

CONNECT

CONFIDENT AND CLEAR DIGITAL COMMUNICATION

INTRODUCTION TO MORTAL FOOLS

Mortal Fools is a multi award-winning theatre, drama and creative learning company in North East England.

We create compelling, dynamic and high-quality theatre by professional artists working as co-creators with young people and communities; helping people connect, have fun, learn and grow together. Our work is collaborative and contemporary, pushing the boundaries of spatial configuration, audience interaction and design.

We also work with adults supporting people of all ages to form better inter-personal connections – strengthening people, groups and businesses.

You can keep in touch with Mortal Fools on social media **@mortalfoolsuk** or by emailing **Rachel.Horton@mortalfools.org.uk** – we'd love to hear from you!

THIS RESOURCE

We've designed this document to get you thinking and reflecting ahead of your time with Mortal Fools during our CONNECT session.

We suggest carving out 15-30 minutes ahead of our CONNECT session to go through the following activities, making some notes and giving yourself head space to properly reflect.

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IT IS NOT LIKE IT IS IN PERSON

No, it's not. That's just the way it is.

That's been a huge learning point – delivering online is going to be different and it's not about replicating what you can do in the room online – it is different and requires a different approach. Humans crave the presence of other human beings to make authentic connections, relationships and shared experiences and in digital spaces that happens very differently.

Like it or not, working through and delivering via digital platforms is going to be here to stay (in some form, at least). The world is changing around us in immeasurable and uncontrollable ways, and those who actively work to find ways to adapt, reinvent and re-imagine are the ones most likely to prosper in all this.

For many of us, delivering activities – meetings, workshops, lessons or pitches – through digital platforms is quite new. And doing new things makes us vulnerable and fearful – learning something new is always vulnerable – and it's especially difficult when we're doing that new thing publicly.

“Vulnerability is the birthplace of innovation, creativity and change.”

DR BRENE BROWN

If we want to increase our confidence with anything, it's important to recognise that confidence is not the absence of fear – confidence is the ability to wade through those feelings and not let them stop you.

Try to remind yourself of this when you hit a hard patch – treating yourself with the same spirit of generous support that you would likely give to someone else. This is new for all of us. We're going to make mistakes and we're going to find some things difficult – but if you stick with it, it will get better.

There are things we can do which make it a little better – things you can put in place yourself and our CONNECT training will help you do that.

One of our biggest learning points with our adventure delivering participatory sessions online to adults, young people and families is that sometimes, you can't control or predict what happens in the session and how your audience is going to respond, but what you can control is your preparation pre-session making sure that you feel confident in your delivery as possible, that you look confident and that your audience pre-session knows how they can participate and interact.

This is especially important as all the in person social cues and “rules” of interaction don't operate in the same way as they do in the real world; facilitators and folk often focus on how they can make their sessions participatory and engaging without making it clear to participants/attendees how and when they can actually participate and engage.

GETTING STARTED AND GETTING SET UP FOR DIGITAL DELIVERY

Prior to our CONNECT workshop, spend some time curating the space around you, a space that you would/could be delivering digital sessions from. This might be at home, or in a classroom or another work-space.

You need to plan how you will look on screen to make sure you can be clearly seen and heard and that you are properly organised for digital delivery.

SHORT TASK 1

Questions to reflect on when planning your delivery:

- Will you be sitting or standing?
- Have you limited potential interruptions?
- Is your space tidy? Does it make you feel good and ready to deliver?
- Have you limited other people's use of your internet connection for best connectivity (if working at home)?
- Do you have everything you need to hand for the session? Register? Drink? Notebook? In Resources? Where will you put the resources, so they are easily to hand? (For proper safeguarding, you may not be able to step away from the camera during an online session should you have forgotten something.) Digital resources/video easily accessible? Have you tested them?
- Start a video meeting on whatever platform you use – making sure you can see yourself on screen. How do you look?

Then consider and adjust to make sure:

- You are close enough and centred to the camera so people can see your facial expressions.
- You are well lit – too bright (glare), too dark or backlighting all make your face difficult to see.
- Your microphone is clearly picking your voice up.
- There are not too many distractions in your background (which can make it harder for participants to concentrate on you) – visual and auditory.

SHORT TASK 2

Note down what adjustments you made to your delivery space and bring them to share in your CONNECT sessions.

SHORT TASK 3

To help make our online sessions run as smoothly as possible, we have a set of protocols we go through with a group at the start of a session / series of sessions.

Spend a few minutes noting down some session protocols that would work for you.

Ours for Zoom sessions are:

- Change your on-screen name to be your first name and, if you like, your preferred pronouns.
- Send the host a private message to let us know if you have any access needs we should be aware of, or any problems during the session.
- Keep yourself on mute unless speaking or asked to unmute to minimise interference.
- Set yourself on "gallery view" for a better experience of being in a group.
- If you get interrupted during the session, don't worry. Turn off your camera, sort it out and come back. This minimises distractions for other participants (adult participants only).
- No-one else should be on the video call with you, unless pre-agreed (young participants only).
- If I lose signal and the meeting ends – or if you lose signal – please sign back in.

SHORT TASK 3 CONT...

- Either raise your real hand or use the digital raise hand function if you want to speak during discussions.
- Please be generous in your responses to what other people are saying either using the response buttons at the bottom or giving visual feedback like a thumbs up.
- Feel free to take notes as we go – but notes of the session and the activities will be circulated to you soon after the workshops.

We also provide our participants (and parents/carers if delivering to young people) with pre-session information telling participants most of the above too.

We've found digital sessions can heighten anxiety due to the newness and uncertainty and providing clear pre-information, setting expectations and sharing the "rules" of engagement really helps.

FINAL WORDS

Our final suggestion to you, is to get out there and attend events, workshops, webinars and participatory happenings.

We supplemented our learning not only by doing and experimenting and reflecting on our experience afterwards but also observing and experiencing different approaches and inviting peer feedback and support.

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