

Some of the advantages and positives of virtual training and events:

I wanted to share some feedback from attendees I have received & collected about some of the positive & beneficial elements of virtual events via zoom (NOT TEAMS!). Given I was dreading virtual working at the beginning of the pandemic & as a relational & interactive trainer felt completely unsure & uncomfortable. I'm surprised that I echo lots of what has been said & now really really enjoy it & hope to continue it as much as possible! This is by no means an exhaustive list but hopefully some food for thought. This feedback is based on my style of training, so this is specific to that. Of course, there are the trickier aspects too, and so depends on the individual's needs; but this particular post is focusing on the positive side as the trickier ones are more frequently shared- so I think it is nice to have some balance. Some of the below are direct quotes & others were grouped together as themes. Of course, each trainer & attendee is unique & there is no 1 size fits all.

1. Less travel time/ no travel or hotel costs. Including venue & catering costs for organisers which can be substantial. Also, means that more people can often be trained at the same time as not restricted by room capacity. So financially is cost saving and many organisations have found they can therefore use the budget for more training or on other resources. And train more people at the same time so increases the reach of training.
2. Because no travel is needed it can be for some more convenient and accessible including for people in different countries, w child care, other caring duties, in locations where training generally isn't held & people so often miss out, those w additional health &/or accessibility needs which may not be catered for or supported when face-to-face & many more.
3. "Have met people from a range of disciplines & contexts which I don't feel I experienced in the same way when face to face".
4. Less faffing w finding & settling into venues (often unfit & not conducive to learning, issues w projector, uncomfortable chairs, communal toilets, finding places to have lunch or if lunch provided dietary requirements, screen too far away to see etc). "Often in social care we are in a room falling apart, can hear the phones ringing, no tea or coffee & on hard chairs".
5. Get less distracted. "In a room I get distracted by people shuffling & moving & going to the toilet etc. Online, I find I stay more focused although it is tiring too so I enjoyed the brain breaks".

6. "We could have follow-up & layered trainings, reflective practice, or consults to embed learning which was an hour here or there which we could fit in as it was virtual. Whereas, before you wouldn't have been able to do that with your schedule & travel times".
7. It can be hard for some people to speak or feel comfortable to put up one's hand in a room full of people, so, virtual can allow for more people to feel comfortable to speak & share using the chat box (including the private option direct to the trainer on zoom which can make a big difference), Q & A, unmuting etc.
8. There is also choice & option for talking & sharing either through talking, typing, or private messages to the trainer (if on zoom- this allows for some amazing sharing & honesty which could be harder face to face). Options for creative interaction like word cloud, polls etc.
9. If at home there are options to keep comfortable & regulated which optimises learning (varies for each person) e.g. own food & snacks, own toilet, moving around, comfy seat, pyjama bottoms, fidget toys, walk the dog, access to other regulating items etc.
10. More options to juggle life including things like doing the washing in the break, getting parcels, looking after the dog etc meaning less stressful afterwards.
11. More option for choice which can feel safer. E.g. where to sit, opt out of break out rooms, camera off or on etc. Especially if things feel overwhelming or intense. If feeling emotional or overwhelmed in a room, it can feel exposing if tearful or need a moment etc.
12. "I would have felt silly doing some of the exercises, but I felt more comfortable doing the movement activities & things you did like dancing which I wouldn't have in a group & I loved them".
13. Can type & makes notes &/or save the chat box conversation which helps with reflecting on the training.
14. "I get to have a proper lunch; whilst the networking can be nice and needed at times. It can also be awkward & tiring. I loved having a full hour".
15. "Easier to read the slides as it is large & on my screen than from a distance on a projector at the back of a room".
16. "Feel less anxious about social situations & being in crowds etc when virtual so feel more comfortable so I can learn more. Don't need to be in unnecessary awkward situations".
17. "Feels more intimate. In a big room you are on the stage, on screen you are close up & in some ways to me feels more connecting".

18. Allowed for more flexibility like lunch time seminars, half day sessions, twilight sessions etc.
19. Keep the list going...