

The Threads Among Us Facilitator's Manual

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For Facilitators:

This manual is a guide for facilitating a 60-minute leadership workshop on increasing awareness of interprofessional civility and empathy. You do not have to read this manual verbatim. The statements are provided to help guide the discussion and make this exercise as easy as possible for the facilitators. We recommend reading through it prior to facilitating the workshop for your group and using it with the provided PowerPoint slides to make for smooth transitions throughout the workshop.

Check You'll Need to Run the Workshop:

- Watch "The Threads Among Us" video and review this manual
- Make sure the room you use for the workshop has:
 - Access to a projector system
 - Internet access to visit "The Threads Among Us" website
 - Audio for watching the video
- Print *Activity Worksheets* from "The Threads Among Us" website
- Download "The Threads Among Us" PowerPoint slides
- Bring a stack of index cards (one for each participant)
- Sign-in sheet with e-mail addresses in order to send survey links
- Copy and paste the survey links on "The Threads Among Us" website to send to participants. **Make sure you send the PARTICIPANTS' survey link, NOT the facilitators' survey link.*
- Remember to fill out the facilitators' survey if you facilitate the workshop

Welcome

The title of today's workshop is "The Threads Among Us", and this refers to the many common threads that connect individuals who enter healthcare professions. A few examples of the links healthcare professionals share include similar values that lead them to careers in medicine (for example, the desire to help others), shared daily stressors, and involvement in the complex dynamics of healthcare teams. Despite a strong emphasis placed on empathic care of patients, empathic interactions with other members of the healthcare team often take a backseat.

The goal of this 60-minute workshop is to increase awareness of the importance of interprofessional civility and empathy by enhancing tools you already have and possibly adding some new ones to your toolbox by offering a forum to discuss these topics amongst colleagues. The topics addressed are critical leadership principles and skills regardless of one's title or position within a health care team. We will begin with an introductory activity on social contagion, followed by a viewing and discussion of the short video, "The Threads Among Us." We will conclude with an activity using a conceptual framework known as the Ladder of Inference.

Your feedback is critical to ongoing improvement of the workshop. Please make sure you have all signed in and provided a legible email address so that we can send a follow-up survey to you. **Let's begin!**

Activity 1: Social Contagion

Introduction to social contagion:

Have you ever been in a situation when a single individual has ‘sucked the energy’ out of the room? Or, have you ever been in a situation when a single individual infused the entire room with positivity and enthusiasm? If you have, you have experienced social contagion.

Social contagion only happens in networks – that is, it cannot happen if you are alone on an island. We connect with each other to form various types of networks: family, friends, neighborhoods, workplace departments. The structures of these networks play critical roles in how information, emotions, and behaviors are shared and/or spread.

The picture on the slide shows a study done by James Fowler and Nicholas Christakis using the Framingham Heart Study data over a 20-year period. Green dots are happy people, blue dots are unhappy people, yellow is neutral. The study demonstrated that individuals surrounded by happy individuals are more likely to become happy. This, as well as similar studies on social contagion of loneliness, smoking, alcohol use, and obesity have demonstrated spread of emotions and behaviors occur within up to three degrees of influence. When we say that emotions and behaviors have up to three degrees of influence, this means that your friend’s friend’s friend influences you, and vice versa.

Instructions to participants for social contagion:

We are going to split into groups of 2-3. Once you are in your groups, please introduce yourself to your group by sharing your name, department you work for, and position. Each group should designate one individual to write down the group’s answers to share with the larger group.

As a group, please consider the following questions:

1. Reflect on a time when you saw an individual at work or outside of work whose presence elevated your mood and the moods of those around you. (Each person in the group should share at least one example.)
2. What are ways in which we can try to positively impact our social networks?

Every interaction we have is an opportunity to be the index case in either a positive or negative outbreak of social contagion. We are about to watch “The Threads Among Us” video, which we will use to further explore the idea of social contagion as well as a cognitive model known as the Ladder of Inference.

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WATCH “THE THREADS AMONG US” VIDEO

Activity 2: Video Debrief

- “Are there any general comments about the content of the video anyone would like to share with the group?”
- “What scenarios portrayed in the video struck an emotional chord with you and why?”

Activity 3: The Ladder of Inference

Introduction to the Ladder of Inference

One of the common themes throughout the video is that, although we usually make efforts to be empathic towards patients, we frequently forget to be empathic and kind to each other. There are many reasons that this occurs. We will focus on The Ladder of Inference, a cognitive framework which illustrates how we unconsciously go from observations to assumptions to responses in the blink of an eye.

The Ladder of Inference was initially developed by the late Harvard University organizational psychologist and business school professor, Chris Argyris. The bottom rung of the Ladder begins with an actual neutral observation which we make assumptions about, and these assumptions lead us to respond or take action. This sequence of events occurs extremely rapidly and often unconsciously, like a “knee-jerk” reaction.

Take the common example of being cut off in traffic:

(Observation) → I am cut off in traffic

(Assumption) → That person is a selfish jerk (assumption) →

(Response) → I’m going to honk my horn at the person who cut me off

Let’s consider the concept of the Ladder of Inference to explore the workroom scene in the video in which a senior resident receives a consult she believes is inappropriate, or “bogus”, and then conveys this to the rest of the team with eyerolling.

Instructions to participants for The Ladder of Inference:

In your groups of 2-3, reflect on the following questions:

1. How might the resident’s response influence: a) her team members?, b) the consulting team’s members?, c) the patient?
2. Using the Ladder of Inference, why do you think that the resident was dismissive about this new consult?
 - a. Hint: It is natural to assume the tenth experience will be negative when the first nine have been. However, it does not have to be!
3. It is possible to “Hop off the Ladder?” If so, how could you “Hop off the Ladder?”
 - a. Hint: Can you question the validity of the assumptions being made about an observation...to tell a different story and respond more purposefully?
4. Have you successfully used any of these techniques in the past to prevent yourself from making a bad decision or acting on an erroneous belief?

Activity 4: Gratis Gratitude Postcard

Introduction to Gratis Gratitude Postcard:

At a few points during the Threads Among Us, we saw examples of individuals who did not feel acknowledged or valued. Everyone wants to feel valued. In closing, we would like to offer a parting opportunity to spread gratitude in your workplace through a Gratis Gratitude postcard. This small practical gesture can help you to start a positive social contagion of gratitude.

Instructions to Participants on Gratis Gratitude Postcard:

Take one of these postcards and write a message to an individual in your workplace who you feel is underappreciated. Thank that person for their role in making your workplace better. You can also simply write, "Thank You", "Has anyone told you that you are doing a great job?", or "Thank you for doing the work you do."

You may keep the letter or actually give it to the individual based on your comfort level.

Closing

Thank you for participating in this workshop, in which we have explored the different ways in which our connections provide opportunities to improve interprofessional empathy. First, we learned about the concept of social contagion: how we influence and are influenced. Second, we watched “The Threads Among Us” video and reflected on the relevance of the content to our own lives. Thirdly, we explored The Ladder of Influence to understand how we can have more control over our responses by questioning our assumptions about observations. And lastly, we offered an opportunity to spread the contagiousness of gratitude, recognizing that nobody achieves anything without a team.

Thank you so much for participating. As you prepare to leave the workshop, please remember to fill out the post-workshop surveys that will be e-mailed to each of you this evening, as your feedback is greatly valued.

As you depart, I would challenge you to think about the following:

What one concept from today’s workshop could you use tomorrow?