How to Organize a Social Interaction Skills Training Workshop

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Conceptualization

Mental Health and Vitiligo

- Profound psychosocial impact of vitiligo
  - Low self-esteem, self-consciousness, and anxiety
  - Stigmatization + avoidance of social situations
  - Worse quality of life

- Studies have suggested a link between vitiligo and psychiatric conditions

- Lack of psychosocial interventions focusing on improving mental health

https://www.ted.com/playlists/175/the_struggle_of_mental_health

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Social Interaction Skills Training (SIST)

- Changing Faces SIST workshop
    - For individuals living with facial disfigurement
    - Significant decreases in anxiety and social avoidance

- Reframe social interactions by enhancing communication skills and overcoming social anxiety and avoidance

- Utilize interactive activities, role-playing and simulations, feedback, open discussion

Robinson E, Rumsey N, Partridge J. An evaluation of the impact of social interaction skills training for facially disfigured people. Br J Plast Surg. 1996;49:281-289.

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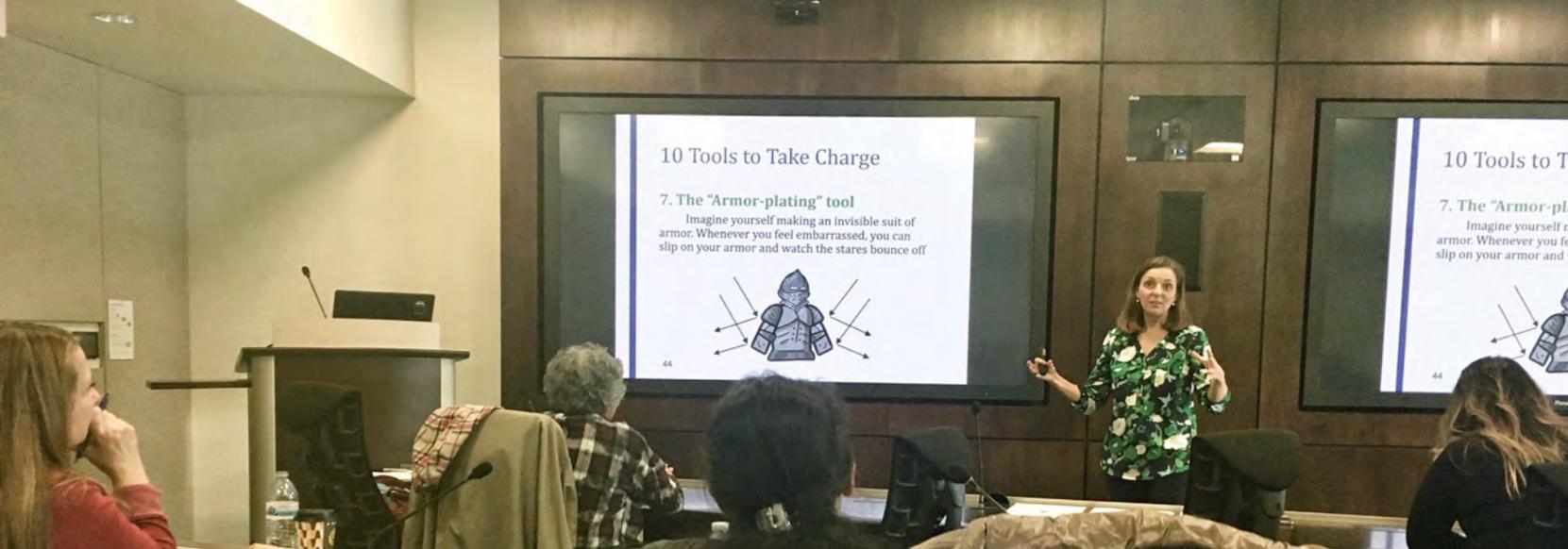
Outcome Measures and Results

Outcome Measures

- 4 outcome measures at 4 separate time points
  - immediately before and after the workshop & 3 weeks and 8 weeks afterwards

- Social Anxiety and Distress (SAD) Scale
  - Assesses discomfort levels in various social situations and intentional avoidance of social interactions

- Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation-II (BFNE-II) Scale
  - Measures apprehension and distress from perceived negative assessment by others in interpersonal situations

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Outcome Measures, continued

- Visual Analog Scales (VAS)
  - Rates the intensity of feelings or sensations
  - Evaluated levels of confidence in the company of strangers and when meeting new people

- Open-Ended Questions
  - Pre-workshop
    - Assessed motivations to attend the workshop, social support networks, and effects of vitiligo on quality of life
  - Post-Workshop
    - Collected feedback and personal updates regarding implementation of workshop strategies

Social Anxiety and Distress

Mean Δ = 4.11

Pre-Workshop — Post-Workshop (8 wks)

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Fear of Negative Evaluation

Mean Δ = 4.65

Pre-Workshop

Post-Workshop (8 wks)

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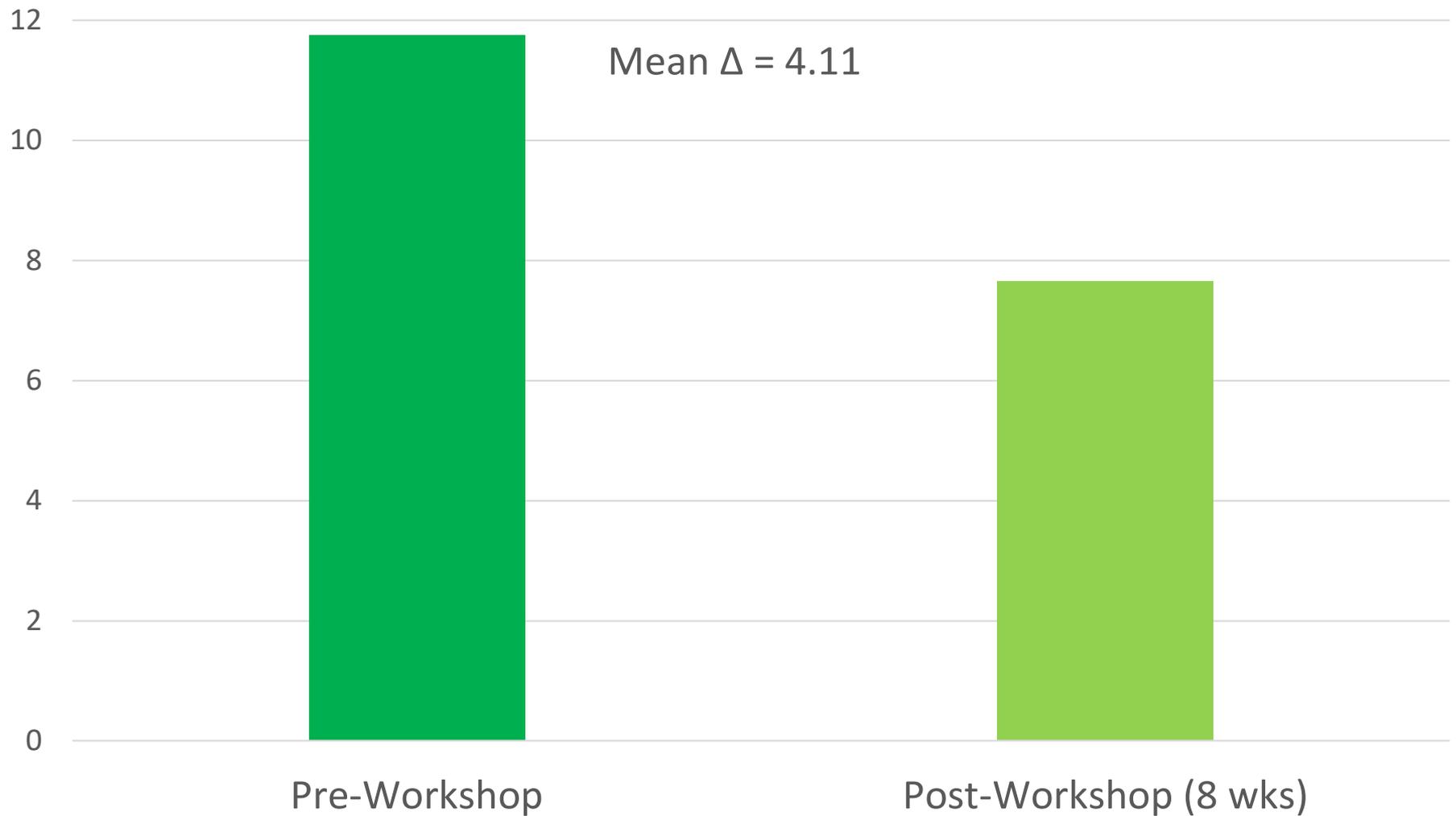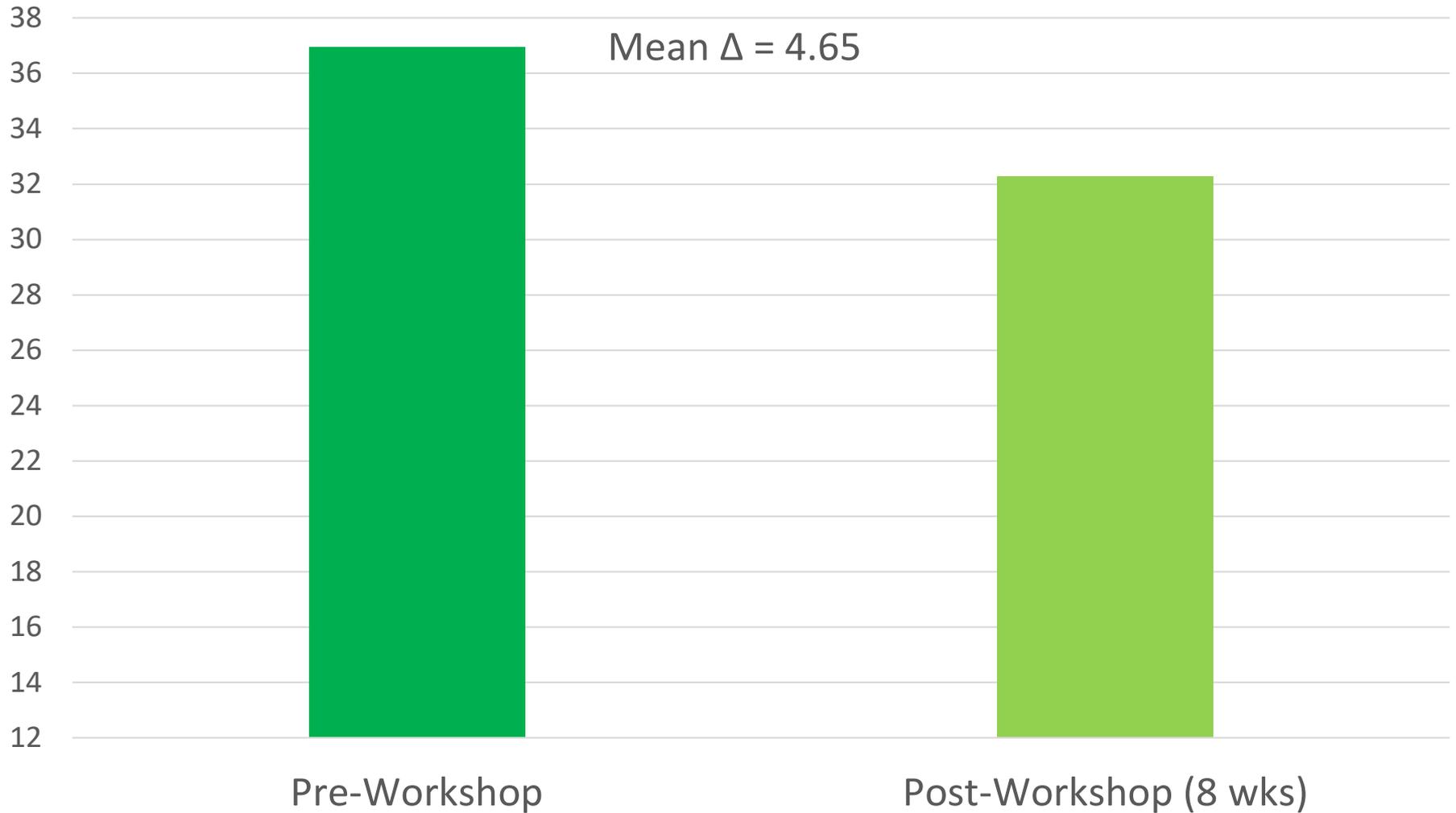
How Comfortable Do You Feel...
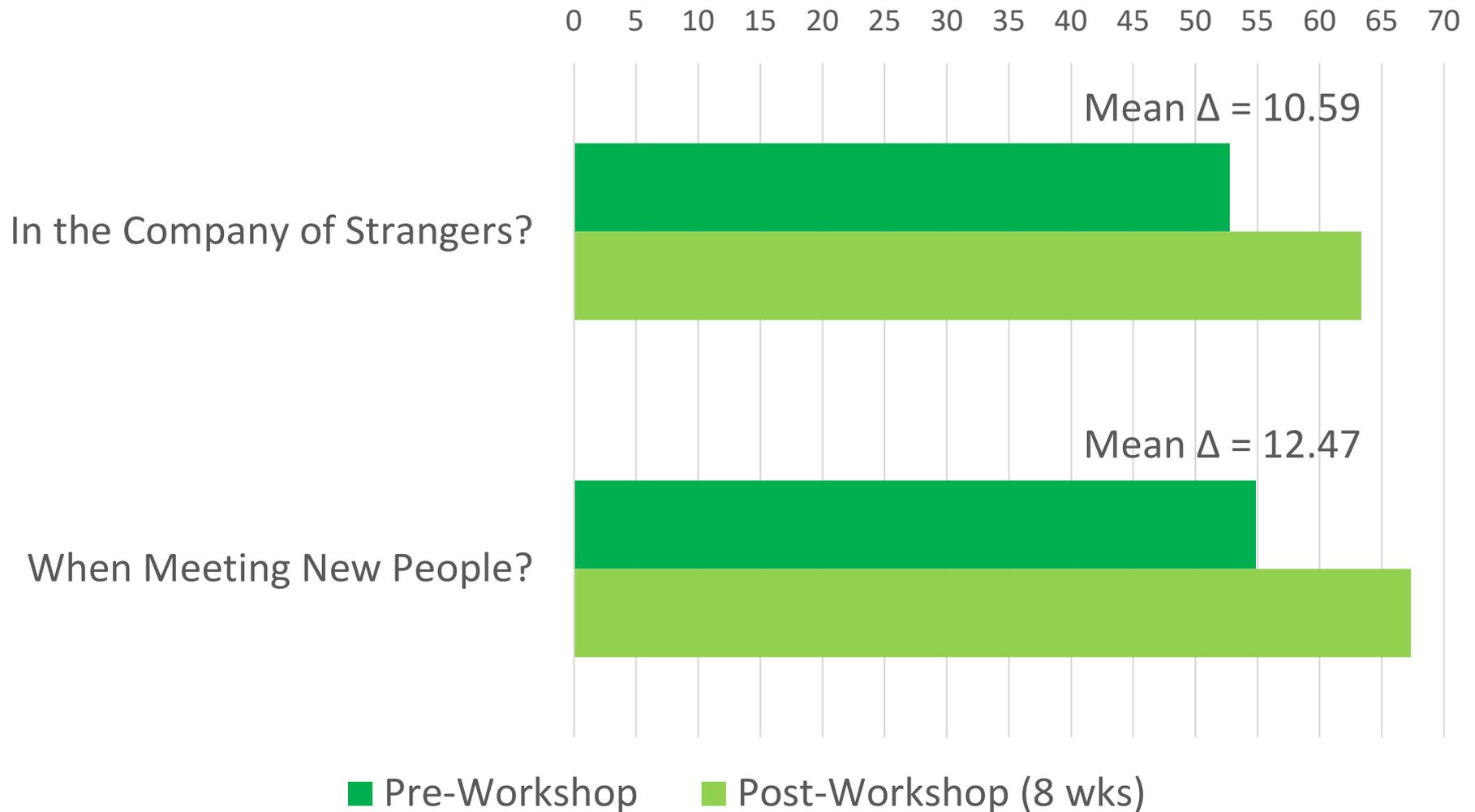
Pre-Workshop Questionnaire

- Common motivations for attening the workshop included:
  - Desire for more knowledge and information exchange about vitiligo
  - Learn ways to effectively manage negative cognitions and emotions
  - Obtain social connection and a sense of community

Post-Workshop Questionnaires

- 100% of participants found the workshop helpful
  - Immediately after the workshop, rated 8-10 out of 10

- Sense of community was frequently mentioned as a memorable aspect of the workshop

- Recounted specific instances where they applied newly-learned coping strategies to uncomfortable situations

- Reported a more positive attitude toward self-acceptance

- Responses also highlighted increased social confidence

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Results

- Data showed promising decreases in anxiety and distress in social situations

- Statistically significant improvement in the Social Avoidance and Distress (SAD) Scale and Visual Analog Scales (VAS) were seen up to 8 weeks after the workshop

- The Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation-II (BFNE-II) showed a statistically significant decrease immediately after the workshop that was not maintained at follow up

Logistical Considerations

1. Funding

- Able to be organized on a relatively low budget

- Logistical considerations (most are optional)
    - Space to host the workshop
    - Providing lunch
    - Printing resource packets + key rings for attendees

- Obtaining funding / support
    - Reach out to faculty from nearby academic site willing to offer time and support
    - Fundraisers
    - Tailor workshop as needed
        - Majority of workshop costs are optional

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2. Recruitment

- Try to partner up with an academic site / clinic

- Methods:
    - Email listserv
    - Announcing at support group meetings
    - Form letters and handouts
    - Recruited in-person in clinic

- Number of participants
    - No set restriction on group size
    - Upsides of both smaller vs. larger groups

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3. Facilitators

- Facilitators should be **trained mental health professionals**
  - Essential that have proper certification / training
  - Equipped to handle any concerns that may arise from discussing difficult or upsetting topics

- Identify potential contacts to work with
  - Psychiatry faculty in nearby academic institutions
  - Local mental health community organizations

4. Venue

- Look for spaces with audiovisual capabilities
    - PPT presentation with videos
    - Find the right size:
        - Depending on # of attendees
        - Space for everyone to face the screen + for moderators to move around
    - Maximize physical comfort + privacy

- Example spaces:
    - Academic site – conference rooms
    - Church, community center
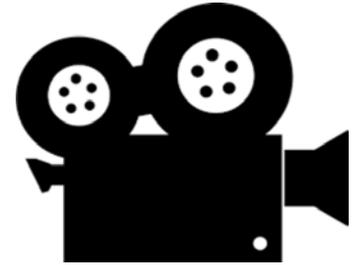
5. Communication

- Email participants with information about the workshop and date/time/location 2-3 weeks before the workshop
  - "Save-the-date"

- Reminder email 1 week before the workshop
  - Ask for lunch preferences
  - Attach map, driving and parking directions
  - Include contact information (email, phone) of point person for day-of questions with directions
    - Make sure not one of the facilitators

6. Day-of Logistics

- Volunteers
    - Community groups
    - Students
    - Help with directions, food transportation, etc.

- Signage
    - Make sure clear signs to the building and the room
    - Have phone on hand for directions if people get lost

- Test audiovisual equipment BEFORE the workshop
    - Run through the PowerPoint
    - Make sure all videos and animations work

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7. Lunch Break

- 6-hour workshop with 1-hour lunch break

- We provided:
    - Bagels and coffee/juice for breakfast
    - Boxed lunches (deli sandwiches, chips)

- Can tailor according to your resources/funds
    - Could also have food laid out buffet-style, snacks/refreshments, etc.

8. Resources / Handouts for Attendees

- We printed and compiled a packet of resources as a keepsake for attendees
    - Patient resources found online
    - Links to helpful social media / websites

- Key ring souvenir
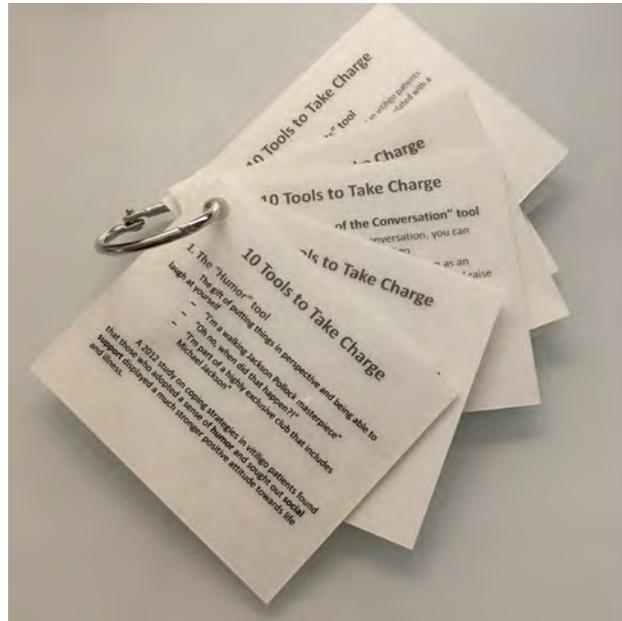
  - Can flip through every night or when feeling down
  - Cited by attendees post-workshop as very helpful
  - Printed / assembled at Kinko's
    - May require funds

Content and Structure

Goals of the Workshop

- Utilize interactive activities, role-playing and simulations, feedback, open discussion

- Through activities, teach participants how to:
  - Handle other people's reactions and questions
  - Build communication skills
  - Develop confidence in approaching social situations

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Workshop Objectives

- Discuss personal experiences, attitudes, and beliefs about vitiligo

- Teach effective communication techniques to use in previously stressful or uncomfortable social situations

- Instill useful coping strategies

- Encourage communication with confidence and courage

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Success of this workshop depends in part on participation and willingness to share experiences.

We know it can be difficult to share, but hoped that over the course of the day participants would feel comfortable enough to open up.

Content Areas

- Understanding Social Anxiety

- Changing Perspectives

- Body Language

- Techniques for Productive Interactions

- Putting it into Practice

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Understanding Social Anxiety

- Brainstorm:
  - What are some things people have said about you that you didn't like?

- The more we avoid risky or challenging situations, the less confidence we have in our ability to cope and the more anxious we feel

↑ Avoidance   ↓ Confidence   ↑ Anxiety

Changing Perspectives

- Brainstorm:
  - Think of a good friend. What are some things you like about him/her?
  - What are some things you like about yourself?
  - What do others like about you?

- Always remember to be kind to yourself and think well of yourself
  - How you **think** about yourself makes a big difference in how you **feel**

Body Language

38%

7%

What you hear
Tone of voice
Vocal clarity
Verbal expressiveness

(38% of message)

Words
(7% of message)

What you see or feel
Facial expression
Dress and grooming
Posture
Eye contact
Touches
Gestures

(55% of message)

55%
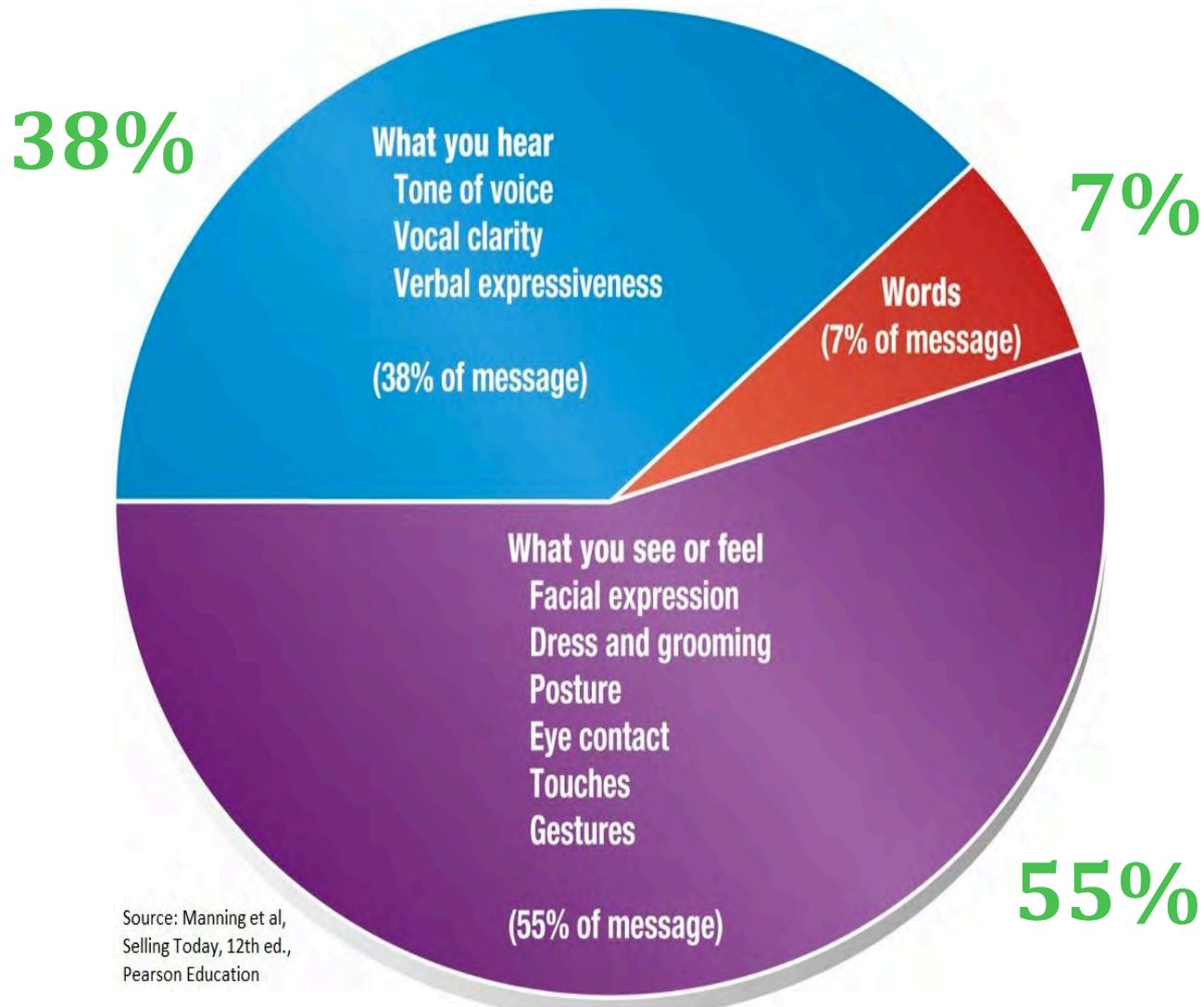
Source: Manning et al,
Selling Today, 12th ed.,
Pearson Education

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Body Language

- Activity:
  - Body language charades

- Power pose
  - You can use your body language to look confident – even if you don't really feel confident at first

Techniques for Productive Interactions

- 3-2-1 GO!
  - Plan for uncomfortable social situations by thinking of:

    3 things to do if someone stares at you

    2 things to say if someone asks what happened

    1 thing to think if someone turns away

Putting it into Practice

- Activity:
  - Example situations

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Photos