

Guidelines for Leading and Listening Well

These will help you facilitate your team's sharing with one another and help you maintain effective participation within your team as you go through the entire learning process of CLC (so keep these handy, and review them often):

1. Leaders help to create a brave space for team members.

The fundamental goal of leading your team is to create a space where each person can be brave, practicing authenticity and vulnerability with God and others, so that things that have been hidden in the dark can come into the light, and where things that might be contentious or hard for others to hear can be freely shared. Your leadership is vital in creating and maintaining a brave space where each person learns, shares, and reflects without fear of judgment, shame, backlash, or ridicule.

We often call this creating a 'safe space', but safety is relative, especially among some who may never feel completely safe. Safety cannot be guaranteed for others, especially if "safety" is set up and maintained by someone who traditionally has authority and/or privilege over another.

One of the best ways to create a brave space is by offering some ground rules to the group the first time you meet, so that the team can edit, agree, and own the ground rules together as a team. Review them often (and possibly post them in large print in your meeting space). The following ground rules have been used by many teams and found to be critical to creating a brave space for vulnerability, learning, and growth.

As a participant in this team I agree to...

- Show up fully, free from distractions, following the instructions given by our leader(s) for each team meeting;
- Give each person in the group his/her portion of the allotted time to share;
- Refrain from giving advice, fixing, or telling another person how to solve a problem he/she has faced or is currently facing;
- Walk to the edge of my comfort zone in my sharing and learning, and then take at least one step further into my discomfort;
- Allow each person to tell his/her own story (meaning, I will not interrupt another person while he/she is sharing, and I will not repeat another person's story outside of our group, unless permission is given).

As a leader of your team (either as pastor or first learner), please remember that giving advice, trying to solve another person's problem, or trying to fix something that you perceive to be wrong or broken (either in a person or in your system) is the primary way that your group will become unsafe and stuck. You also help the group experience when you don't allow *others* in your group to give advice or offer fixes. When someone

does jump to advice or fixing, give a gentle reminder: "We all are tempted to give advice, but we've agreed to our ground rules where we've stated not to give advice."

You make the group a braver experience when you give everyone a chance to share and be heard. So you might need to put a time limit on each person's sharing, to make sure all have time to share during a meeting. You might consider using a timer during exercises where your group will struggle to fully share and give each member adequate time. If someone is dominating the group, it is your role to gently but firmly confront that - "We each have been given 20 minutes to share, and for *everyone* to have a chance to share, I need to ask you to complete your thoughts. Could you do that in one more minute?"

2. Leaders model effective group participation.

You are a player-coach; you lead the group but you are also a co-participant with everyone else. Start a time of sharing off by modeling what you want others to do. If you honor the assignment, your group members are more likely to do so. If you are authentic and vulnerable, your team members are more likely to be so. If you take risks to share beyond what is normally comfortable for you, your team members will generally follow suit. As you honor the holiness of another person's sharing, others will too. And if you work to honor time limits, they will generally join you in that.

When a person has finished sharing there are two effective ways for you and other team members to respond:

- **First, engage in active listening.**

"So what I think I heard you saying is...."

If you get affirmed in your listening, you might ask, "Is there anything else you'd like to say about that?"

If you didn't hear completely, generally a team member will begin to clarify what you missed. After the participant re-clarifies, say again what you think you heard. Keep repeating until the speaker affirms that you got the message.

- **Second, you can simply acknowledge them for sharing.**

"Thanks for sharing," or "That took a lot of courage. Thanks for taking the risk to put that out there," or "It seems like that is really painful. I'm really honored that you would share that with us," or, if he/she teared up as they shared something, "Would you be willing to share with us what's behind those tears?"

Here are some suggested transition statements to keep things moving during a meeting:

- A. The pastor or first learner usually shares first, modeling authenticity and courage. Do not call on someone else to lead or start off sharing, unless you have confirmed ahead of time that she/he is willing to do so.

After you (or another) share, simply ask, "Who would like to share next?"

It is not necessary to go around the circle; learning and practicing courage happen best through invitation, so invite and allow people to volunteer to share.

- B. When that person has completed their sharing, and you have engaged in active listening, and it seems that their sharing is complete, simply say: "Thanks for sharing? Who would like to go next?"
- C. If it seems that sharing has been difficult, as evidenced by statements like "This is really hard," or "I've never told anyone this before," or by the presence of tears or expressions of sadness or anger, say something like "Thank you for sharing. It takes a lot of courage to put all that out there."

Remember to resist giving advice or passing judgment on what was shared. When everyone in the group has shared or you've reached your ending time, acknowledge everyone's courage and willingness to enter this difficult work together.

If you find yourself, as the leader of the team, talking a lot, you are likely not functioning well in your role of facilitating the learning and sharing of the *entire* team.

3. Leaders manage both the process and the schedule.

Set a beginning and ending time that all can agree to, which might be the same for every meeting or might change depending on the content of a meeting. You are much more likely to reach your goals if each person has integrity around the design and content of each meeting. And integrity begins *with you* being ready for each meeting, willing to learn from and actively listen to others, seeking to recognize and manage your own anxiety, and calling others to integrity in the process.

Having integrity also means staying within the allotted time and content you've agreed to as a group, or mutually modifying things along the way when things arise that require the need to do things differently.

We offer this guidance with all seriousness but not with rigidity.

On some occasions something could transpire in a team meeting that makes it impossible for the group to stay on track or within time. For instance, a team member could reveal that he/she went through a traumatic experience as a child and had never told anyone about it. Obviously, as the leader, you wouldn't skip over this and say, "Thanks for sharing. That sure takes a lot of courage. Who's next?" Take these moments as holy and Spirit-led, and discern how best to deeply listen to each person's sharing (while also recognizing that emotional, relational, and spiritual healing and learning are processes that take large amounts of time and effort).

These guidelines are designed to help us learn and share together in community, so that everyone can show up fully, which might mean things will arise in individuals or within

the group that will require modifying in the moment the content or time of a meeting in order to facilitate healing and the recognition of God's transformative work.

BONUS: Questions to help you facilitate learning

Often participants are not clear in their sharing. This may be because they are anxious about sharing. It may be because they are attempting to express something that they have not shared publicly before. And/Or it could be that they do not yet have clarity.

In these kinds of situations, the facilitator helps the learning process by asking good questions.

The following are questions that are very helpful in assisting someone to express themselves as they seek to gain insight.

- What is the impact (of this situation) on you? On others in your life?
- In this situation, what do you want for yourself? What do you want for the other person (or persons)? What do you want for your relationship?
- What do you think this (negative) feeling is trying to tell you?
- What are you not saying?
- What are you asking God for in this situation?
- When you pray about this, what do you hear from God?