

PTSD Coach App Evaluation Study Focus Group Procedures

Guidelines for Conducting the Focus Group

- Following the discussion guide: The moderator should follow the discussion guide making an effort to cover each of the main questions in the guide (i.e. each of the questions in bold text).
- You can ask the questions in your own words they do not need to be read verbatim.
- The suggested probes are not required, but should be used *if the material in the probes is not otherwise discussed* ("as necessary").
- You can also use general/non-specific probes that encourage participants to elaborate on or clarify their responses (e.g., "Can you tell me more about that?" "Can you give me an example?").
- In cases where you're not sure you understood a response, please ask for clarification (e.g., "Could you say a bit more about that?") or paraphrase and ask the group/individual to confirm ("I think I heard you say...? Is that it or did I misunderstand?").
- You do not need every participant in the group to individually respond to each question. If a number of participants indicate that they share an opinion that's adequate. In such cases it is helpful if you can 1) state that agreement verbally so that it is recorded (e.g., "It sounds like at least 5 of you share that perspective") and 2) ask if anyone has a different view, perspective or something to add.
- If participants get off track, guide the group back to the topic being discussed.
- **Keep track of time.** Allocate roughly 15 minutes for each numbered set of questions. It's important that each topic is addressed even if that means not covering every question completely.
- Being a skillful moderator: A focus group moderator's job is to ***facilitate the conversation but not to dominate the discussion.***
- **Do not offer suggestions or opinions.** Your goal is to gather information, not provide it.
- **Be Neutral;** avoid judgments both positive and negative. Some people may not like the topic being discussed and should be allowed to voice their opinion. Use this opportunity to find out why the person does not like the product/topic (e.g. consultation calls) and what changes could be made.
- **Try to ensure even participation.** If a few people are dominating the discussion, then call on others.

Steps to Take Immediately Before and During the Focus Group

1. Before the focus group make sure that you:

- Have the focus groups questions
- Have the participant list for your group

2. Introduce the focus group:

- Use the "Introduction" provided prior to the focus group questions to explain the nature and purpose of the focus group.
- Answer participants' questions, if any.

Participation is voluntary. If after hearing the description of the focus group, an individual does not feel comfortable participating, he/she can leave.

3. Take attendance:

- Take attendance by placing a check next to the name of everyone present on the participant list for your group.
- **Important**-Indicate that the purpose of taking attendance is so that we know the number of people present.

4. Closing:

- Be sure to thank the members of the group for coming, before closing the session.

PTSD Coach Apps Evaluation Study

Focus Group Questions: Planning Team

Introduction

"Thank you for participating in this focus group. The purpose of this focus group is for you to share your experiences and opinions about the PTSD Coach App. We hope to use what we learn from you today to improve future efforts to help Veterans, like you, better manage PTSD with the use of technology and mobile devices."

"We will be taking notes during the discussion to make sure that we review your comments later and summarize your responses. Sources of the information will remain private and no names will be noted. We also request that you not repeat comments made by others without their permission. Does anyone have any questions about the process for today?"

The following questions will be asked by the focus group facilitators. The facilitators will use a flexible, responsive approach (rather than a structured standardized or ordered approach) when using this guide.

Use of PTSD Coach Apps

1. To begin, we would like to get your thoughts on the general idea of using an app to help people manage stress?
2. What were your initial impressions of the PTSD Coach app?
Suggested probed (as necessary): How well did the app meet your hopes and expectations?

The following questions will be asked by the focus group facilitators. The facilitators will use a flexible, responsive approach (rather than a structured standardized or ordered approach) when using this guide.

3. How did you use the PTSD Coach app?
4. To what extent were you able to integrate use of the PTSD Coach App into your regular routine?
5. To what extent was it feasible to use the tools offered to help manage your distress?
6. In what ways, if any did you modify the tools in order to better fit your needs?
7. What did you like most about the app?
8. What got in the way of you using it?
Suggested probed (as necessary):
 - Access issues?
 - Technical issues?
 - Time issues?
 - Other issues?
9. How did it work technically for you?

Perceived Value of the PTSD Coach App

1. There are many ways in which the PTSD Coach App differs from traditional treatment methods. For example, it is immediately available to help during moments of distress. Additionally, it can help you track how you are doing over time. What benefits do you think the PTSD Coach App has offered you in comparison to traditional treatment methods?
2. Considering the range of information and tools available in the app, which parts of the app stand out as being particularly useful to you?
 - 2b. Which aspects of the PTSD Coach App were less useful to you?
3. How well did the PTSD Coach App prepare you to manage your distress in subsequent situations?
4. To what extent would you recommend the PTSD Coach App to others?

Impact on Health

1. How did the PTSD Coach App impact how you typically manage your stress?
2. To what extent did the PTSD Coach app effectively engage you in using the tools to help manage your stress in ways different than you have in the past?
3. What happened when you used the app?
Suggested probed (as necessary): How did your distress meter change before and after using the tools?

The following questions will be asked by the focus group facilitators. The facilitators will use a flexible, responsive approach (rather than a structured, standardized, or ordered approach) when using this guide. Potential Enhancements

1. Is there information that we could have provided prior to your use of the PTSD Coach App that could better prepare you for its use?
2. How could the PTSD Coach App be improved to make it more useful or helpful for you?
Suggested probed (as necessary): Which part of the PTSD coach was least helpful in your efforts to manage your distress?
3. What could be done to improve the quality of the PTSD Coach App?
4. How could the PTSD Coach App be improved to make it easier to use?
Suggested probed (as necessary): What could be done to further support use of the PTSD Coach App?
5. How can we make the PTSD Coach App more attractive to patients to use?

Other Comments

Are there any other comments you would like to make?

Suggested probed (as necessary): Is there any part of your experience with the PTSD Coach App that we haven't asked you about that you would like to share?

Closing

"Once again, we would like to thank you for participating in this focus group. Your time, feedback, and contributions are key in providing us with information to further improve Veteran care and satisfaction. We hope to use the information you have provided today to continue to build and enhance the use of mobile apps to facilitate treatment of PTSD.