Team Time Digital Feedback Evaluation

Introduction

This is an evaluation of the digital feedback we have collected via Typeform, an online survey platform, from those who have experienced a Team Time session. This way of collecting feedback was introduced with the launch of Team Time to ensure that the feedback captured at the end of Schwartz Rounds is available for this intervention too. Participants are sent a link to the feedback form at the end of, or following, the Team Time session from which they can complete the survey on the Typeform website.

Background

Evaluation is a key component of Schwartz Rounds and the Point of Care Foundation requires organisations to collect feedback after each Round using a standard paper evaluation form. This form is circulated at the end of each Schwartz Round and the results are reported back to the Point of Care Foundation after every six Rounds. Feedback can be used to help facilitators know how their Rounds are experienced by attendees and where improvements can be made. It can also give the panellists an impression of how their stories were perceived, which can give them a sense of closure for sharing their experience. Furthermore, the feedback can be used to report back to senior management the impact Rounds are having within their organisation which can help sustain support for them going forward. The Point of Care Foundation, and the Schwartz Community, were keen to continue to be able to collect this feedback therefore the traditional Schwartz paper feedback form was adapted into an online survey for Team Time.

Method

The data was downloaded from the Typeform website and organised into Excel. From here the qualitative data was coded and analysed to draw out key themes.

Findings

The first three questions of the survey asked respondents to provide their organisation, the date of the Team Time session attended, and if there was a theme for the session. This was followed by the below nine questions which provided a statement for respondents to agree or disagree with. There were 848 responses to these multiple choice questions.

Multiple choice answers: Qs 4-12

		Completely agree	Agree somewhat	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree somewhat	Completely disagree
4	At least one of the stories was relevant to me	79%	17%	2%	1%	0%
5	I gained insights that will help me to feel more supported / calm	51%	37%	11%	1%	0%
6	Today's Team Time will help me work better with my colleagues in our team	47%	36%	14%	2%	0%
7	The group discussion was well facilitated	84%	13%	3%	0%	0%

8	I have a better understanding of how my colleagues feel about their work	68%	26%	6%	0%	0%
9	I have a better understanding of how I feel about my work	42%	40%	15%	2%	1%
10	I plan to attend Team Time again	72%	19%	7%	1%	0%
11	I would recommend Team Time to colleagues	80%	15%	5%	0%	0%
		Exceptional	**Excellent**	**Good**	**Fair**	**Poor**
12	Please rate today's Team Time overall	27%	48%	20%	4%	1%

Free text answers: Qs 14-17

Following these multiple choice questions, respondents were then asked whether they would be willing to respond to some questions in further detail. Of the 848 respondents, 596 opted to continue answering questions and the analysis of these answers can be found below.

14) Can you write a few words to describe how you experienced the session?

Summary table of most referenced words/concepts*

	Number of participants referenced
Emotional	64
Helpful	71
Listening	41
Sharing	40
Supportive	33
Honest	26
Open	28
Interesting	25
Safe	16
Insightful	29
Powerful	22
Connecting	21

* verb conjugations have been grouped together for ease, e.g. 'emotional' includes the use of 'emotive' and 'emotion'

Key to the feedback on this question was confusion over the wording. Over 37 people misunderstood the question and either commented that they didn't understand what the question was asking, or simply answered how they physically joined the session, e.g. '*Via zoom whilst working from home*'. Clearer wording is needed to differentiate between wanting to know how respondents joined the session, or words to describe how they found the session.

The most common descriptions used are related to how participants shared with others, the emotion brought out in the sessions, sessions being helpful, and the appreciation of having the time to reflect and to listen to colleagues.

Sharing experiences and feelings

Sharing experiences and feelings was a central theme in the feedback given. Participants found it extremely useful and interesting listening to, and understanding, the perspectives of their colleagues.

'Just found it so supportive hearing and knowing that colleagues are facing similar challenges to me and that I am not alone with this struggle. Also helpful to hear other people describe the range of challenges being faced.'

The sessions gave them an insight into their colleagues' experiences and emotions and acted as a reminder that they are all human and dealing with things outside of the work environment

'The stories were very relevant to me and both struck a deep cord and I had a sense the rest of the audience felt the same. Inspiring and reassuring that feelings are shared so widely whatever role you play and that that is on a personal and professional commitment level by colleagues'

Some participants found that they were experiencing things differently from their colleagues. The majority of these found that there were still common links and feelings which brought the team together and made them feel less isolated. However, a couple of participants found the session made them feel more isolated as they felt and experienced things very differently from others.

'I *felt very remote from some of the participants, who are working from home: I found it difficult to empathise with that situation.'*

Connecting

Sharing their stories created a strong sense of connection for many participants following the sessions. There was a sense of bringing people together, and of not being alone in their experiences and feelings.

'I felt the session was very powerful and helped me feel connected on a human level to my colleagues… it has helped me gain real insight into the shared similar experience of others'.

Several people said they felt less isolated and felt less alone following the sessions.

'It makes you feel less isolated and that others feel the same as you do.'

There was an increased sense of community, team morale and team spirit, and the importance of their team.

'I love listening to the comments on how my colleagues are feeling, it helps us become better team players and the need to show more support to one another'

Through sharing experiences and feelings, teams have a greater sense of cohesion and Team Time has helped participants feel closer together.

Team Time also helped participants to understand their colleagues more by offering insight into the perspectives of others.

'[it] helped me realise what the rest of my team have to deal with, the challenges they faced before coming to work, talking about the issues we face helps others realise what we are going through'

Furthermore, this sharing and connecting has helped normalise the feelings and difficulties people have been having which participants found to be reassuring and supportive.

'It was really helpful to hear that I was not the only person feeling deskilled and disconnected at the start of the isolation. I feel normal.'

There were a handful of participants who found the sessions made them feel disconnected from their colleagues. This was either because they were experiencing things differently, or because they felt shut out of their team. This led to the sessions being a negative and isolating experience for them.

'I feel like an outsider as I don't feel the same way like the others, it seems that I am not blended in.'

Emotional

'*Emotional*' was the second most common way (n=64) of describing the sessions. Some specifically commented that the emotion they felt was positive, as they felt so connected as a team.

'The experience made me feel emotional in a positive way as I reflected on how we are all important to each other.'

Others found the emotion difficult to work through with a couple of people mentioning some emotional distress during the sessions.

'I was concerned that at least one person was struggling emotionally and hope that someone is following this up outside of the virtual session.'

Some found that it was emotional to hear others expressing their feelings and stories and that there were often difficult emotions to reflect on.

'When you are head down and in the midst of it, it is easy to keep soldiering on and ignore the emotions. This session forced me to take some time to look at it which whilst it is a good thing, is also difficult.'

Helpful

'*Helpful*' was the third most common way (n=55) of describing the sessions. Participants found it helpful to be given the time and space to reflect on their feelings and experiences, and to think about how to be kinder to themselves and to their colleagues. Hearing how their colleagues are and what they have been going through was helpful, as was knowing they are not alone in their feelings and experiences. Storytellers and others who shared their stories found it cathartic to be able to share what they had been through and the impact of this.

'I felt that it was helpful to take time to listen to colleagues and also have introspection of my own feelings about how things are. Very rarely do I think about how I FEEL about something at work.'

Participants really valued the time to reflect which Team Time offered. Being able to step away from their day jobs and as a team reflect on how their work has affected them emotionally and otherwise was really appreciated.

Environment

Participants found the environment to be very honest (n=26), open (n=28) and supportive (n=33), particularly when hearing that colleagues were experiencing similar feelings to them. They also felt supported by the effort gone into creating a safe space in which they could express themselves and be heard.

'Pleased that people were able to be honest and open, felt it was a safe space to disclose more personal feelings. Dismissed idea of being brave all the time.'

From feedback where there was not such an open conversation (i.e. the session was too structured, or felt too corporate), participants did not get as much out of the session.

'The story video to start felt very 'corporate' and perhaps made it harder for some people to share their more honest and open feelings'

Where participants were new to the team, or were in a session with a wider team they didn't know so well, they felt less safe to contribute even though they would have liked to.

'I have felt very shut out of my team and therefore do not feel able to share my feelings. I think the experience would have been better with just those I am close within the team as I would have felt able to share which might have helped me get a lot of stuff off my chest'

There was one instance recorded where a senior manager was in the session and challenged someone's practice which made it feel less safe to explore feelings.

'On one occasion it felt that the manager was challenging someone's practice which is not the right forum and makes team time feel less safe to explore feelings.'

Participants found it interesting to hear the points of views of their colleagues and insightful to know what their colleagues are going through.

'I found this experience insightful to how others are feeling, I felt that it was positive for me to reflect on the knowledge that we are all in this together even when we are all apart!'

Many felt that the Team Time session was a positive experience despite how difficult dealing with the emotion could be.

'It was emotive and powerful. I benefitted personally, and believe it was a positive experience for the team as a whole'

Participants felt it was positive to be given this space to have the time to discuss their emotions and reflect on how their experiences have made them feel and how they are not alone in these feelings.

'The experience made me feel emotional in a positive way as I reflected on how we are all important to each other'

One person stated that they felt a *'pressure to be positive'* in the session as they weren't able to discuss actual difficulties. A couple of other participants found it to be a negative experience describing it as *'depressing and downing'*. Some others just did not feel comfortable in this type of environment.

Well facilitated

36 participants mentioned the facilitation and/or the facilitator in this section of feedback. The majority (n=34) of these were positive, praising the facilitator for providing a safe, supportive space, enabling open and honest conversation with compassion and care. However, there were two respondents who felt there was room for improvement with the facilitation. They commented that the sessions were too structured and the process was prioritised over the conversation.

'Unfortunately the facilitator prioritised getting the process right over the actual conversation. Too much time spent following a checklist, there was no time for discussion'

Follow up

Some participants felt that a follow up or de-brief was needed at the end of, or after, the sessions. It was felt that there was the potential to leave people in a vulnerable state and some felt the ending was too abrupt.

'at the end it was left somehow up in the air - it could have been a really good opportunity to generate agreement to complete a team wrap or support plan or just to keep reflection & wellbeing higher on the agenda'

One person suggested having some tools to take away might have been useful, or advice on how to emotionally stabilize after the session before carrying on with their day. A couple of people noted that someone in their session was struggling emotionally and they hoped that someone followed up with that person after the session, but they were not sure.

'I felt slightly flat afterwards. Intense feelings and then nothing…. I could handle this, but I am not sure everybody would, and this could potentially leave some people very vulnerable.'

Structure

In this section of feedback there were several comments on the structure of the sessions. This was also included as a specific question later in the feedback form so a more thorough exploration will feature below.

A few (n=13) commented on the size of group and from these the preference was to have a smaller group. People felt more comfortable opening up where the group was smaller and the team were more familiar as this made people feel safer and more comfortable to share.

'Really good forum to discuss things in a smaller group to the Schwartz rounds and with team members we already know.'

Where it was felt that the group size was too small, this was generally because of a lack of participation from the participants and it was felt that if the group had been bigger there would have been more contributions.

'only a small number this time but hopefully this will increase making for better discussion.'

Group sizes are likely to have varied greatly across different organisations and we did not collect data on the corresponding group numbers.

Eight people commented that the sessions could have been longer to allow for more time for the group discussion.

Seven people commented that they already have these types of conversations in their teams.

Technology

Fourteen respondents commented on the use of cameras. Of these, six commented that they were able to, and valued, seeing their colleagues faces suggesting cameras were on in the session. A further six stated that cameras were off during the session and that this made the session more difficult for them, either because it felt uncomfortable not seeing faces, more distant, or more difficult to connect. To ensure smooth-running of the sessions and expectations, clear guidance re camera and audio should be stated beforehand or at the start of the session.

Virtual format

There were several comments regarding the virtual nature of the Team Time sessions. Words such as '*unnatural*', '*odd*' and '*strange*' were used to describe the experience of having these conversations online, and some found that they, or others in their group, felt less sure about contributing online. Some felt it was more distant and that some of the emotion and connection was lost in a virtual format. Others simply missed the '*in person face to face experience*' that comes with a Schwartz Round. One or two people commented that it felt very different online but that this was perhaps because it was new.

There were a couple of respondents who preferred the virtual format, finding it safer being able to join from the comfort of their own home, as well as more accessible, and that the emotions were still '*very palpable'*.

Two people felt that the virtual format meant they were easily distracted from the session and were not able to be fully present as they were side-tracked by phone calls and/or emails.

Uncertainty

Seventeen respondents commented on some uncertainty or anxiety around not knowing what to expect. Four of these were around the unexpected emotion they experienced in the session. The other thirteen were around not having clear instructions or expectations for what the session was going to be like, what the rules were and how the session was going to run. People would have valued knowing in advance that they were able to just listen and there was no pressure to contribute.

Negative

Of the 565 free text responses, only eleven could be construed as wholly negative. These were from people who commented that the session made them upset or depressed (n=4). Some people felt that they already have these conversations with colleagues, so they did not gain anything from the session (n=2) whilst others found it was too painful (n=1), tiring (n=1), or made them feel like a failure (n=1). One person commented that the session made them feel like an outsider, and another that the session was un-inclusive of staff and widening an existing divide between staff.

15) Are there any aspects of the session you found particularly helpful?

Answers to this question largely reflected the answers and themes from the previous question.

The most referenced aspects people found particularly helpful were the shared feelings (n=50), being given the time to reflect (n=48), listening (n=43), the good facilitation (n=40) and hearing others' experiences (n=38).

Connecting

Participants found it helpful to be able to connect as a team and hear that others were experiencing the same things, and feeling the same way, as them.

'*so great to have those together with shared experiences and felt it helped to build a team bond'*

This validated their feelings and made them feel less alone.

'*knowing that other people felt the same way, feeling validated'*

They really valued being together as a team to talk about their feelings and emotions, and also being able to share and hear the more personal sides of people's stories as this enabled them to understand their colleagues better and be more supportive.

'realising that everyone is experiencing similar emotions both on a personal and professional level'

Time to reflect

Being given the time away from their normal routines to reflect was invaluable.

'Being given the time to reflect on myself and my colleagues'

'just having the space and time to think about the impact of the current situation'

Facilitation

Participants found it helpful that the sessions were so well facilitated and that there were no expectations or agenda from the sessions.

'The facilitator enabled us to actually reflect as a team'

They valued that there was no pressure to contribute but they were given the opportunity to share and contribute whilst being listened to and feeling heard.

'Being able to speak but if you didn't want to speak you still felt involved'

Feeling as though they had permission to speak about their feelings and the impact of their work and the current environment on themselves was extremely helpful.

'knowing it's ok to talk about how one is feeling'

Listening

Participants really valued being able to sit and just listen to the experiences, perspectives and feelings of others.

'Listening to the stories and tuning in to how I felt hearing them, rather than going into problem solving mode'

Discussion

Having the opportunity to enter into a discussion about people's stories, experiences and emotions was also helpful to participants:

'the facilitated discussions were all really useful'

'to have the ability to talk as a group

Guidance

Participants found it helpful when there was clear guidance prior to or at the start of the session so that they knew what to expect and how things were going to run during the session.

'I felt the facilitator explained things very clearly in terms of the structure of the meeting. I found this helpful because it enabled me to remain "in the moment" and focused'

Chat function

People liked being able to use the chat function so that they didn't have to speak if they didn't want to but could still contribute.

'The option to type questions or comments rather than interrupt the speaker was useful and enabled people to have their say'.

16) Are there aspects of the session that you found difficult/unhelpful?

Technology

The technology was the most common aspect of the session reported as being difficult or unhelpful.

Thirty respondents commented that having cameras turned off was unhelpful. This was largely due to finding it harder to connect without seeing people's faces and their reactions/expressions.

'it was difficult connecting with people at times without being able to see them'

However, two respondents found that having cameras on was distracting.

'When people have the camera on and can be seen doing other things, rather than listening in to the conversations, this can be distracting'

There were also some audio issues such as delays or poor-quality audio. A couple of people commented on the background noise interrupting when participants were not on mute.

Virtual

People found it difficult hearing others on the session so upset (n=14), particularly in a virtual forum where they were not able to reach out and comfort them in a physical way.

'Felt very difficult hearing how upset people were and not being able to give them a hug'

Some felt that it was unhelpful having to re-live the difficulties they had been going through and re-experience the emotions.

'having to look at and experience the emotions again'

Some also felt that the emotion was left unresolved at the end which potentially left participants vulnerable. It was felt that there needed to be more emphasis on wrapping the session up in the absence of the informal chats and checking in with each other at the end of a physical Schwartz Round.

'after the session I felt like a needed to talk to someone as a debrief'

'from feeling as if I was in a room with colleagues, I suddenly felt very isolated'

Some participants also voiced concern about distressed colleagues and not knowing whether they were followed up with and supported at the end of the session.

Participation

Participants found it difficult/unhelpful when there was not enough participation from the group (n=12)

'difficult as so few people share'

Some people also found the silences difficult to cope with (n=12).

'at times there were silences which I find uncomfortable'

This was often because they found it awkward and did not understand what the silences meant. Others found the silences made it more daunting to contribute. One respondent commented that it would be helpful to acknowledge that silences are ok and are to be expected.

There were a couple of comments about how live the topic was. Two people felt unsafe and uncomfortable with the topic being so current as they were still dealing with unprocessed emotions and experiences.

'it was tricky that the events discussed were so immediate... I worried that at the moment discussing such personal ongoing events could make recovery harder'

Structure

There were some reflections (n=7) that the introduction part of the session was too long or too corporate. Four people commented about an initial video played which they felt was too corporate or difficult to understand and that this time could have been better used as more discussion time.

From those who commented on the group size (n=13) there was a consensus that too many people in the group makes it difficult to contribute, however there needs to be a balance. Those who commented on the small numbers of the session did so because not enough people were contributing, and they therefore hoped larger numbers would improve this.

Three people commented that having a senior manager in the session was difficult, particularly when the manager commented on a piece of practice as this is not the right forum. A manager also commented that they found it difficult being in the session

'Not easy as a manager to sit in both camps'

Three people commented that they felt uneasy not knowing who was in the session.

'You are not sure who is present, and it feels more intimidating contributing'

Several people (n=8) felt the session wasn't long enough and it would have been helpful to have more time to continue the discussions

'A little more time may have been helpful as it took us time as an audience to get into the flow'

Facilitator

In their response to the question about unhelpful aspects, ten people commented on the facilitation. There was a mix between those who felt that the facilitation was over the top and those who felt the facilitator needed to do more to encourage contributions.

'the facilitation was over the top and controlling… also there were subtle political point scoring comments'

'wondered if there could have been some questions from the facilitators to help encourage members of the audience to contribute more'

It was also commented as unhelpful when the facilitators were not familiar with the technology.

Furthermore, one person commented that there was a lack of social distancing which escalated their anxiety. This was presumably in a session which was held in person.

17) Do you have any comments on the structure and format of the online session and/or size of the group: what worked and what didn't?

Group

The aspect most referenced in response to this question was the group size (n=65). Of these, 55 felt that a smaller group was preferred

'I think the group felt too big for me to feel comfortable sharing'

'smaller size felt intimate and safe'

'having a small sized group and a team I was familiar with was helpful'

Some people gave suggestions of group size numbers. Four people suggested 10-12 people was about the right number. One person suggested a maximum of 15, two others suggested a maximum of 20, one a maximum of 30. One person thought 25 people was too large, another suggested the number should be 20-30. One person thought the maximum should be 8 people.

Three people commented on preferring a larger group, to enable them to feel more '*anonymous*' and to '*generate conversation and share experiences*'.

Camera

Cameras were the second most referenced aspect in the responses to this question (n=41).

Fifteen people suggested that they would prefer cameras on as it made them feel more connected. Eight of these had the camera on during the session and seven did not but would have preferred to.

'we could see each other, and I think we really needed that'

'in this new world of disconnection I feel it is important to see people'

Eighteen people suggested that they liked having cameras off in their session as this made them feel safer and more comfortable.

'I appreciated that cameras were expected to be off - especially if it brings up something emotional for you. It allows you the time and space to deal with your own feelings, without worrying that everyone is watching'

Four of these commented that they could put the camera on if they wanted to when speaking which they appreciated.

'not putting on our camera unless we wanted to speak made me feel more safe'

A further two respondents stated that they would like the option for cameras to be allowed on when contributing.

Four others commented that they liked being able to have cameras on at the beginning and/or end of the session to see everyone's faces but then having the camera off for the stories and discussion.

'it was great at the beginning to just have the two facilitators and speakers on screen. a really good aspect was everyone waving goodbye at the end'

A further two people thought that having camera on or off should be optional.

Virtual

Twenty-seven people commented on the virtual aspect of the sessions. Fourteen of these commented that they would have preferred to have the session in person. This was largely due to it not feeling natural online and that it was felt this kind of practice is more impactful in person.

'worked ok but face to face is far more powerful in my opinion'

Nine people found that the virtual format made it more accessible for them compared to Schwartz Rounds which they have previously struggled to attend.

'I have found attending the sessions difficult in the past due to work timetable, commitments and travel. this was a great way for me to engage in these sessions'

One person also commented that they expect the anonymity of the virtual format would encourage more reluctant members of the team to join.

Two people commented that the virtual format would not accommodate large groups

Participation

Ten people liked that there was no pressure to contribute and that they were able to choose whether they wanted to or not.

'I think it worked very well that you could choose how much you contributed verbally, I really struggle to open up especially when in a large group and did not feel pressured to speak out in front of everyone.'

Although some didn't like people being on the call and not participating, several people really valued not feeling as though they had to speak and just being able to listen and reflect.

'I liked the fact that I could listen and didn't have to speak if I didn't want to'

Three people did comment that more participation was needed and that it would be useful for some tools to encourage more people to contribute.

Chat function

Thirteen people commented about the use of the chat function. Of these, six were able to participate by writing comments in the chat box rather than having to speak which they appreciated.

'I found that very supportive'

One other person commented that they would have liked this option. However, another person found that using the chat box for a conversation was unhelpful.

Three respondents commented that writing their names in the chat box when they wanted to speak worked well. One other person found this a barrier.

'People typing on the chat that they wanted to speak felt like a fair process but for me personally was a bit of a barrier, in the context of me still getting used to online group sessions.'

Introduction/Preparation

Eight people commented on feeling unprepared for the session in terms of not knowing what to expect or how it was going to work.

'Clear direction on what is happening is essential'

Some would have liked warning that it may be upsetting, others would have liked more insight into what the session was going to look like, others on how it would work in terms of the technology and contributing with clear ground rules.

Length

Fifteen people commented on the length of the sessions. Of these, twelve felt that the sessions should be longer.

'Some people may not participate as they feel what they want to share isn't important enough given the time that has been allocated.'

This was to allow more time for discussions and so that the grounding exercises at the beginning did not need to be rushed.

The other three people commenting on length felt that less time needed to be spent on the ground rules, people need to join early so as not interrupt the time given for the session, and that the sessions needed to be flexible to allow for the discussion to continue should it be needed.

Summary

Sharing

The most helpful and appreciated aspect of Team Time was the sharing. Teams valued hearing from their colleagues and how they are, both in a personal and professional sense, hearing and reflecting on their shared experiences and feelings. This encouraged team bonding and the sense of a human connection whilst normalising some of the feelings they had been having and making them feel they are not alone.

There were a few exceptions to this who found the sessions did not help them and actually made them feel more isolated as they were experiencing and/or feeling things differently to their colleagues and could not relate to what was being shared.

Emotion and follow up

Many respondents found the sessions to be extremely emotional. For some this was unexpected, and they would have liked to have warning about it.

Only a few people commented on the rawness of the emotion due to the 'live' topic of covid-19. Some found it hard reliving the emotion and experience but the small number of comments on this suggest that most people valued having an outlet to have these kinds of conversations.

Some preferred being alone in the comfort of their own home when feeling so emotional, but others struggled with this in a virtual format. Some were concerned that there were people struggling who might not be getting any follow up or support after the session.

People also found it difficult going from being on an emotive call to switching off and being alone or having to go straight back to work without any further interaction. This highlights the importance of follow up and support for people distressed or needing some further discussion. It also suggests that incorporating a way to wrap up the session is needed to end on a positive note or to offer some closure to the discussions which have taken place. Examples of this could be a breathing exercise at the end or tools to take away to help emotionally stabilise after the session and re-set before continuing with their day.

Facilitation

Most respondents were complimentary of the facilitation of the sessions and really valued the honest, open and safe environment created by the facilitators. The feedback shows that a good facilitator really made a difference to how participants experienced the session and what they were able to get out of it.

Participants valued that there was no pressure to participate however it is important that facilitators can encourage those who have something to say to share by drawing out themes and posing relevant questions. It is however important that the facilitators are able to strike a balance between drawing out themes and reflections and allowing participants to contribute and share their own thoughts and feelings.

There was some feedback that the facilitator could occasionally become too concerned with the process and following a set structure for the session which detracted from an open, flowing discussion and did not enable contribution from the audience.

It is also key that the facilitators have some level of familiarity with the technology so that this does not detract from the smooth-running of the session.

In addition to a warning that the sessions may be emotional and cause participants some level of distress, it is also important that clear guidance is offered prior to the session so that participants are prepared, know what to expect and are clear on how the session is going to run.

Group size

It is important to strike a balance between needing a big enough group of people participating to keep the session flowing, and not being so large a group that it becomes too overwhelming or daunting for people to contribute, and to keep it feeling intimate and a safe space in which to share.

As the survey did not specifically ask for the size of the group in each session, it is difficult to know what the corresponding group size was to each respondent. It seems that bigger groups were generally less successful and that smaller groups made up of team members who know each other felt safer sharing and were able to get more out of the conversations. This however will vary depending on the specific team involved and the organisational culture.

Although many people valued not being pressured to contribute, some respondents found it unhelpful when not many people contributed to the discussions. This is something which might improve as people get more comfortable with having these conversations, particularly in this format.

It is therefore perhaps worthwhile the facilitator acknowledging that just listening is ok, and that silences are valuable and to be expected.

Generally people valued the opportunity to have these sorts of discussions with their team to help them gain insight into their colleagues, increase team-bonding and empathy, and to highlight their shared experiences.

Cameras

There were mixed feelings about the use of cameras in the Team Time sessions. Some really valued being able to see their colleagues faces – particularly if they were working from home or shielding – as it helped them to connect, and made the session more powerful being able to see people's responses to the stories and comments. However, many people preferred not having to be on camera. This allowed them to sit and reflect on what was being said and really feel in the zone. Some also felt safer to contribute with the level of anonymity not having a camera on offered.

A flexible approach to use of cameras is probably required depending on the individual team. Some gave the option to turn videos on at the start and end of the session so that the team get the chance to see each other but there are then no distractions during the stories. Others gave participants the option to turn their video on when they were contributing depending on their personal preference.

Technology

When relying on technology to run this type of session there are always going to be hiccups. Hopefully over time, as people get more used to using the technology in this way, it will get easier.

Key to the smooth running of the sessions is clear guidance on how the session is going to run (e.g. cameras on/off, posting name in chat box to contribute, etc) and audio being muted for those not speaking to prevent background noise and distraction. It is important that participants are encouraged to turn off their phones/emails/close other programmes to ensure that they will not be distracted and are able to remain fully present during the session.

Many respondents appreciated being able to contribute to the session via commenting in the chat box rather than speaking. This enabled them to contribute and feel valued and part of the discussion without having to speak which can be very daunting for some. Allowing contributions via the chat box may be useful to encourage participation as discussion if the facilitator is comfortable with this and is able to read the comments out for people to feel heard. This in turn might build confidence to contributing aloud in the future.

Virtual vs physical

Those who mentioned that they had experienced Schwartz Rounds before generally preferred being able to have these kinds of conversations and reflections in person. However, the virtual format of Team Time does make the sessions more accessible to people who often aren't able to attend physical Schwartz Rounds as they don't need to be in a specific physical location to join and it is less of a time commitment if they don't need to travel there, etc.

There was a consensus that some of the connection emotion was lost having these conversations online rather than in person. Despite this, people valued having the opportunity to have this type of reflection at all given the Covid-19 environment.

As people get more used to having these conversations in a virtual forum it may start to feel less strange. Team Time could also be a good introduction to Schwartz Rounds due to their accessibility and the potential for anonymity when participating.

Length

Several people commented that more time was needed for the session. Again, it is a difficult balance between keeping the length short enough that it does not become a barrier for people to attend, but long enough for fruitful, meaningful discussions. As facilitators become more experienced running sessions they will hopefully be able to streamline sessions so that there is optimum time for discussion. From feedback provided it seems that a minimum of 45 minutes is needed to allow enough time for the discussion element.

Conclusion

The feedback on Team Time thus far is extremely positive. The sessions are proving to be very valuable to many participants as they offer an often otherwise unavailable outlet for discussing the emotional impact of their work, and promote team understanding and cohesion.

As a new practice, there are still improvements which can be made to the Team Time model to ensure that participants are able to get as much out of the sessions as possible. Many of these however are likely to be down to individual sites to streamline depending on the specific teams who will be engaging in Team Time. Group size, length, cameras on/off, and the facilitators approach will all be able to be adapted depending on the needs of each team and/or organisation.

Some further guidance may be needed on the preparation for, and the start of the session, along with the end of the session and follow up. It is important that participants have an idea of what to expect from the session to help alleviate any anxiety or apprehension prior to joining. It is even more important the sessions are ended in a way that does not leave people feeling vulnerable and alone after a potentially distressing session. Follow up and support afterwards will be key for the psychological safety of the sessions.

The long term sustainability of Team Time is likely to vary drastically between different organisations depending on the teams who experience it, the organisational culture and backing, and the effectiveness of the facilitators at recruiting for sessions and enabling open, honest and valuable discussions.

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