



Ways to Meet the Spiritual and Emotional Needs of Sisters during the Pandemic: Best Practices on Zoom

Introduction: During the pandemic, many of us have found our worlds turned upside down. Perhaps you are trying to work from home while supporting children going to school online. Or perhaps you are worried because you can't see elderly family members, or are feeling isolated while living alone. Whatever your situation, we know it's a time of increased stress and want to do everything possible to ensure that your Sisterhood will bring you joy and be a safe harbor, a place to revitalize, give and receive support, and deepen relationships during this time of disconnection.

Since it's likely that chapters and larger regional events will be held in the virtual "Zoomiverse" for the foreseeable future, we have created this guide to help you:

- Use virtual gatherings to maintain and deepen personal relationships while on Zoom.
- Understand how Zoom works.
- Identify topics and activities that translate well in the virtual world.
- Explore ways to simplify chapter management and co-leader responsibilities in the virtual world.

Virtual Gatherings

Regular virtual gatherings are the primary way to nurture and deepen relationships with your sisters during this time. Below is a sample agenda for Zoom gatherings. Your topics and the allotted time for each section will vary depending upon the interests of your sisters. Whatever your focus, an agenda will help keep your gathering on track.

i. Opening blessings and icebreaker	5 min
ii. Personal updates (~2-3 min each) ¹	30 min
iii. Small group discussion -see sample topics below on spiritual sustenance, along with info about "Zoom rooms"	30 min
iv. Reconvene and share highlights with entire group	15 min
v. Set next meeting time and assign new sisters to: (a) handle logistics and; (b) create an agenda for next gathering	10 min
vi. Closing blessings	5 min

Consider have a Zoom lunch. Try different days of the week. Make it easy for sisters to attend.

¹ Depending upon the number of women at the gathering.

Tips for Building Intimacy in the Virtual World

1. **Be fully present.** While it may be tempting to answer email or go online, please resist the temptation! Your body language may show that you're distracted and decrease the sense of emotional intimacy for the entire group.
2. **Sound.** Find a quiet space before the gathering. If there is noise in your background, mute your sound when you're not speaking. Just remember to unmute before you speak.
3. **Visuals matter!** Make sure to adjust your camera and lighting so everyone can clearly see your face.

Discussion Topics

The Sisterhood Manual includes many topics for discussion (<https://sosspeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Membership-Manual-Suggested-Meeting-Themes-Winter-2020.pdf>). **Click here** for three different discussion topics that are excellent for newer chapters. They have been updated for virtual gatherings. Check out the *Resource Corner* in the Sisterhood Bi-weekly Briefing (it goes out every other Wednesday via email) to find other updated versions that adapt well to our virtual world.

We are all navigating uncharted waters. Try having your central discussion in group breakout rooms one gathering and then stay all together during your next gathering. (See below for how to enable breakout rooms.) Going into breakout rooms will give you more time for in-depth learning, sharing, and support. But the trade-off is, you won't hear from everyone. See which way works best for your chapter. There is no right answer here!

Below are some general discussion prompts and questions that can support deep sharing. Check out the link above for additional ideas. We'll be adding more structured activities over the coming months.

1. Share something that is weighing on your heart now.
2. How can your sisters best support you during this time?
3. What's going on in your emotional life now?
4. What are ways that your faith or religious practice is sustaining you now?
5. How are you staying connected to your community now (either religious or secular)?

INTRODUCTION TO ZOOM

Zoom is an online video conferencing platform. The free version limits you to 40 minutes/session. If someone in your chapter has a Professional license (no time-limit), feel free to schedule your gathering on their license. But don't worry, if you don't have access to a pro license, the Sisterhood purchased extra licenses for your chapter use. The person who wants to be host (see role below) emails Nadia (nadia@sosspeace.org) at least one week ahead of time, if at all possible. Nadia will create your meeting and email the host with instructions for how to

“claim host”. This is a **NEW CAPABILITY** and will ensure that every chapter can access unlimited Zoom time!!

Zoom 101

It may be helpful to review some Zoom basics at the beginning until everyone is comfortable. Zoom has a toolbar at the bottom of the computer screen with several icons. It may appear elsewhere on a phone or tablet. Here are a few things to review:

1. **Sound.** When prompted upon entry, choose “use computer sound”. *If there is a red line through the microphone icon, you are muted.* To unmute, click on the icon. The red line will disappear and you should be able to speak and be heard. If others can’t hear you, click the up arrow next to the microphone and choose a different microphone setting among the listed options. If you choose to mute when not talking so background noise isn’t a distraction, remember to click the microphone icon to unmute before you start to talk. Remember, a red line through your microphone means you are muted.
2. **Video** (camera icon) is similar to the sound icon. Clicking on it will turn video on and off. We strongly encourage everyone to keep their video on. Eating is no excuse—just let everyone know what you’re having!
3. **View.** Gallery view allows you to see everyone in equal-sized squares, while speaker view highlights the person speaking. If you only see the speaker and you are on a computer, go to the top right of your screen and click on the view setting which will change you to gallery view. We recommend gallery view unless someone will be sharing or presenting for an extended period of time.
4. **Chat** (rectangular bubble icon). To use, make sure that you see the word “everyone” when you click on the chat icon. If you see one person’s name, click on the arrow next to their name and scroll until you see “everyone”, then click on that. If you chat privately with one person, keep it brief so you can give your full attention to the person speaking.
5. **Reactions** (face icon). Click on the icon to show approval, e.g. clap, thumbs up, or show love, when you don’t want to speak.
6. **Name.** To ensure that your name shows up and not another computer user, click on the 3 dots in the upper right-hand corner of your “hollywood square”. Go to rename and type your name as you want it to appear.

Zoom Logistics

1. **Host.** The host has several abilities:
 - a. Let people in from the waiting room. This is a new Zoom feature to enhance security, making sure that no unauthorized person enters your gathering. The host must click “admit” (name shows up top center) for the person to enter.
 - b. Share screen, for example, to show a movie or post group agreements. If host wants other participants to share screen, click on share screen arrow and enable “all participants”.
 - c. Move people into breakout rooms.

- d. Assign co-hosts. Co-hosts can do everything that a host can do except move people into breakout rooms. You may assign multiple co-hosts.
- e. Assign someone else to be host if she needs to leave the meeting.

The original host can assign a new host at any time during your gathering. It's helpful for the host to be comfortable with Zoom logistics. We recommend that the host not serve as the facilitator, so she can focus on addressing any technical issues that may arise.

2. **Breakout Rooms.** The host can assign two or more people to each breakout room for more intimate discussion. The host (and only the host) will see "Breakout Room" as an option on the Zoom toolbar. When clicked, the host will be asked how many rooms she wants to create. Let's say there are 16 women on the call and she wants four sisters in each group. She will create three rooms. Zoom will ask whether she wants to automatically or manually assign. We suggest manual assignment so you can achieve balance between Muslim and Jewish sisters. To manually assign, click on each sister's name and move her to one of the three rooms. You can exchange women or move to another room by following the Zoom prompts next to the person's name. In order for the host to be part of a group of four, do not assign three women to a breakout room. They will remain with the host and function as the 4th breakout room.

If you want participants to choose which breakout room they go to, you must have downloaded Zoom version 5.3 or higher. Under the breakout room icon, check "participants can assign own rooms". The host just needs to identify the total number of breakout rooms and participants can then self-select. The host can also do a combination and assign some participants and allow others to self-select.

If for some reason, a small group has a question for the host, they can send her a message by clicking "message host". The host will join the breakout room by going to the breakout room icon and clicking on the arrow to the right of the room that requested help. When the issue is resolved, she can return to the main room by clicking on the icon "leave breakout room".

To return everyone to the main room at the end of the allotted time, the host clicks on the "breakout room" icon to "end breakout rooms". Each room will automatically see a message saying that the breakout room will automatically close in 60 seconds. If you want to give sisters a heads up, the host can "broadcast" a message "breakout rooms will be ending in 3 minutes". For more detailed information, visit: <https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/206476313-Managing-Breakout-Rooms>.

3. **Screen Share.** If you want to share a movie or document, make sure it is already opened on your computer before you enter Zoom. When you click the share screen icon you will see all the open documents on your computer. Select the one you want and screen share will begin. The host can enable screen share so that all participants are able to share their screen. E.g. a participant wants to show a power point or a movie.

Tips to get the most out of Zoom:

1. **Use breakout rooms.** Being together as a whole group is ideal for opening and closing blessings, check ins, and logistics. Moving into smaller groups in breakout rooms can mimic some of the 1:1 or small group conversations that happen naturally in meetings.
2. **Use the chat function.** While you want to explicitly discourage sisters from “chatting” with individuals during the gathering, using the chat function can very successfully engage everyone at the beginning and end of your gathering, creating positive energy and group cohesion in a short time.

Examples of a “chat icebreaker”.

- a. Share one thing that brought you joy this week.
- b. In four words, describe something you’ve done this week to take care of yourself.
- c. Describe something that made you laugh this week.

Examples of prompts to end your gathering:

- a. One word describing how you’re feeling now.
- b. One way your sisters can support you between now and your next gathering.
- c. One way you will create space for self-care in the coming week.

When everyone has entered a response, someone can read the responses out loud.

For more detailed information on how to use the chat function, visit:

<https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/203650445-In-meeting-chat>

Additional Sisterhood Support:

1. Contact Samie Facciolo, Assistant Director (samantha@sosspeace.org) if you have general concerns about your chapter and either she, Sarah Haider, or one of the volunteer Regional Coordinators can provide ongoing support.
2. Contact Janet Penn, Director of Resource Development and Training (janet@sosspeace.org) if you would like additional ideas about discussion topics or areas where additional training would be helpful.