Improving Your Networking Skills
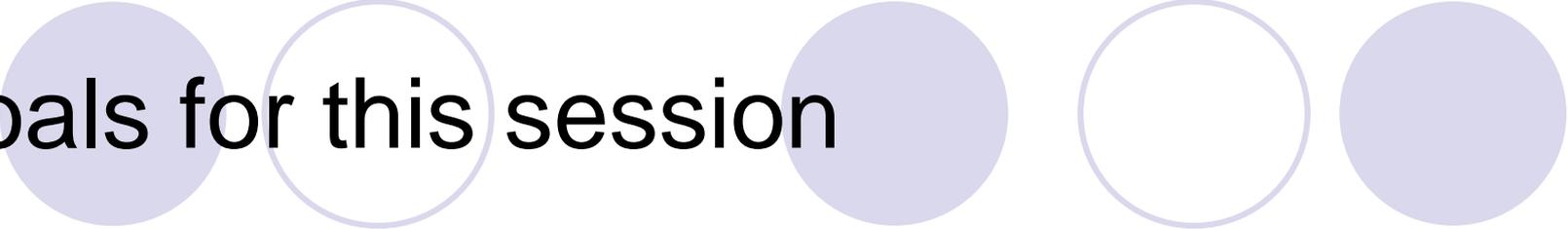
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Geannine L. Darby, CFRE
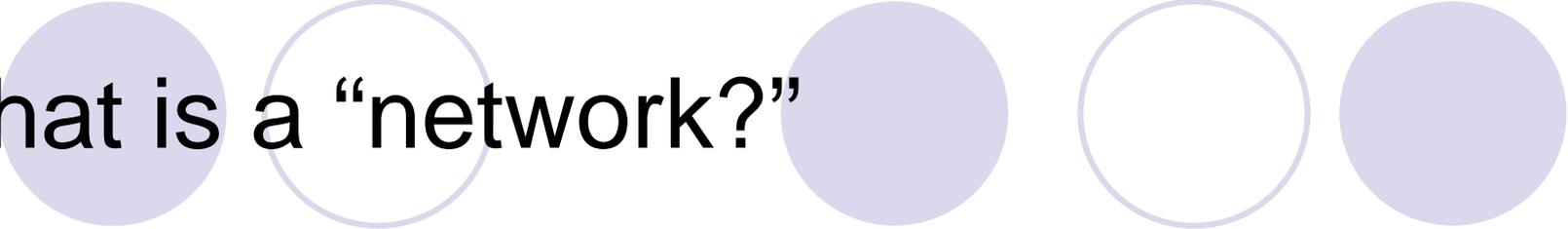ghladky@verizon.net
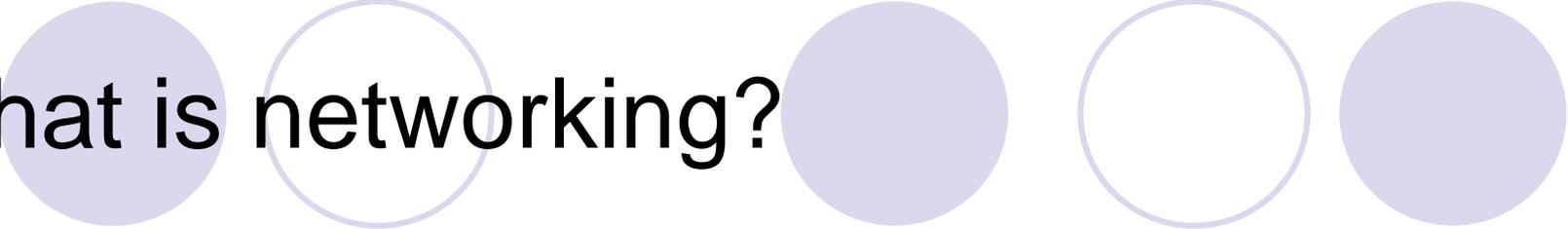410-419-8265

Goals for this session

- Why did you choose this session?
- What do you hope to get out of this session?

What is a "network?"

- An association of individuals having a common interest, formed to provide mutual assistance, helpful information, or the like. (dictionary.com)

What is networking?

- the exchange of information or services among individuals, groups, or institutions; *specifically* : the cultivation of productive relationships for employment or business (Merriam-Webster)

- a supportive system of sharing information and services among individuals and groups having a common interest (dictionary.com)
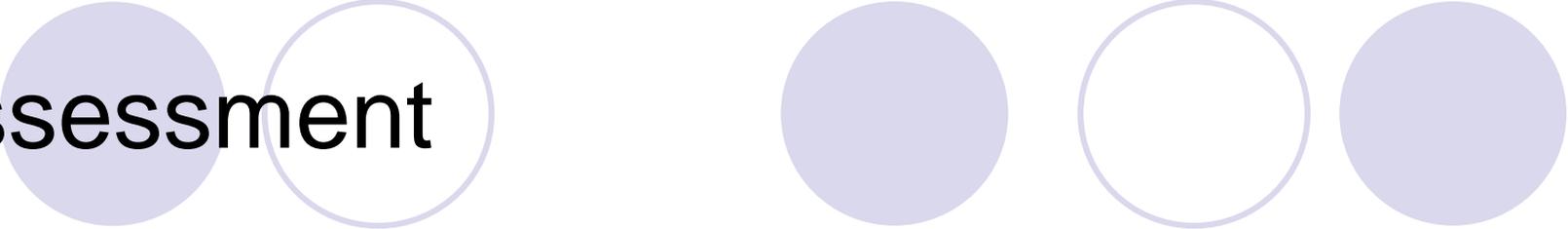
Assessment

- How many of you consider yourselves well-networked, professionally-speaking? Personally?

- Does anyone here wish they could get out there and expand their network?

Why network?
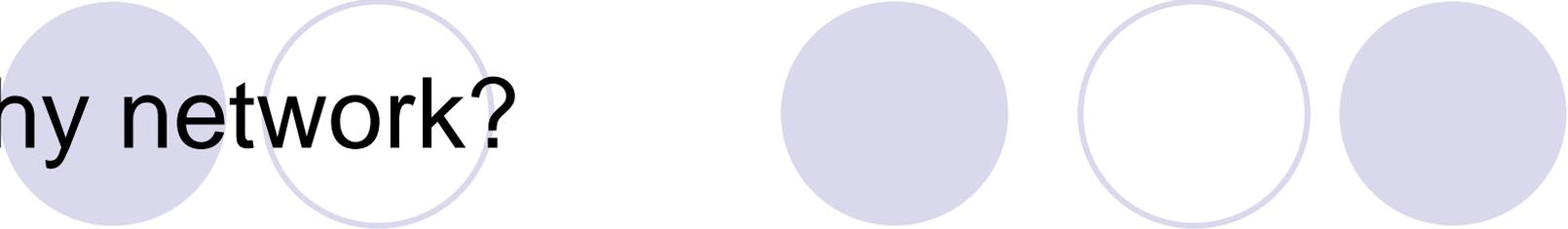
- Valuable to professional future, to benefit yourself on your career path, including when job hunting
  - Develop "soft skills," which enhance your technical expertise
  - Era of collaboration in healthcare
- In this setting, for patient benefit
  - To benefit your patients in accessing the resources they need, by increasing your knowledge of available resources and options for patients, expand your referral resources for patients
- To do your job better
- To enjoy new friendships
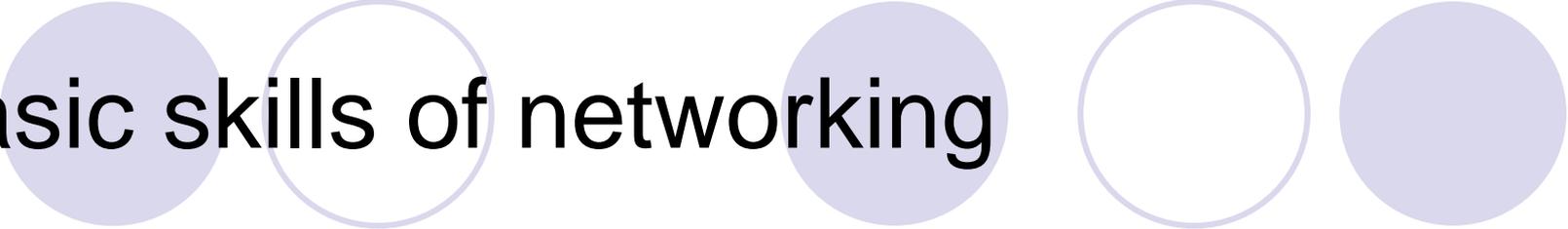
Methods of networking

- Face-to-face settings
  - Events – professional/industry opportunities to "work the room," whether social or educational, e.g. lectures
  - Lunch or coffee or happy hours
  - Volunteer for an organization, whether a trade organization or community health organization or even something outside your industry – for an event, a committee, a one-time project, mentoring
  - Become a mentee, if not a mentor, as many associations have mentoring programs that can help you hone just a single area of skill
  - Within your own organization and former organizations
    - With co-workers and former co-workers
    - With patients and former patients

Methods of networking - continued

- Online – Social media/email (be cautious here, as everywhere, with regard to HIPAA)
  - LinkedIn – one-to-one, groups
  - Facebook
  - Twitter – (not my area of expertise)
  - Professional organizations – online discussion groups
  - Other online social groups
- Email
  - Surveys, feedback, opportunities to connect further
- Mail and phone still work too
- Other?

What if I'm not very outgoing, not comfortable putting myself out there?

- What do I say after, "Hello, my name is…"
  - Be yourself, be genuine – don't put pressure on yourself – tell the real story – you want the best for your patients
  - Search for commonalities
  - Buddy system – go with someone and allow them to introduce you to individuals they know
- Practice – mirror, webcam, phone video, other settings – practice graciously ending conversations as well
- Hone relationship-building skills
  - Listening
  - Putting two and two together – your brain will search its archives for people, places and things that can help the person you're speaking to
  - Think quality versus quantity of contacts

Basic skills of networking

- Shake hands
- Introduce yourself
- Smile
- Look the other person in the eye
- Place your name tag on the right
- Note their name badge and start a conversation that way
- Listen
- Find commonalities
- Offer up information about yourself that may encourage them to open up
- Pay them a compliment or ask a question
- Ask open-ended, versus yes/no, questions
- Be conscious of conversation stoppers vs. starters
- Plan gracious ways of ending conversation, including next steps, follow-up if appropriate
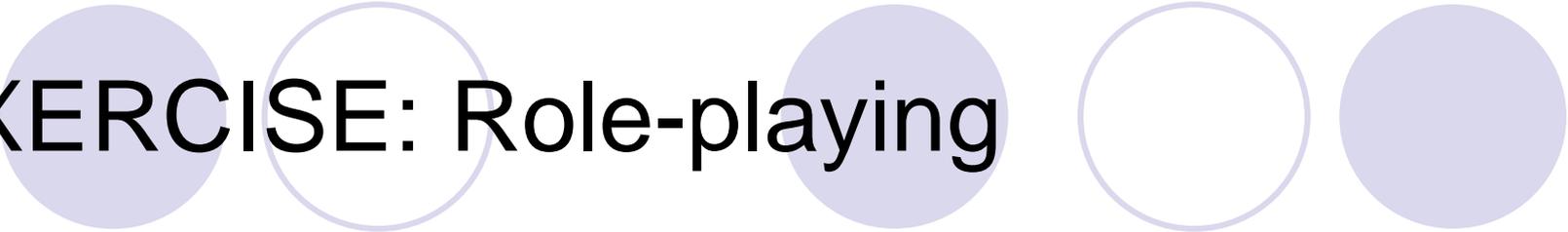
EXERCISE: Role-playing

- Work in groups of two (2) - pair off with someone you don't know
- Introduce yourself
- Find three (3) things you have in common but which are not obvious

Who should I be networking with?

- Who has the information you need?
  - Co-workers
  - Colleagues in your profession
  - Colleagues in allied related professions
    - How do I establish a new relationship with a professional contact I've just met?
      - Look for a reason to follow up or stay in touch
      - Empathy – put yourself in their shoes – look for ways you may be able to help them, as well (remember, the definition of network includes the word "mutual")

Who should I be networking with?

○ Patients, former patients

- Learning from your patients about resources they have identified, e.g. affordable community acupuncture, support groups you weren't aware of, etc. (is there liability? check with your employer)

- How do I establish a personal relationship with a new patient who I do not know?

  - Mindset of relationship versus transaction – some is innate, some can be learned
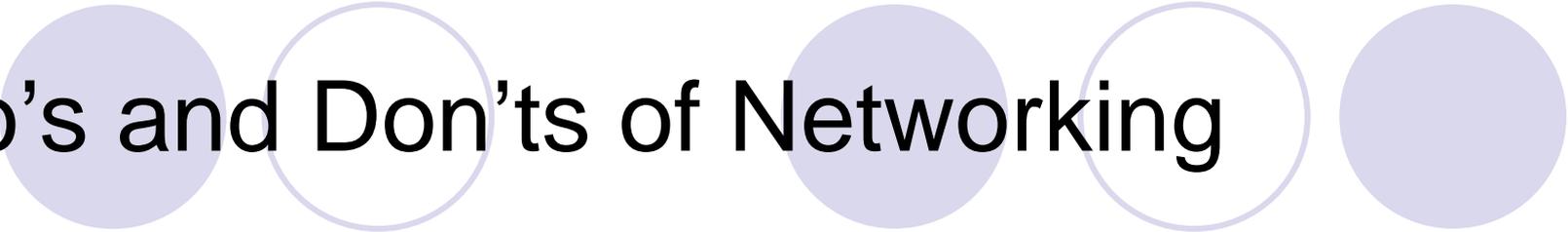
Do's and Don'ts of Networking

- Do always be polite
- Do plan next steps and follow up on commitments made as you get to know people
- Don't push yourself on someone
- Don't take improper advantage of others' generosity of time and ideas
- Don't say anything on social media or in an email that you wouldn't say aloud; assume your boss, and the whole world in fact, will see it

Next Steps – What to do after establishing a connection?

- Stay in touch
  - Ask permission, "May I call you in a week or so?" "Would you be willing to meet with me for 20 minutes?"
  - Ask if they prefer email, texting, phone (some people still do!)
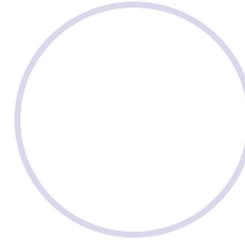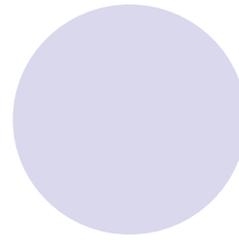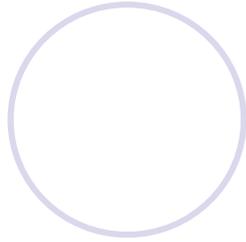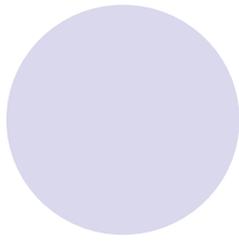 - Follow up, especially if you committed to do so

The "Dangers" of Networking

- Expanding your network can mean
  - Putting yourself out there and letting others get to know you
  - Making time for communication with the new individuals in your professional/personal life
  - Getting asked to present at workshops
  - Being invited to be considered for job opportunities, or refer others for openings
- The pluses outweigh the minuses
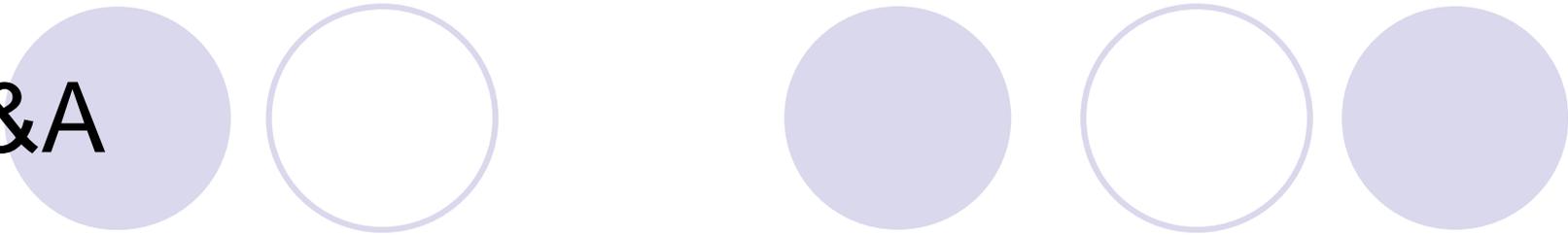
Q&A

- Questions?

- Other points to share for the good of the group?

Thank you!