Honoring The Whole Person: Meeting Guidelines for Mind, Body and Spirit

Introduction

As a ministry of the Church, Ascension strives to honor human dignity and promote the common good in every dimension of its work - including the ways in which we conduct our meetings. This resource has been developed to foster organizational and cultural alignment in the manner in which associates participate in and experience meetings and workspace areas. We recognize that meetings and our workspaces can support associate health, development and well-being, as well as a sense of meaning and purpose that enhances the overall experience and outcomes of the meeting itself. This guide provides recommendations and resources for the context of in-person and virtual meetings, with specific attention to health in the areas of mind, body and spirit organized around the following:

- Meeting design
- Strategic movement
- Nutritious dietary options
- Reflection and mindfulness in meetings
- Well-being education & reinforcement
- Workspace healthy food choices

Through Ascension’s partnership with Johnson & Johnson Human Performance Institute, we have access to their evidence-based Energy Management Principles that have been incorporated into the following resources.

As you begin referencing this guide, remember to take associate reception into account. The principle of participation calls us to invite all involved to help shape the environments in which they work. We recommend making the meeting attendees part of the decision making process. As you begin to implement some of these changes, work to provide the opportunity for feedback and suggestions from attendees. If something isn’t working, change your plan for the next meeting. If something is well received, make it a regular agenda item. Each meeting provides an opportunity to demonstrate Ascension’s dedication to associates’ personal health and well-being.
Meeting Design

Energy Management Principle #1: Balance energy expenditure with renewal
Full engagement requires that energy expenditure be balanced with intermittent energy recovery. The simple practice of purposefully integrating breaks and movement into the meeting agenda can ensure attendee energy and focus are maintained throughout the meeting.

Balance energy expenditure with energy recovery (renewal). Recovery can be achieved through strategic movement which will be featured in Section II of this guide. Incorporate opportunities for movement into your agenda every 90-120 minutes. See the sample meeting agenda below for example of a full-day meeting for how to integrate breaks and movement. For virtual meetings, full day meetings should be condensed while maintaining a refresh break every 90 minutes.

Sample meeting agenda

7:30 a.m. – 8:00 a.m. Breakfast (see sample menu)
8:00 a.m. – 8:10 a.m. Begin meeting with a reflection and/or mindfulness exercise and include energy management/strategic movement script (below) as part of meeting introduction
8:10 a.m. – 10:00 a.m. Meeting content
10:00 a.m. – 10:15 a.m. Recovery break every 90-120 minutes: large movements (see examples) and strategic snack (see examples)
10:15 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. Meeting content
12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m. Lunch (see sample menu)
1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. Meeting content
3:00 p.m. – 3:15 p.m. Recovery break every 90-120 minutes: large movements (see examples) and strategic snack (see examples)
3:15 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. Meeting content
End with a meeting celebration

Energy management/strategic movement sample introduction script:
Use this introduction to set the expectation that the meeting will be run with energy management and full engagement in mind.

“We know the importance of strategic movement as a method to manage energy, so we plan to integrate movement into our meeting today. We will be mindful of using our recovery break times to move, in order to have the energy to help us focus on the purpose of our meeting today.

During our meeting, we encourage you to stretch or use small movements such as flexing and extending the feet every 30-45 minutes.

[In-person events] Feel free to stand in the back of the room as needed; we have provided high top tables for you to stand at as needed (highly encouraged). We also incorporated 15-minute recovery breaks into the meeting agenda approximately every 90 minutes.

[Virtual meetings] Take breaks as needed. We also incorporated 10-minute recovery breaks into the meeting agenda approximately every 60 minutes.”
Strategic Movement

Energy Management Principle #2: Integrate opportunities for movement

Movement throughout the day helps manage and increase energy levels. Enabling associates to manage their energy through small and large muscle movement enhances blood circulation, increases metabolism and helps increase overall energy levels.

Encourage movement

- Provide standing work stations whenever possible
- Encourage standing and/or light stretching during the meeting as needed and/or as a scheduled, facilitated recovery break
- Plan intentional movement into the meeting activities
  - Example: have attendees stand to stretch between presenters, or lead a guided stretch during the meeting etc.
- Plan a movement break into the agenda every 90-120 minutes as blood flow to the brain begins decreasing after 10 minutes of sitting still

Strategic movement guidelines

How often:
- Small Movements/Stretching: Every 30-45 minutes (see examples 4–11, page 4)
- Large Movements: Every 90–120 minutes (see examples 1–3, page 4)

Duration:
- Movement breaks may last 5–15 minutes
- Low to moderate intensity
- Remember, some movement is better than no movement!

Strategic movement resources

Link to stretching video* options:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dw14YL-If4s
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G4ifGIL7kG0

Suggested viewing frames: 1:49 - 2:54, 2:55 - 4:20, 4:22 - 6:00

*Reference: Stretching video is courtesy of the Saint Agnes YouTube Channel
Movement examples

Source: Johnson & Johnson Human Performance Institute

1. Stand up and sit down (lock wheels on chair for safety)
2. Stand up or find stairs to climb (up)
3. Take a walk
4. Lower your head, keep shoulders back
5. Lift your head, keep shoulders down
6. Pull knee toward your chest
7. Flex your foot
8. Extend your foot
9. Small arm circles, shoulders down,
10. Reach behind
11. Reach arm forward
Nutritious Dietary Options

Energy Management Principle #3: Support healthy snacking and meals in meeting rooms

Plan strategic snacks and meals to enable attendees to **eat light and eat often** with low glycemic foods every 2-3 hours to maintain mental focus and energy (manage blood glucose levels).

Eat strategically throughout the day to help manage and increase energy levels.

**Offer options and education**

For in person events, offer healthy options. If possible, place nutritional information next to each item.

**Recommendations**

- Use smaller plates and bowls, as larger plates encourage larger portion sizes
- Refreshment stations should include water, tea and coffee

**Suggested eating times for energy maintenance**

- **Breakfast**: Approximately 7:30 a.m.
- **Mid-Morning Snack**: Approximately 10 a.m.
- **Lunch**: Approximately 12 p.m.
- **Afternoon Snack**: Approximately 3 p.m.
- **Dinner**: Approximately 6 p.m.
- **After Dinner Snack**: Approximately 8 p.m.

**Eat light and eat often to:**

- Stabilize blood glucose levels
- Improve energy levels, brain-function and mood
- Control cravings
- Decrease likelihood of overeating
- Maintain muscle mass
- Prevent excessive fat storage

**Strategic snacks**

Have healthy snack options (low glycemic) readily available or encourage attendees to bring their own snacks to the meeting. Attendees should have the opportunity to eat low-glycemic foods every 2-3 hours to sustain energy. **Tip**: To determine if a snack is a low glycemic option, look for 5g of protein and/or 5g of protein and fiber per 100 calories. Snacks should always be between 100-150 calories.

Examples of low glycemic snacks include yogurt, nuts, apple or other fruits, banana and peanut butter, grapes and cheese sticks, cottage cheese and fruit, hummus and whole grain pita or veggies, whole grain crackers and cheese, hard boiled eggs, and low glycemic snack bars.
Sample Meals – Meeting Options

Breakfast

Meals: Request from catering that two-thirds of the plate is filled with grains, fruits and vegetables and one-third contains protein.

For example:
- 1 cup whole grain cereal with 1/2 cup skim milk and 1/2 cup of berries, 1/2 cup of orange juice
- 1 egg vegetable omelet, 1 slice whole wheat toast, 1/2 cup of fruit
- 6 ounces yogurt parfait with granola and sliced bananas

Sample Grains:
- Whole grain breads and bagels, whole grain cereal

Sample Proteins:
- Milk
- Peanut butter (individual servings)
- Hard-boiled eggs (sliced in halves)
- Yogurt
- Beans and legumes

Sample Fruits and Vegetables:
- Seasonal mixed berries/fruits (e.g. blueberries, raspberries, strawberries, blackberries)
- Seasonal fresh whole fruit (e.g. peaches, pears, apples, bananas, oranges)
- Dried fruits such as apricots, cranberries, raisins
- Peppers, tomatoes, spinach

Sample Beverages:
- Water
- Coffee (regular and decaffeinated)
- Hot teas
- 100% fruit and/or vegetable juice
- Skim milk
Lunch and dinner options

Meals: Request from catering that two-thirds of the plate is filled with grains, fruits and vegetables and one-third contains protein. Please make vegetarian options available at all meals. Vegetarian meals still need to include a protein source.

For example:
- One-half of a turkey, lettuce and tomato sandwich on whole grain bread, with one-half cup of fruit, and 1 cup of green salad
- 4-5 ounces of sliced chicken breast with 2 cups of green salad, one-half cup of pasta and one small whole grain roll
- 4-5 ounces of fish, one-half cup brown rice, 1 small whole grain roll, 1 cup of seasonal vegetables
- Grilled vegetable sandwich on whole grain bread, 1 cup bean salad, one-half cup fruit

Sample Grains:
- Whole wheat or whole grain breads and/or rolls
- Whole wheat pizza dough
- Whole wheat or whole grain crackers
- Whole wheat pasta
- Brown or wild rice
- Other grains to consider: bulgur, buckwheat, barley, wheat berries, quinoa

Sample Proteins:
- Lean poultry such as chicken or turkey
- Tofu
- Nut butters such as peanut butter and almond butter and non-nut butters such as sun butter and soy nut butter
- Fish and seafood
- Beans and legumes

Sample Vegetables (local and in-season preferred):
- Root vegetables such as potatoes, carrots, beets
- Leafy green vegetables such as spinach, lettuce, endive
- Cruciferous such as broccoli, cauliflower, kale, arugula
- Stalk vegetables such as asparagus, celery
- Fruit vegetables such as tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, squash, pumpkin
- Legumes such as peas and beans
- Allium vegetables such as onions, garlic, leeks, shallots

Sample Fruits:
- Seasonal mixed berries/fruits (e.g. blueberries, raspberries, strawberries, blackberries)
- Seasonal fresh whole fruit (e.g. peaches, pears, apples, bananas, oranges)
- Dried fruits such as apricots, cranberries, raisins

Water available during meetings

We are very fortunate in the United States to have a safe, clean and abundant water supply to keep our bodies well hydrated in support of overall health. At meetings, we advocate for the use of tap water during meals and on table tops. The sale of bottled water promotes the idea that water is a commodity, rather than something to which people have a basic human right to access. In some developing countries, organizations have bought the rights to local water sources, bottled the water and then sold it back to the local community for a profit. By not purchasing bottled water for our meetings, Ascension can reduce the profits made by companies which use and sell water for profit, sometimes through unjust means, and restrict access for all people. We can also minimize its harmful impact on the environment by reducing the amount of waste that finds its way to landfills and decreasing the production of the plastic bottles.

Note for MOSTL meeting planners: Please plan meetings in accordance with the Updated Guidelines for Optimizing Conference, Meetings and Events effective August 2017. Questions: contact Conference Services
Workspace dining areas

As an organization that is culturally relational and strives for collaboration, our common workspace dining areas are the center of activity. Not only are these areas where meals are eaten, but they are also a gathering space during breaks and are conducive to celebrations. Many times food is brought in by others for the sharing by all. There are times such food is not healthy in nature. Organizationally, we should support healthy choices by suggesting that food that is brought to the shared workspace be healthy in nature. At minimum, if unhealthy choices are to be offered, so should there be a healthy choice.

For example, if an associate wishes to bring in a cake to celebrate a colleague’s birthday, there should also be a bowl of fruit available. Many say that one has a choice not to eat the unhealthy food item, but not participating is really not a fair option. As we wish to be reverent to all and support a healthy work environment, we should implement a standard of choice in our eating areas when shared food is brought in and offered to all.

Reflection and Mindfulness in Meetings: Purposefully build in time for intention, quiet and mindfulness

Create opportunities and intention

It is a longstanding expectation in Ascension that, as a part of attending to our ministry identity and the spirituality of our associates, our meetings begin with reflection. Leading reflection at the start of a meeting should be considered part of the meeting, a way to be led into the meeting and a way the meeting is led. Reflection to open the meeting means to pause and step back from reactions and first impressions to look more closely and fully at what is before us and more deeply at what is inside us. It is a non-judgmental way of perceiving in which we become more present to our experience. In reflection, we listen to our experience — paying attention to how it is speaking to us and to what is occurring within us.

Reflection may include formal or group prayer. Prayer is a turn toward God in some way — through words or conversation; through meditation or contemplation, or even simply through an open heart. In prayer, we become more aware of God’s presence in our lives. We seek a deeper understanding. We give thanks, or we seek guidance and grace. Praying as a group also opens us to a greater appreciation of God’s presence in our ministry, and inspires us to act as a community.

- Before the meeting, consider the nature of the group and the purpose of the meeting. What has their journey been as a group? Where are they now as a group? Where are they being called beyond themselves? What disposition needs to grow in the group? What faith traditions and cultures are represented? What is the purpose of the meeting?
- At the start of a meeting, encourage attendees to take a moment to become aware of and place aside any stressors, personal and/or professional, weighing on their minds.
- Consider including 60-120 seconds of silence, deep breathing or a guided visualization exercise prior to the reflection.
- Consider a 60-second journaling exercise in which attendees capture what they personally hope
to gain from the meeting, respond to the reflection, or answer a specific question that invites personal and organizational awareness. Invite volunteers to share as appropriate.

- Beginning/End of meeting celebration:
  - Beginning celebration – celebrate an accomplishment that occurred between meetings
  - Ending celebration – intentionally recognize the completion of a well-balanced meeting that specifically provided attendees space to focus on their basic needs while accomplishing work

**Reflection and mindfulness**

- Incorporate Ascension’s Mission and Values into reflections. Consider using resources from our [Values webpage](#) here, from our daily Good Day Ascension reflections, or from our Mission Integration reflections website.

- Lead attendees through simple breathing, stretching or walking meditation to honor our mind, body, spirit integration.

- Practice 50-minute meeting scheduling to allow attendees time to handle their personal needs such as: personal connections, restroom and water breaks, strategic movement, etc.

- View a brief nature video as an opening reflection, inspiring awe and allowing the mind to rest in the beauty of our world.

- Stop, breathe, reflect, choose – take a minute to follow your breath and do a brief body scan. Intentionally breathe into any discovered tension, and imagine breathing out/releasing that tension.

- Open the meeting with a focused-attention exercise, beginning with guided breathing. Invite participants to mentally note/acknowledge to themselves preconceived ideas/outcomes/solutions they may harbor around the meeting’s agenda. Encourage participants to detach from/place aside their expectations and be open to innovative opportunities. Perhaps noting to oneself: “I accept these are my preconceived thoughts and feelings, and they may not be facts.” What other ways might there be to think/feel about this situation?

- Allow 60 seconds of silence to breathe and be present with self, allowing the mind, body and spirit to come together in the moment.

- Stop, breathe, reflect – invite each participant to pause, remember and journal “Why is my heart in this work?” Allow approximately 2 – 5 minutes for partner sharing of a reflection highlight.

- Take a 60-second mental vacation – pause and remember a favorite vacation spot, explore the scenery and how you felt there. Breathe in, breathe out.

- Stop, breathe, reflect, choose – nothing lasts. Savor success and challenge for what they have to offer. Change is certain. Our founders never meant for our ministry to be stagnant, but to ever evolve to fulfill our Mission. How might we best fulfill our Mission today?

- Use a bell or chime (or app) to begin and end moments of silence and reflection.
Well-being Education & Reinforcement: Reminding and educating associates of resources

Educate on resources
Whenever possible, send meeting materials electronically instead of printing – let associates know this is done intentionally, reminding them to ‘think green’ and eliminate environmental waste.

- Remind associates of the resources available to them (within a specific ministry, or nationally) to help them with their continued health and well-being behaviors/needs.
- Mention SmartHealth’s Well-being Program.
- Ask associates if they have visited the Ascension Leader Institute site.

Recognize indicators of wellbeing
- Intentionally ask if anyone is participating in the SmartHealth Well-being program or personal accountability health and well-being program.
- Provide accolades or incentives for meeting attendees who are practicing health and well-being regularly, and/or during the meeting time.
- Conclude the meeting by revisiting the intention and purpose from the opening reflection – if time allows, invite attendees to weigh in, how did we live out our intention and purpose in this meeting? How were our Mission and Values reflected in what we did and how we interacted with one another?

Virtual Meetings

Tips for incorporating recommendations in virtual meetings
Virtual meetings are a large part of many of our associates’ daily work experience. Consider the following guidelines for creating a productive and enjoyable virtual meeting:

For meeting facilitators/leaders:
- As with in-person meetings, begin with a reflection.
- Integrate meeting celebrations at the beginning, end or at both times.
- Set expectations and objectives at the beginning of virtual meetings – encourage participants to stand, move, stretch or sit and take breaks depending on their needs throughout the meeting.

- Minimize presentation length by sending pre-reads in advance, adhering to the defined agenda and encourage conversation to maintain engagement and collaboration.
- Purposefully integrate the principle of participation which calls us to invite all involved either by creating space for dialogue or by requesting attendee(s) to lead a portion of the agenda in advance.
- Incorporate breaks into the agenda – recovery breaks should be every 60-90 minutes for virtual meetings.
- Model desired behaviors throughout the meeting such as video usage - video use helps to personalize the conversation and keep participants engaged.
- Not all recovery breaks need to be individual – instead, meeting facilitators could lead a group activity, a
guided stretch, an icebreaker, show a motivational video, lead a gratitude exercise, conduct a brief meditation, etc.

- Add a short, unscheduled break if you believe participants are low on energy and/or are becoming disengaged. Re-engagement break could be an active break by leading participants through some stretches or small movements to re-energize them.
- When scheduling an hour-long meeting, schedule for 55 minutes to allow for a movement break before the next meeting.
- If conducting a one-on-one call where technology is not required, consider a virtual walking meeting.

For meeting participants:

- Use video conferencing capabilities if available.
- Prepare ahead of the meeting – gather low glycemic snacks and water to have on-hand throughout the meeting. Look at the agenda and create your personal movement and recovery plan during the breaks.
- Move during the meeting when possible – if you don’t need to be in front of your computer for portions of the session, then walk or perform small movements.
- Minimize distractions – turn off notifications for emails, texts and instant messages to maintain focus on the meeting in progress.
- Use headsets and/or speaker phones to allow for easier movement and stretching during the meeting.
- Avoid driving during meetings as it can be dangerous and distracting for other attendees.
- Emailing or texting during breaks is not likely a recovery, so ensure you allow for the recovery you need.

Remember to integrate...

- Stretching and/or small movements every 30-45 minutes can be done standing or sitting
- Large movements (i.e. walking, taking the stairs, etc.) every 90-120 minutes
- Deep breathing, gratitude exercises, or a brief meditation during breaks