



CAEP WELLNESS TOOLKITS

CAMARADERIE GROUPS

Create small groups of colleagues to connect over a meal once a month for a deliberate discussion of a particular question.

Increase engagement and fulfillment

A practical guide for success



*Prepared by:
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Groups of 6-8 people meet monthly for a meal, and discuss their answers to a particular question.

The question changes monthly, and relates to purpose & meaning, recharging, life strategies, connection etc.

These groups are proven to reduce burnout & improve engagement, with long-lasting effects.

The Emerg Doc Version

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for your group *right from the start*

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What is the effort : benefit?



Time

minimal for organizer;
1 mealtime a month for
participants x 6 months



Cost

Can be borne by individuals,
or subsidized by external
source or department/
division



Impact

Large & sustained benefit,
proven in small RCTs

What does this program cultivate?



Personal Resilience

Offers time and space to recharge & connect with one's own purpose in medicine.

Culture of Wellness

Fosters deeper connections amongst group members.

Evidence

These groups have been well studied at Mayo, and are in regular use across many U.S sites, including Stanford. There are two small RCTs that look at the impact of these groups.

West, 2014: 74 physicians at Mayo clinic met biweekly to reflect on shared experiences for 9 mos. Significant improvements in engagement at work and reduced depersonalisation (on various validated metrics) were found compared to a control group that did not participate. Score improvements remained almost as high as the original assessment, even 12 months after the program had finished.

West, 2021: 125 Physicians at Mayo were randomized into meeting biweekly to reflect on shared experiences for 6 mos, or not. All were assessed at baseline and at 12 mos. Burnout scores in the intervention group decreased by 12.7%, while scores in the non-intervention group increased by 1.9%. Depressive scores also decreased similarly in the intervention group.



Both trials showed measurable and sustained benefits (6-12 months) after the program was completed.

How to: Start here



Sample Questions

What has gone well for you this week?

What was a recent meaningful encounter for you and why?

How do you recharge after a tough shift?

What strategies do you use to optimize your time?

See Appendix for more

Poll your group for interest. Provide sample questions & time commitment in the initial ask. Meetings should last 90 min or less, monthly for at least 6 months. They may meet for breakfast, lunch or dinner, and it is OK to miss a meeting.

Decide on who to include. Learners? Other specialties? Nurses & allied health? Groups have different vibes. See “make it your own” for more info.

Consider seeking out financial support: hospital wellness committees, departments, gifts in kind from local restaurants. Most US hospitals offer \$20 per person per month; we offer \$50 per group per month

Assign interested people into groups of 6-8. Aim for gender, diversity, and career stage balance where possible.

Identify a group leader, or an administrator, to arrange the first meeting, and send out the question of the month.

How to: Meeting Structure

Keep meetings short (60-90 min), with a fixed term (eg 6 mos), which allows people to attend **without guilt**

Group leaders should lay out the ground rules at the start of each meeting:

1. conversations are confidential
2. the first 15 min is for everyone to answer the question of the month
3. the purpose is to listen & share, not to solve.
4. the last 5 min of the meeting should be used to find the date for the next meeting

Choose a mix of questions over the program: some should foster positivity & gratitude, and some should address challenges/stresses (see Appendix)

Check in with group leaders at 1, 3 & 6 months. Do an end evaluation for all. This will help tailor the program and may prove it's value for funding. Consider simple narrative questions: what worked well? What could be 1% better?

Make it your own



Decide at outset whether to have narrow or wide groups eg EM MD only vs ED team; EM only vs other specialties; learners.

Rural/small numbers: include other specialties or HCW; or consider virtual groups of same specialty in different regions.

Keep in mind that when groups include MDs & others, the vibe may be different: with non-MDs, it may naturally focus on getting to know one another & team building. It may take more time for physicians to build comfort with vulnerability in this setting.

Covid adaptations: can have meetings over zoom with same food together. Keep it short. Consider an outdoor gathering if guidelines allow. Walks may also work but it is harder for the whole group to listen to one person at a time. Consider dividing into groups of 3 and then switching.

Be prepared for...



A group leader who doesn't get around to scheduling a meeting:

choose leaders carefully or have them volunteer; offer admin support or other electronic ways of gathering participants;

Meetings that tail off:

Ask why. What could be tweaked so that people see value in it? Consider: are the questions right? Is the time of day right? Is there an uncomfortable dynamic in the group? Can you do something about it? Do groups need more (or less) structure for organising them?

One group member talks too much:

"Let's hear from others who haven't had a chance to speak yet" ; remind all at start that the point of the group is not to offer solutions unless explicitly asked for

Another person talks rarely:

"What are your thoughts on what you've heard, or on the question itself?" Consider approaching them afterward to see what could be improved

A member is in distress: Ensure that group leaders know the pragmatics for a colleague in distress: local peer support, employee assistance, provincial wellness program etc. Create a sheet with your local info for them.

Camaraderie groups are a low-cost, high impact intervention to build a culture of wellness and personal resilience

Groups meet monthly for at least 6 months over a meal. A leader ensures that everyone answers the question of the month, and that the focus is discussion rather than solutions

Questions should focus on meaning & purpose, savouring, and life strategies

This initiative is tremendously flexible and can be adapted for almost any type of group

Summary

Contacts



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Checklist

- Check for local interest in a camaraderie program. Include time commitment, format, & question examples.
- Decide on target group: EM physician only vs mixed with others such as nurses or learners
- Identify any department or hospital funds available to subsidize the program
- Check for administrative support to help groups with scheduling
- Invite people to join. Include time commitment, format, question examples and any funding available
- Create balanced groups of 6-8 with diversity in mind
- Ask groups to identify a group leader to organise meetings times
- Create a list of questions at the start of the program so it is easy to send them out to groups monthly
- Create a sheet with info on where to turn if in distress
- Create an evaluation for participants at the end of the program

Questions

Why did you go into medicine/nursing etc?

What makes a meaningful shift for you?

How do you navigate stress when overloaded?

What helps you recharge after a hard day?

What brings you joy at work?

Think about a mentor or supportive colleague. What do you appreciate about that person?

Who is your role model? What do you appreciate about that person?

Think about a time you made a medical error. How did it affect you? How did you move forward?

What helps you cope when bad things happen?

How do you know when you need to take a break from work?

From:

[Mayo Clinic Strategies to reduce burnout: 12 actions to create the ideal workplace \(pp. 233\)](#)

Questions continued...

Personal Growth

Share a lesson your patients have taught you.

What did you learn this week?

What's something new that you have tried recently?

If money was no object, what would you spend your time doing?

What is your 20%? (the 20% of work that you find most fulfilling)

Have you been burned out? How did you know? How did you recover?

What have you learned that you would pass onto a junior colleague?

Day to Day

What do you do to make it a good day for those around you?

What helps you stay in the moment with a patient?

What helps you sustain your energy and concentration?

From:

[Mayo Clinic Strategies to reduce burnout: 12 actions to create the ideal workplace \(pp. 233\)](#)

even more Questions...

What tactics do you use to keep on top of things?

What hobbies or recreation brings you joy? How do you create time for it?

How do you create firewalls between work and home? What is most helpful for you?

How do you prioritise the things that are important to you?

How do you protect time to be with those you love?

What is the best way for you to connect with your patients?

How do you preserve relationships with friends despite a demanding schedule?

From:

[Mayo Clinic Strategies to reduce burnout: 12 actions to create the ideal workplace \(pp. 233\)](#)

References

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THANK YOU

Contact Information

*For more info, please contact us at:
www.caep.ca*
