?"
- "And what happened after that?"

GARNERING PARTICIPATION

- "I'm wondering how this might look/appear/feel/seem to you?"
- "I'd like to invite you to participate in..."
- "I'm curious to know what others think"
- "What do others think?"
- "Does anyone else have any ideas or thoughts on this?"
- "What else do we need to do to make this a success?"

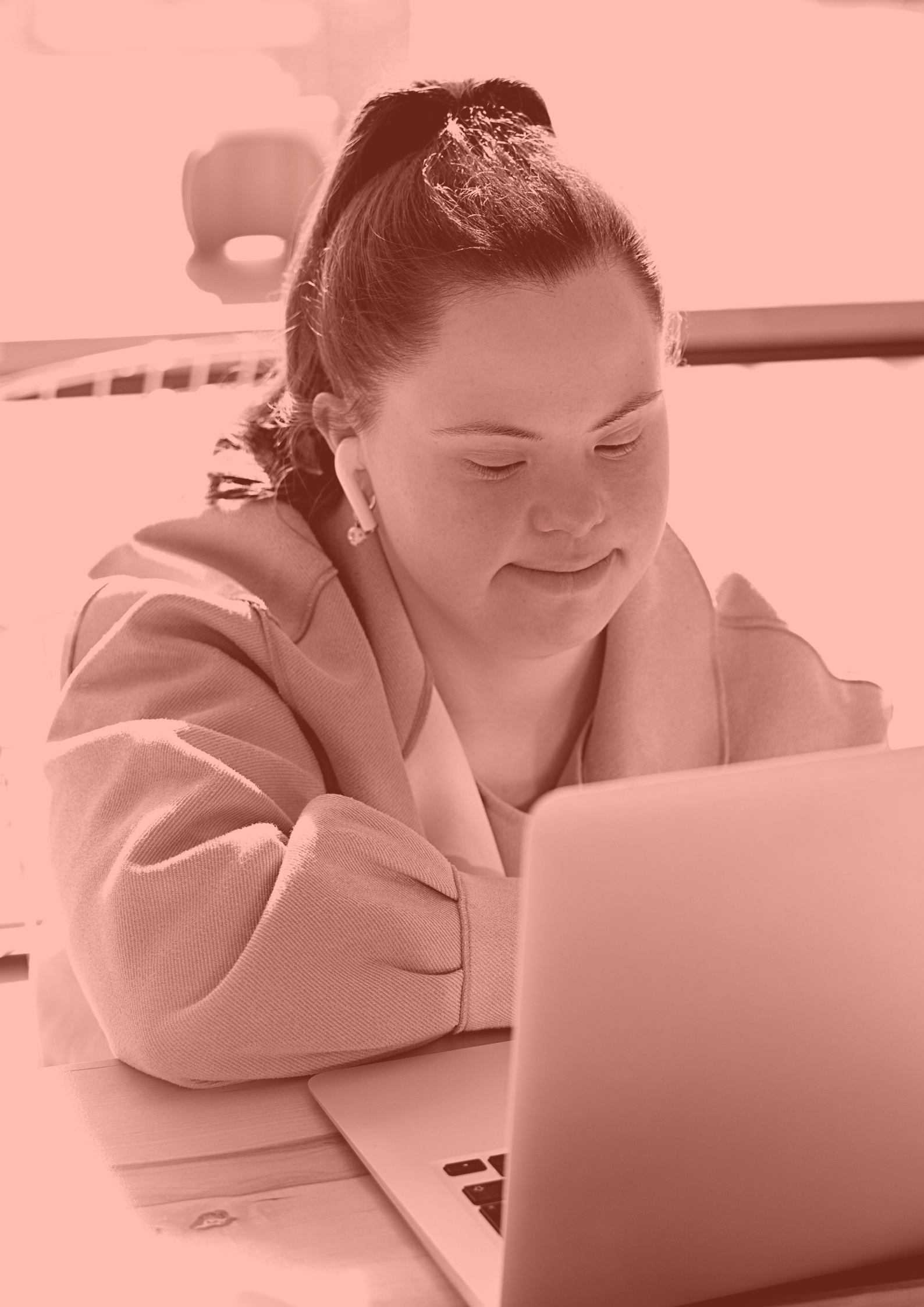## REFLECTING AND CLARIFYING

- "What I have heard is..."
- "Am I correct in observing that..."
- "So what you're saying is..."
- "What I'm hearing is... Is that right?"
- "Please clarify"
- "What I hear you saying..."
- "Can you help me be clearer in my mind about..."

SETTING YOUR GROUP AGREEMENT

Before women get to know each other a bit better it's important for the group to have some ground rules so that everyone feels comfortable with each other and free to speak honestly.

Everyone needs a safe environment in which to be themselves.

Your group needs to develop a short, collaborative agreement to ensure the best possible setting for your time spent together.

One of the things that will happen is story telling; what women do well is tell stories; about themselves, their lives, their families. Stories can be funny, sad, tragic or uplifting; it doesn't matter as long as they are shared in the generous spirit with which they are offered and kept safely within the virtual 'walls' of the group.

Sometimes groups experience conflict. Conflict is not always bad and can lead to good outcomes for the group. This is why setting ground rules is so important. Groups can make sure they refer back to them regularly.

As a group, consider the following prompts:

- What things would make this group work well for you?
- What makes this a safe and respectful place for us to connect in?
- How will we minimise distractions to ensure that everyone can get the most out of the group?
- What does respect mean to this group?
- How will the group contact each other? Will all members of the group share contact details, or just the group leader?

Go to Seeds for Change for more examples of group agreements.

TEMPLATE

_____ GROUP AGREEMENT
(GROUP NAME)

AS A GROUP, WE AGREE TO UPHOLD OUR VALUES OF:

- Confidentiality – our stories and comments are not repeated outside of this space.
- Acceptance of difference – someone might think differently to you, it doesn't make them wrong.
- Safety and comfort for all group members.

-

-

AS A GROUP, WE WILL UPHOLD OUR VALUES BY:

- Giving each member an equal opportunity to speak and be listened to.

-

-

-

DATE OF AGREEMENT

_____

GROUP MEMBERS

_____

BE SURE TO CONFIRM THAT ALL MEMBERS OF THE GROUP AGREE ON THE STATEMENTS THAT MAKE THE FINAL CUT.

_____

_____

ICE BREAKERS

ACTIVITIES FOR GETTING TO KNOW YOUR GROUP

- Each woman picks up something that she can see from where she is sitting. Each member of the group takes their turn to introduce themselves, the object and something interesting or special about it. Examples include: a photograph, a book, a card from a loved one.
- The first person introduces themselves using a word to describe themselves that begins with the same letter as their name, i.e. Clever Claire. The second person repeats what has been said before them, then adds their own name, i.e. Fierce Fran. Keep going until the whole group has had a turn and the person who started can repeat back everyone's names.
- 2 Truths and a Lie. The same classic game you played in childhood—just now over Zoom! Each person shares 3 things and the group has to guess which is the lie.

Google icebreaker activities for Zoom for more examples.

BREAKOUT ROOM ICEBREAKERS

Use the Breakout Room function on Zoom to put women into smaller groups or pairs for these activities. Give them a time-limit and a topic to speak about:

- Talk about yourself for two minutes, then listen to your partner talk about themselves for two minutes. Return to the group to share something interesting with the group about your partner.
- Talk about a hobby with your partner and try to convince them to give it a go.
- Think about when you were 10 years old and describe to your partner: your dining room table, who is sitting around it, what you are eating and what dinner conversation is had.
- What are you reading, watching or listening to at the moment that you would recommend to someone else?

This website provides some information on how to use the Breakout Room function on Zoom.

ONLINE GROUPS

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQS)

BEING SAFE ONLINE

It is important to be mindful about the information you share online as once it is published, you often cannot take it back. It may be helpful to think, when sharing online, "would I want someone I don't know to have this information about me?"

It is also important for the group to respect the privacy of all members by not sharing information about others beyond the group setting.[12]

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

eSafety Commissioner: Empowering women to take control online

Technology Safety Australia: Safer technology for women

WHAT PLATFORMS ARE AVAILABLE?

There are so many online social networking platforms to choose from! It is up to your group members to choose the best method(s) for you.
For example, you may like to meet on Zoom weekly and set up a group chat to connect informally between sessions. Some popular platforms you may like to explore, include:

- Zoom video conferencing – set video meetings in advance and share meeting details with your group. Use a password and the Waiting Room function to ensure you don't have any Zoom bombers!
- Private Facebook group – select Facebook friends to add them to your group, or share the link with your group to have them add themselves. Facebook groups can be a good way to share images, short posts and resources with the rest of your group.
- Online messaging apps, such as WhatsApp or Facebook Messenger group chat. Do your research to decide which is the safest, most appropriate option for your group.

SHOULD I RECORD THE ONLINE MEETING?

This is up to the group to decide. It may be worthwhile to have a group discussion about online privacy and how to be careful with what you share online. If anyone in your group is not comfortable having the meeting recorded, then all group members should agree to not record the meeting. We don't think that it is necessary to record meetings.

HELP! NO ONE IS SAYING ANYTHING. HOW DO I GET THE GROUP CHATTING MORE FREELY?

In your group you will have differing levels of experience and comfort communicating online. It may feel strange at first, but we recommend giving the group moments of quiet to give women the chance to speak up. You may find that the women are waiting for another person to speak first or don't want to accidently speak over other group members.

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR ONLINE MEETINGS

Take a couple of minutes at the start of each session to remind group members of these points:

- Conversation is welcomed and encouraged, however try to keep your microphone on mute while you are not speaking to minimise disruptions from background noise.
- How to access the chat function, the mute button, turn your video on or off, and change your view to see everyone's faces.
- To uphold the value of privacy from the group agreement (p. 21), set yourself up in a quiet space away from distractions from other people. Use headphones with a microphone if needed.

SAMPLE AGENDA

WELCOME AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

GROUP CHECK-IN

- How are you?
- What is something that has happened in your world, since we last met?
- Is there something you would like to get out of today's session?
- Have a unique prompt for each session – i.e. What is your favourite quote to live by? If you could go for coffee with anyone, who would it be and why?

INTRODUCE A CORE THEME OR ACTIVITY FOR THE SESSION

- What will the group be talking about or doing together in the session?
- Why was this theme or activity chosen?

ACTIVITY / DISCUSSION

- You may like to utilise the breakout room function on Zoom to allow for smaller group/one-on-one conversations or activities.

SHARING AND REFLECTIONS AS A LARGE GROUP

- What did you learn in today's session (about yourself / another group member / a topic)?
- What did you enjoy about today's session?
- Building on this session, what else would you like to discuss as a group in future?
- General reflections

FINAL CHECK-IN

- How are you now?
- Set an intention for the remainder of the day / week.

SAMPLE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Hello! My name is [*name*] and my heritage/culture/background is [*tell the audience something special about YOU*].

I would like to acknowledge [*people present*] for [*reasons – i.e. your creative advocacy efforts*].

Today we are meeting across different lands. I am currently on [*name of traditional custodians*] land, and I'd like to pay respects to elders past and present, and any emerging leaders in this virtual room today.

I'd like to invite you all to tell the group who the traditional custodians of the lands where you are today. If you're not sure, that's okay – I invite you to do some reading and let us know next time. A great place to start is the AIATSIS website.

A CONFLICT RESOLUTION METHOD

NOTE: It may be appropriate to take this conversation 'offline' and facilitate an interaction between only the people involved in the conflict, so they do not feel that the interaction is being observed by the whole group. This may be done by staying back after a session to discuss the issue.

Some instances when 'offline' conversation may be appropriate:
- The issue only involves a small number of people
- Members of the group are uncomfortable or upset
- The session can continue to run as intended, meaning the issue can be raised later on.

1   TREAT THE OTHER PERSON WITH RESPECT

Respect for another person is an attitude conveyed by specific behaviours. The way I listen to the other, look at her, my tone of voice, my selection of words, the type of reasoning I use – these either convey my respect or they communicate disrespect.

2   LISTEN UNTIL YOU 'EXPERIENCE THE OTHER SIDE'

One of the best ways to communicate more accurately during disagreements and to resolve conflict is to institute Carl Rogers's rule: "Each person can speak up for himself only after he has first restated the ideas and feelings of the previous speaker accurately, and to that speaker's satisfaction."

3   STATE YOUR VIEWS, NEEDS AND FEELINGS USING 'I' MESSAGES

'I' messages generally follow a format of:
   i. I feel (state how you feel)
   ii. When (state the problem)
   iii. Because (state why)
   iv. And I would like (state what you would like to happen/change)

- State your point of view briefly, especially during conflict, you will usually communicate better if you keep your message short and to the point.
- Avoid loaded words that can be difficult during tense times.
- Say what you mean and mean what you say. They may talk about one issue when their real concern centres on another. It is often preferable to state the truth as it really is for you.
- Disclose your feelings. Until the emotional issues are resolved, the substantive issues probably can't be settled. Whether you are talking or listening, the conflict resolution method concentrates especially on the feelings.
- Finally, there are some occasions when Step 3 of the conflict resolution process (stating your own view, needs and feelings) is unnecessary. Sometimes one person is upset and the other is not. When the angry person vents their feelings and is accepted and treated with respect, the conflict may end.

4 RECORD THE INTERACTION

- Who was involved in the conflict?
- For each person, what are their needs in the resolution of the conflict?
- What are their fears?
- What was the conflict about?
- When did the conflict occur?
- Where did the conflict occur?
- Why did the conflict occur?
- How will the conflict be dealt with so the group can move forward?

PROBLEM SOLVING TOGETHER

From time to time groups may come across a problem that feels impossible to solve. We have outlined a few tips for effective problem solving, as a collective.

IDENTIFY THE PROBLEM

It is a mistake to think that everyone has the same idea about what the problem is. You may be surprised to hear the different interpretations people have of the problem. If you don't have agreement on what the problem is, you will not be able to move through the stages.

OUTLINE *WHY* SOLVING THIS PROBLEM IS IMPORTANT TO THE GROUP

By understanding why you want to get to the bottom of the problem at hand, your group will be inspired to create change. When a group understands their purpose or cause – and shares a belief – they will be driven to reach the outcome they want.

DEVELOP GOALS

Develop three to four simple, realistic goals that will help you to progress toward overcoming the problem. Try the SMART goal framework to help you.

EXPLORE THE OPTIONS

Think of a number of actions that could be taken to progress you toward reaching your goals. Keep an open mind to allow for the possibility of previously unthought-of solutions.

CONSIDER CONSEQUENCES

A simple pros and cons list, or further discussion can help uncover the advantages and disadvantages of each option.

DECIDE ON THE MOST APPROPRIATE OPTION

Building on your discussion about the advantages and disadvantages of each option, select the best option. A simple democratic vote may help this process.

AGREE ON ACTION

Work out how you need to go about putting your option into action, then test it.

EVALUATE THE STRATEGY

Bring the group together to reflect on your goals, the actions you have taken and whether these have progressed you toward your goals. Are your goals still relevant? What have you learned from trialing new options for problem solving? Where will your group direct your energy next?

SOME BARRIERS THAT MAY PREVENT PARTICIPATION AND HOW TO OVERCOME THEM

LACK OF ACCESS TO APPROPRIATE TECHNOLOGY

- Provide opportunities for pairs or small groups to meet in person and share devices.
- Use a blended delivery model, where some people participate online and others meet in person.
- Assist group members to find a device that they can borrow for use in the sessions.

LACK OF ACCESS TO ADEQUATE DATA / INTERNET

- Provide small amounts of money or re-charge cards to participants.

UNSUITABLE TIME

- Ask the group ahead of the first meeting to determine suitable meeting times.

NOT KNOWING ABOUT THE GROUP

- Use social media to share information about how to get involved. A great place to start is community Facebook pages - most towns will have one.

NOT FEELING WELCOME

- Ensure everyone is individually welcomed into the group and given the opportunity to introduce themselves.
- Don't forget to refer to your group agreement (p. 21) where you have outlined what respect looks like for your group.

- What is said in the group, stays in the group. It should be a space to discuss matters that are personal to group members.
- Don't forget to refer to your group agreement.

GOSSIP

CARING RESPONSIBILITIES

- Children or other people in your care may need to be present – and that's okay! Be sure to let your group know, and consider the privacy of the group and the person in your care.
- Being able to connect from their own home may help to overcome this barrier.

- Foster a community of acceptance, where people from different experiences and backgrounds are welcomed.
- Group members who currently receive <u>funding under the NDIS may be able to access assistive technologies</u> to enhance their use of laptops, tablets or smart phones.
- Disabilities may include: hearing loss, low vision, communication disability, physical disability or intellectual disability.

PRESENCE OF ANY DISABILITIES

PRESENCE OF MENTAL ILLNESS

- Foster a community of acceptance, where people from different experiences and backgrounds are welcomed.

LANGUAGE OR CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

- Foster a community of acceptance, where people from different experiences and backgrounds are welcomed.
- For some people for whom English is not their first language, some means of communication may be easier than others. It is important to ask them how they can be included, and work together to find solutions.
- See page 40 for specific support services.

OTHER BARRIERS

- In your first session, discuss possible barriers for your group, and brainstorm ways to overcome these.

EVALUATION

Simply, evaluation is about identifying what has worked well in your group and the things that can be improved. Our time and resources are precious, so we want to be contributing to something that is worthwhile for each person involved.

Evaluation does not need to be formal or written; you can simply ask the group to reflect on what they like or don't like about it. We suggest using reflection times – such as at the end of the session – to get some feedback from group members. Jot down some notes to reflect on and use in future planning, and to let us know how the online program is being received by your group.

DIFFERENT WAYS TO EVALUATE

- Observing participation and body language
- Keeping track of who continues to return each session
- Brief surveys or questionnaires – take a look at the next page for pre-program and post-program questions, to help understand the group's changing attitudes and feelings over a number of weeks.
- Group discussion
- One-on-one conversations using the Breakout Room function on Zoom.
- Group reflection on goals that have been previously set and any outcomes that have been achieved.

Speak to Women's Health Goulburn North East for support in evaluating your group.

PRE-PROGRAM QUESTIONS

- What are you MOST looking forward to in being a part of the group?
- What are you hoping to get out of the group? i.e. new friends, a new skill, is there something you'd like to learn?
- Do you have any concerns about being a part of the group? Please describe these.
- How can you be supported to participate in the group?
- Do you feel like you have a strong social network, who you can call upon when you need support?

POST-PROGRAM QUESTIONS

- What did you enjoy MOST about being a part of the group?
- Did the group meet your expectations? Please describe why/why not.
- What did you enjoy LEAST about being a part of the group? Provide a reflection on why you feel this way.
- Were you supported to participate in the group? How?
- Did you feel respected and listened to in the group? Provide a reflection on why you feel this way.
- How would you rate the strength of your relationships, following the program?

WEAK – AVERAGE – GOOD – VERY STRONG

- Do you feel like you have a strong social network, who you can call upon when you need support? Has this changed for you since attending the group?

RESOURCES

PROVIDING SUPPORT TO OTHERS / SELF-CARE

Looking after yourself – Beyond Blue

Supporting others – Mental Health Movement

5 Things to keep in mind when supporting friends who are struggling - Graham Panther (ABC Everyday)

ONLINE GROUPS

Our Guide to Chairing a Feminist Virtual Meeting – YWCA Australia

How to use Zoom like a pro: 15 video chat tips and tricks to try today – Alison DeNisco Rayome (cnet)

INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY

Works For Me (video) – Women with Disabilities Victoria

Event Accessibility Checklist – Australian Network on Disability

ADVOCACY AND ACTIVISM

Advocacy Toolkit – YWCA Australia

Plan Your Power: A toolkit for women's rights advocacy planning – International Women's Development Agency (IWDA)

PREVIOUS VERSIONS OF *WOMEN GATHERING* AND WHERE TO FIND OUT MORE

The Women Gathering model was developed by Women's Health Goulburn North East in 2006 – 2008 in response to the ongoing drought in the Hume region. Originally called Women Gathering In Dry Times, the model was adapted in response to the 2009 bushfires.

Find the Women Gathering resources developed to date here.

SUPPORT IS AVAILABLE

IN AN EMERGENCY, PHONE 000.

SUPPORT FOR FAMILY VIOLENCE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT

1800 Respect (24/7 support) – 1800 737 732

Centre Against Violence – 1800 806 292

Safe Steps (24/7 support) – 1800 015 188

MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

Beyond Blue – 1300 224 636

Lifeline (24/7 crisis support) – 13 11 14

Suicide Call Back Service (24/7 support) – 1300 659 467

SUPPORT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

headspace

Albury Wodonga and Wangaratta – 1300 332 022

Shepparton – 03 5823 8800

Kids Helpline – 1800 55 1800

NESAY (North East Support & Action for Youth) – 03 5720 2201

SOCIAL SUPPORT SERVICES

Anglicare (emergency food relief)

Wangaratta – 03 5723 7900

Bright – 03 5755 0123

Beyond Housing

Wangaratta – 03 5722 8000

Wodonga – 02 6055 9000

Shepparton – 03 5833 1000

Seymour – 03 5735 2000

Child Protection Crisis Line (24 hour crisis support) – 13 12 78

Food Access Guide (Alpine Shire)

Gamblers Help (24/7 support) – 1800 858 858

Statewide crisis & emergency accommodation – 1800 825 955

Victoria Legal Aid – 1300 792 387

IN AN EMERGENCY, PHONE 000.

OTHER ORGANISATIONS OF INTEREST
HEALTH

Nurse on Call (free 24/7 health advice) – 1300 606 024

Gateway Health

Wangaratta – 03 5723 2000

Wodonga – 02 6022 8888

Myrtleford (by appointment) – 03 5731 3500

Community Health @ GV Health (Shepparton) – 1800 222 582

FOR LGBTQIA+ COMMUNITY

Rainbow Door – 1800 729 367

Switchboard

FOR MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITIES

Albury Wodonga Ethnic Communities Council (AWECC) – 02 6024 6895

Multicultural Centre for Women's Health – 1800 656 421

North East Multicultural Association (NEMA) – 03 5721 2090

FOR FIRST NATIONS PEOPLE

Rumbalara Aboriginal Cooperative (Shepparton) – 03 5820 0000

Mungabareena Aboriginal Corporation (Albury Wodonga) – 1800 421 640

Djirra – 1800 105 303

Albury Wodonga Aboriginal Health Service (Albury Wodonga & Wangaratta) – 1800 421 640

FOR WOMEN WITH A DISABILITY

Women with Disabilities Victoria - Leadership Network (Moira Hub) – 03 5872 2224

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