

Small Group Meeting Process

Group sharing helps people connect in meaningful ways around common life stories. It provides attention, support, and opportunities for compassion and empathy. It is a way to move beyond false independence which often leads to isolation, pain, and loneliness.

- 1- Decide on a time and place (face-to-face or virtual) for storytelling.
- 2- Find a quiet place to minimize any interruptions.
- 3- Create a ritual opening if that speaks to you. Light a candle and/or invite each person to make a dedication to whoever or whatever is on their heart.
- 4- Make introductions and invite each person to share briefly how they are feeling today.
- 5- The leader reviews the “Group Ground Rules” which may include:
(after reviewing the rules, discuss and get commitment from each member by a raise of hands).
 - a. Listen from the heart *
 - b. Speak from the heart *
 - c. Be spontaneous and authentic *
 - d. Be lean of expression * (keep to one story)
 - e. Commit to confidentially, “What is said here, stays here.”
 - f. Only one person speaks at a time (use talking stick)
 - g. Give no judgments or no advice unless the storyteller asks for them.
 - i. It works best with no feedback. This allows the storyteller to be fully present with the emotions and thoughts of what they have just shared. This gives them an opportunity for healing and greater awareness regarding the story they shared. Note, this will be hard to do for many participants.
 - ii. If time permits, and others are open to this, one of the listeners can repeat back the story what was just shared. Repeat in the storyteller’s words and intonations as best you can. Stick with what was said, without adding any of your own stories or suggestions.
 - iii. Another way to give feedback is for each listener to have a card to write a question (or put into the virtual chat) they may have for the storyteller. The storyteller then reviews the questions and if they want to answer a one or more of them.
- 6- Every member has the option to pass when it is his or her turn to share.
- 7- Note: Practice active listening, being present with what is being said. Notice and let go of all the stories from your life which are being triggered by what you are hearing. Let go, as best you can, of your natural thoughts and impulses to give feedback, try to fix the other person, and judge them. Your silence and openness to hear their truth is the greatest gift you can give each other. Notice the feeling underneath the words spoken.
- 8- Leader calls on each member to share his or her story. Leader designates the timekeeper.
- 9- After each member has shared, if time permits, open group time for discussion and announcements.
- 10- In the last five minutes of the meeting, each person checks out by stating with a word or short phrase about how he or she is feeling at that moment.
- 11- End meeting by blowing out the candle and/or acknowledging the meeting is over.

* From Illuman – The Four Intentions; at: <https://illumian.org/way-of-council/>