



Nurturing Digital Communities

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Who is this for?

- Organizations that offer member-to-member support
- Coaches, trainers and health educators
- Professionals looking for a way to find/engage with clients outside of traditional in person meetings

What you will learn

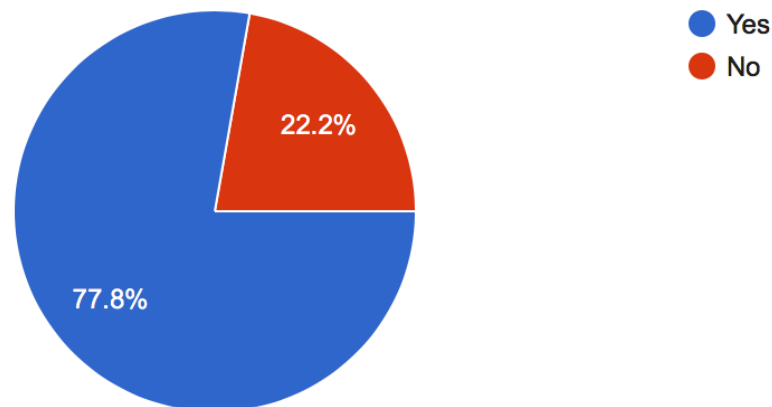
- Tools for digital communities
- Risks and challenges of digital communities for behavioral health support 🍷
- Where to find resources to set up, manage and moderate digital communities
- Where to invite professionals in to help build, manage these

What is an engaged online community?

- Joined common gathering space online
- Active
- Posts regularly
- Supportive
- Platform-agnostic – could be any platform that you can connect with others on (Facebook groups, online forums)

Why nurture an engaged community?

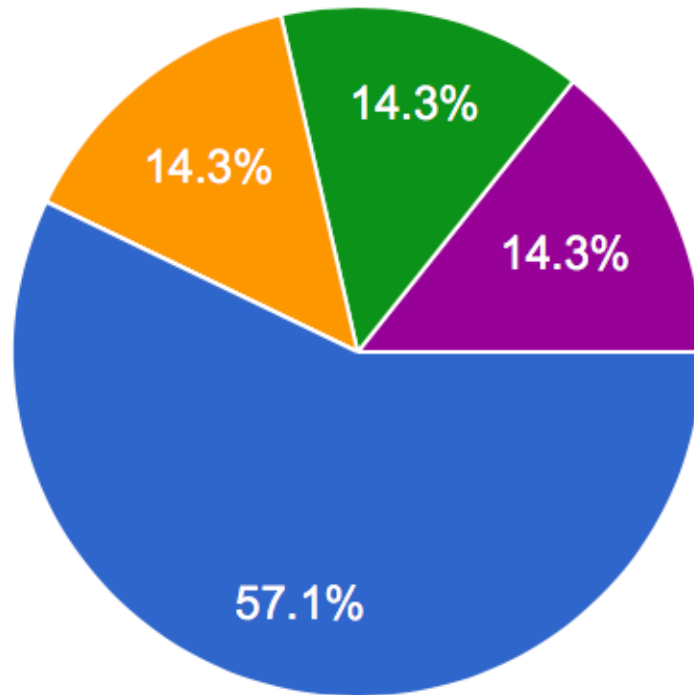
- People are already using them! In our survey 77% of respondents were already using online groups for support, help or community
- They work because our online lives are taking over
- Sharing in a private group is more helpful



How online communities grow

- Free tools like Facebook groups enable groups that become fully-functional peer-to-peer support groups
- Statewide organizations have pulled them in under umbrellas
 - Notable examples include in mental health and maternal and infant health groups that started online have now become fully fledged supportive organizations with funding and personnel.

Who is using digital communities?



- I was seeking support for myself
- I was seeking support for a child (of my own or that I am a guardian of)
- I was seeking support for another adult in my life (parent/spouse/friend/sibling)
- I was seeking for myself AND my children AND other adults in my life
- Self and child (different groups for each)

Before you set one up...

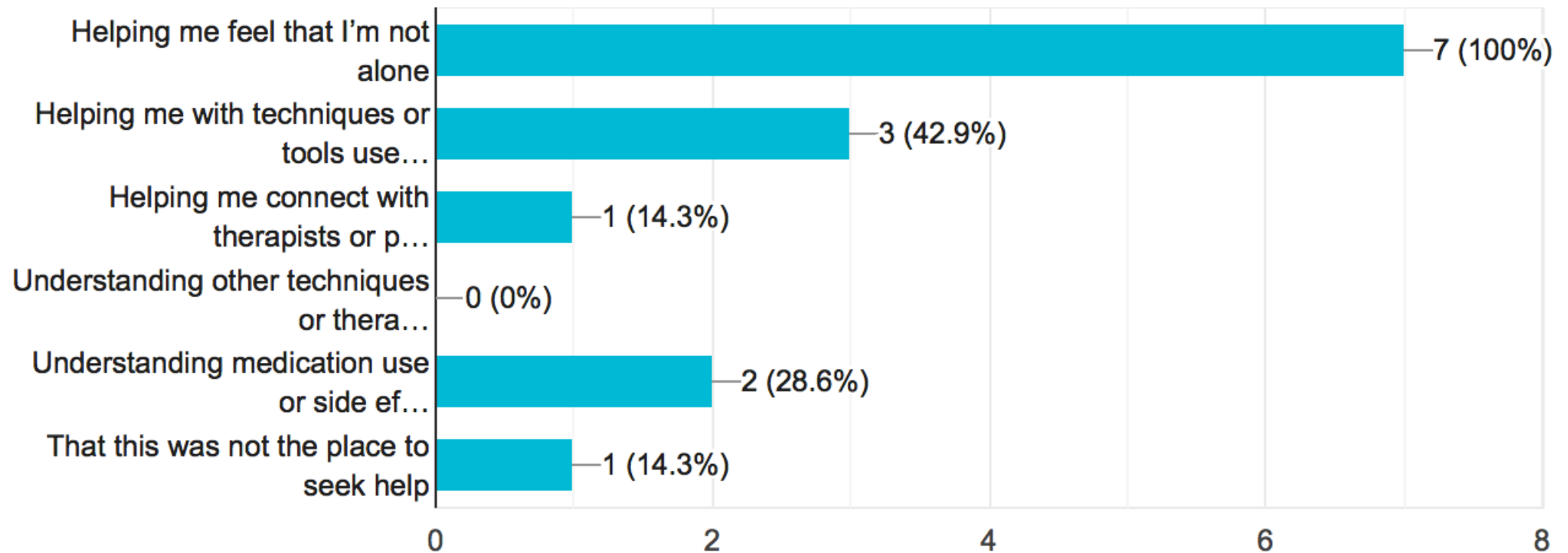
Is there another group out there?

Audience, purpose, platform and content

- SMART goals
 - Specific
 - Measurable
 - Attainable
 - Realistic
 - Time-bound

Group goals

- Community, friendship, support, assistance, education

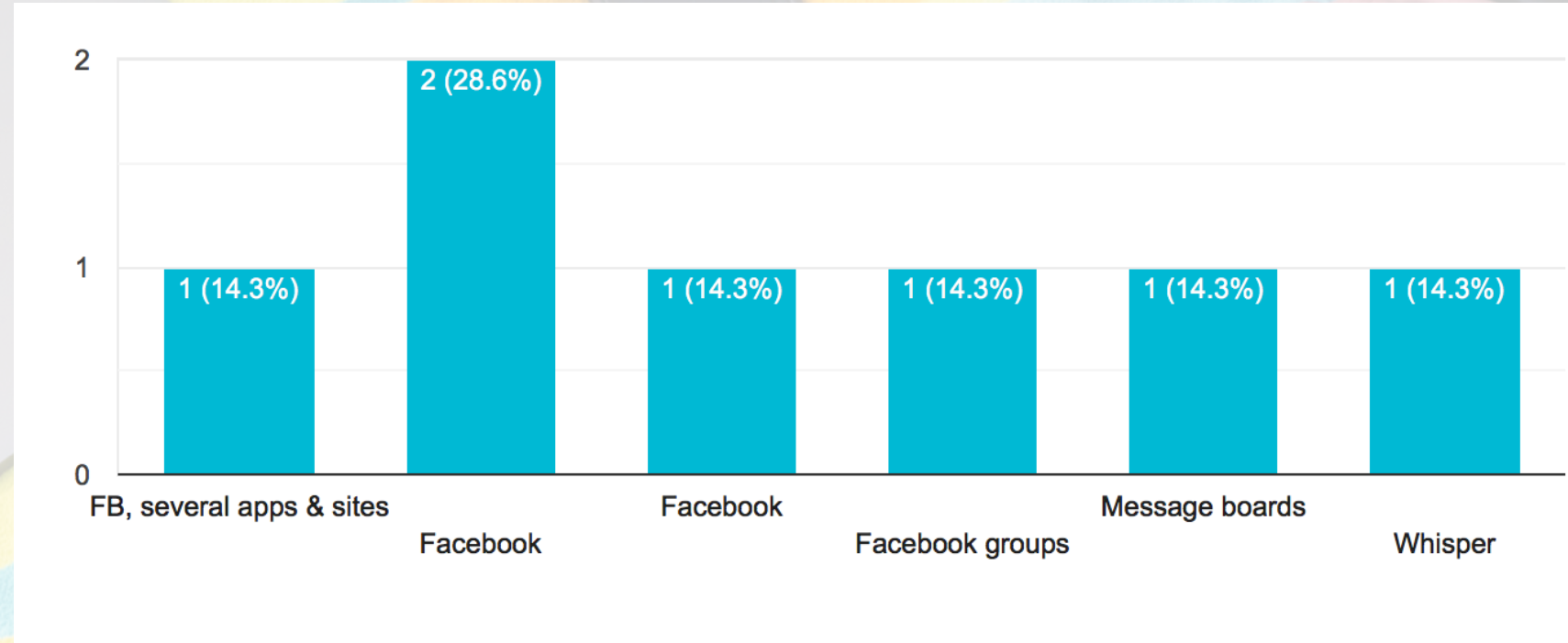


Who is the audience?

- Understand WHOM you are building for first:
- Age
- Demographics
 - Race/gender/orientation may require separate communities
- Needs
- Capabilities to deliver the kind of community they want

Types of online communities

- Apps
- Social platforms
- Message boards
- Chat
- Messenger
- SMS (Text)



New tech offers more places to connect

- Live chat/messenger/chatbots
- Live video (Zoom)
- Often embedded in business/patient portals but allowing others to communicate person to person if they are members
- Dedicated apps (for therapists/clinics/support/health professional groups)

Privacy concerns

- What format should groups be set up in for security and privacy?
 - Secret groups for the most sensitive topics like mental health, closed groups for almost everything else
- How to handle PHI / PII?
 - In short, don't post it!
- Security versus privacy
 - Security is login/hacking/spamming, privacy is what you post, how it's enforced, group rules and moderating
- F8 offers group anonymity but is it security?

Setting up platforms

- Technical savvy
- Cost
- Server requirements
- SAAS solutions versus hosting your own

Managing online platforms

- Moderators and helpers are essential
- Trolls, flounces, spamming and flaming
 - Each of these challenges requires a planned solution so everyone knows what to expect and what to do
- Growing beyond the platform
- Growing on someone else's platform
 - Always a risk – Facebook changes the rules often, but it's a low-barrier to entry platform that everyone uses already

Fostering engagement

- Drive conversation with questions, polls
- Moderated discussions
- Online 'events'
- Share content from web site/page
- Share curated content that is evidence-based

Creating content

- Tap moderator expertise
- Use quotes, shares, photos
- Quick video clips
- Pull from respected sources
- Ask your audience what they want
- Do Google searches and alerts

Extending your group's reach

- Survey research
- Built-in focus groups for organization and research use
- What's legal?

Where can we find each other?

- Other online communities
- Industry (big companies/media)
- Doctors 🏥
- Therapists
- Google search
- Local support hotlines/groups

Metrics and Measurement

- Check back against your goals periodically
- How are we doing?
- Adjust what's not working
- Rinse and repeat

Social media may be bad for us...

- There is good research showing **reduced usage** of social networks (including community) is better for us and reduces depression and loneliness
- Are we contributing to the problem?
 - Maybe...

Questions & Workshop

If you don't have an online community yet:

- Identify whether you should have an online community
- Identify a champion of your community
- Identify a tech partner
- Set a goal and work backwards into it

If you do have an online community:

- Set a goal for growth
- Identify new moderators who can help expand
- Plan events (virtual) and a content calendar for 12 mos.

Thank you!

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Resources

- Self-hosted (on your own server): WordPress, BuddyPress, PHPBB
- Social: Facebook (health group), Whisper, Messenger
- SaaS/App: Mighty Networks (also App-based) Tapatalk, Tribe,
- Zoom + EHR portals
- Survey: Survey link: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdBGa0QjQp1H7JNaU67Cas_NitVWcA1Rlrm6p6BRB7Gw7j9nQ/viewform?usp=sf_link
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