Can group relations work actually be undertaken virtually?[1]

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Can group relations work actually be undertaken virtually? As the virus settles in, and group relations conferences have been pushed into the future or rethought, we have been asking ourselves - is GR actually possible in a virtual environment?

As GR consultants interested in this question and anticipating the possibility that ICI's annual Exploring Difference Workshop (GR in Toronto) may need to be conducted virtually, we invite you to think with us about what adaptations might be possible and what limitations might be inevitable. We have been wondering what happens to our cherished GR boundaries - the ones we need to do our work as consultants and the ones we believe are essential for member learning.

1. What happens to 'the task' and the capacity to find and hold the task - made more complex without bodies in the room and unidimensional head photos on a screen? Made more challenging to persist with by virtue of the distractions available when working virtually. How are the initial agreements stimulated and supported virtually?
2. What about 'time' as connectivity issues plague beginnings, middles and endings of each GR element - and at every moment in between? Connectivity strength varies across the globe and at various times of the day and night; timezone issues might make for a complex weave of differing biorhythms for members - my morning, your evening? And what about digital security?
3. Since the 'territory' is no longer 'our' physical space, how do we contend as consultants with being in the 'territory' of the membership - their living rooms, offices, bedrooms?
4. How does 'authority' work in the virtual environment? Can useful explorations of transference arise in making sense of what's really going on?
5. If these boundaries are fundamental for 'containment' - how are we to anticipate, manage and make use of the anxieties that arise and are necessary for deep learning? Surely these virtual anxieties will have a different quality?

We will need to develop new processes and skills (since very few of us have been members in a virtual conference) for the complexities virtuality poses and the heightened presence which is required - not to mention the significant technical capacities to plan and execute a virtual conference.

We want to draw your attention to Dr. Jeffrey Roth's efforts written about here: https://www.ofek-groups.org/en/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=37&Itemid=59

Please join us in grappling with these questions and others you may have.

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[1] https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/can-group-relations-work-actually-undertaken-barbara-williams/