

Suggested Guidelines for Discussion Groups

1. *Use “I” statements.*

Share your ideas and thoughts in a manner that owns them as your personal views and perspectives. “I believe that...” or “I feel that...” Understand and acknowledge that your beliefs are rooted in your life experiences.

2. *Listen deeply and lovingly, responding in a collaborative spirit.*

Lovingly accept each person’s contributions as reflecting her or his experience, whether or not the experience is your own or is common to others. Be interested to see and learn from others’ perspectives.

3. *Wait a few seconds before speaking.*

In order to help slow down the discussion and keep participants from interrupting each other, take a few deep breaths after another person shares before you begin to speak.

4. *Self-monitor the frequency of your contributions*

If you tend to speak readily, slowly count to ten before speaking; there may be someone in the group who needs more “time space” than you to feel comfortable or safe speaking up.

5. *Pay attention to the power dynamics of the group.*

Has any one group (of age, race, gender, etc.) “hogged” the time or determined the shape and flow of the sharing, thus compromising safety, respect or mutuality?

6. *Honor confidentiality.*

Hold in confidence anything of a personal nature that is shared.