



Contemplative Outreach

HANDOUTS

**SPIRITUAL ENRICHMENT AND SUPPORT
FOR FACILITATING CENTERING PRAYER GROUPS**

Friday February 26, 2021
6:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Central Time to
Saturday February 27, 2021
10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Central Time

Presentation on Facilitator Spirituality, Attributes, & Skills

Exercise 1

Personal Reflection Worksheet

This exercise is offered to help you (1) reflect on the motivations that may be influencing your service and (2) identify your current strengths and opportunities for growth.

Instructions: Use the questions below to reflect on how you see yourself on a scale of 1 to 5. 1 indicates a lower ability. 5 indicates a higher ability. Circle the appropriate number.

1. Do I listen well in most situations? 1 2 3 4 5
2. Am I able to respond to ideas and personalities in a non-judgmental way? 1 2 3 4 5
3. Do I put people at ease in a group? 1 2 3 4 5
4. Am I sensitive to the needs and feelings of others in a group? 1 2 3 4 5
5. Do my personal feelings and prejudices interfere with my listening and communicating skills? 1 2 3 4 5
6. What have you learned about yourself that you can use to help the members of your Centering Prayer Group support one another in transformation in Christ? If not already a facilitator, what have you learned about yourself to ground your desire to become a facilitator or share facilitation?
7. In the next couple of days, take time to write down specific ways you can apply your strengths and specific behaviors you would like to develop.
8. On Saturday morning, there will be an opportunity for some sharing on your reflections.

Exercise 2

Group Dynamics – Small group discussion

- The purpose of this exercise is to gain insight into possible approaches to difficult dynamics that may be going on in your Centering Prayer group.
- Select someone to be your group's facilitator for this exercise and a note taker.
- Share a difficult dynamic going on in your group. Group members are encouraged to share their personal experiences in a similar situation.
- You are not trying to solve what has been shared, but share similar experiences and insights that might be helpful to the speaker. Ultimately, it is up to the speaker to prayerfully discern the appropriate response. We will come back in the large group with time for a few groups to share.

Presentation on Holding Space

Holding Space: The Art of Being Present with Others by Adam Brady
(excerpted from <https://chopra.com/articles/holding-space-the-art-of-being-present-with-others>)

Holding space is a conscious act of being present, open, allowing, and protective of what another needs in each moment. The term has been growing in popularity among caregivers, healers, yogis, and spiritual seekers. It's a broadly used phrase to define the act of "being there" for another. The effects of this practice, however, go much deeper than simply offering support.

Consider the individual words for a moment. To hold means to embrace or encircle someone or something in your grasp. Physically, this might take the form of a hug or the cradling of a hand in yours. But you can also embrace someone non-physically with your intention, attention, and energy. Space refers to the immediate environment you are sharing with another. This, too, may be the physical space of a room, but more frequently refers to the mental and emotional environment you are in with others. Put together, these words embody the principle of *surrounding the environment with your awareness in way that provides comfort and compassion for all*. . . .

Safety

A key component to holding space is the quality of safety. For others to be open, genuine, and oftentimes vulnerable, they must feel secure and have a sense of trust. People won't let down their defenses until they know it is safe to do so. . . . You need to create an environment in which all who enter feel protected from harm. . . . Maintain confidentiality, transparency, and impeccability in all you say and do.

Suspended Self-Importance

. . . Understand that it's not about you. When you hold space you must make the conscious decision to leave your ego at the door. Holding space is about serving others and your personal concerns or needs are not part of the process. Suspending your sense of self-importance should be considered a prerequisite for the practice. If you aren't able to put your ego in the back for a time, you'll be ill-suited to be present for the needs of others. Holding space requires radical humility and the willingness to be a temporary caretaker of the feelings and concerns of another.

Attention

One of the most precious gifts you can give another is the gift of your full and complete attention. However, listening attentively without the need to respond, interrupt, or comment is a skill that takes considerable practice to master. Even with the best of intentions, your ego may sneak back in; it looks for opportunities to subtly make things about you instead of the other.

When holding space you must work diligently to maintain eye contact, be free of distractions, be fully attentive, and cultivate an openness or "space consciousness" in which there is no "me," but rather the ever-present witness of the sounding board of consciousness. . . .

Practice Acceptance

Holding space is all about allowing· allowing this person or group to feel what they feel. Allowing them to say what they need to say. Allowing yourself to be whatever they need you to be right now. Holding space, therefore, isn't about controlling anything. Your role is that of a guardian of the space. Like two cupped hands filled with water, you are there to hold the other with your awareness. In doing so, you must allow that experience to take whatever shape it will. . . .

Nonjudgment

Holding space is an impartial process. You're not there to pass judgment or to evaluate another. When you judge another's experience you create additional mental static that will only get in the way and obscure the truth. In the moment when you're holding another's fears, suffering, or grief, your opinions are irrelevant.

Unless you've been through what they're going through, you'll never truly understand their feelings. Being there is enough. Good and bad are merely a matter of perspective and in this moment, your perspective isn't the one that's important.

Compassion

Although you nonjudgmentally practice acceptance with your full attention, that doesn't mean you wouldn't prefer things to be better. Compassion is an essential quality for the practice of holding space. To embrace another in acceptance is an act of compassion in and of itself. In your openness to the pain of others you are essentially saying, "How can I help you? I don't want you to hurt. What can I do to help support your highest good?" Even if not spoken aloud, these intentions to relieve the suffering of others are the essence of compassion.

In many cases, simply being a loving presence can bring about a deep sense of relief that eases the pain of another. The world can use more compassion, so the practice of holding space provides an opportunity to continually build this vitally important skill.

Witnessing

Witnessing allows you to play a special part while holding space· that of the observer. . . . In holding space you're just there as the witness, almost like a fly on the wall. Naturally, you can participate if requested to do so, but essentially your role is that of the watcher. . . .

Through the practice of holding space, you serve as a container for which the healing and transformation can take place. It's a powerful gift of presence that you can give to others through the quality of your attention.

Exercise: Here are desired attributes in a Facilitator. Match these with Holding Space components

Welcoming:

Supportive:

Compassionate:

Calm:

Courteous:

Good Listener:

Faith Sharing Guidelines:

Presentation on Establishing Group Purpose and Guidelines

EXCERPTS FROM FACILITATOR FORMATION LEVEL 1 WORKSHOP MATERIALS (12-08-2017)

Exercise 6 **Your Centering Prayer Group's Sharing Guidelines**

It is very helpful for a Centering Prayer group to have clear guidelines for sharing. A strong consensus on sharing guidelines helps the group avoid potential conflicts and encourages unity of purpose.

Break up into small groups of three to four participants. Select a facilitator.

1. Review Handout A – Centering Prayer Group Guidelines for Sharing
2. Ask each member to share which guideline they find particularly helpful.
3. Ask each member to share additional guidelines that might be helpful.
4. As a group, come to a consensus on the top seven guidelines.
5. Be prepared to share your top seven guidelines in the large group discussion.

When you are back with your Centering Prayer group, facilitate your group through a consensus process to create a new set of guidelines or to reaffirm or update its current guidelines.

(Facilitator Formation Level 1 Workshop 12-08-2017)

Handout A **Centering Prayer Group Guidelines for Sharing**

- ➤ Participate with utmost charity
- ➤ Listen to others from the heart
- ➤ Accept each other as we are—non-judgmental
- ➤ Seek understanding, not agreement
- ➤ Maintain confidentiality and trust
- ➤ Speak from own experience—not about ideas or theology
- ➤ Okay to be silent
- ➤ Facilitator has permission to remind the group when straying or monopolizing
- ➤ NOT interrupting when others are speaking
- ➤ NOT speaking a second time until all have had a chance to speak
- ➤ NOT giving advice
- ➤ NOT criticizing

Group Covenant

As a member of this community:

I listen to others from my heart.

Facilitator Handbook – February 2021 Serving Others on the Spiritual Journey in Community

Within each person is a core of goodness, of strength, and of love. I put aside superficial feelings for other persons and their opinions. I try to understand the heart of what others are sharing.

I listen to others with a non-judgmental attitude.

I try to hear the other's perception of reality. I may not agree with it, but I can affirm that person's right to a different point of view.

I listen to others with love.

With the grace of God, people have within themselves all they need to discover truth and life. My loving concern can assist that discovery for both of us.

I listen to others with respect for their freedom.

This group does not exist to give advice, but to encourage growth and insight. We do not have to be of one voice or of one mind.

I listen to others with shared trust.

A basic level of trust encourages conversation to extend beyond the superficial knowing that personal thoughts will be kept confidential.

I speak from my own unique experience.

I will use the pronoun "I" when I share my point of view.

I will learn to trust that what I have experienced is important and worth sharing with the group.

Together we seek understanding, not agreement.

We will help one another use and act on what we have come to understand.

No one can act for another, but as we share from our experience, we can discern creative possibilities.

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Presentation on Practical Aspects and Tools of Facilitating

EXCERPTS FROM FACILITATOR FORMATION LEVEL 1 WORKSHOP MATERIALS (12-08-2017)

Handout B ASC Centering Prayer Group Facilitator Bag-Punch List

- Large canvas bag
- Facilitator bag punch list
- Facilitator punch list
- “Welcome! Please enter in Silence” signs
- Laminated Format Explanation
- Music, CD player or iPod, Bluetooth amplifier (fully charged)
- i-Qi Clock and Meditation Timer (Apple app), Android app, or manual timer and gong
- Appropriate readings:
 - Your own favorite scriptures
 - *Psalms for Praying*, Nan Merrill
 - http://www.faithandworship.com/Celtic_Blessings_and_Prayers.ht
- Votive Candles (or you can use the ones in the Chapel)
- Lighter for candles

Handout C

All Saints' Centering Prayer–Facilitator Punch List

Thank you for agreeing to serve as Facilitator to our Centering Prayer Group. Your generosity is deeply appreciated.

1. Arrive by 5:30 p.m. If the church is not open, call Beth Davis on her cell: (321) 689-5611 and she will get the Sexton to open it.
2. Make sure you phone is on airplane mode, silenced and Bluetooth setting is “on.”
3. Put Bluetooth speaker on “preacher’s podium” and turn on music appropriate for the quiet stillness we seek through Centering Prayer.
4. Adjust lighting as necessary (switches 1-4).
5. Light the candles on the altar (please use plastic sheets to protect altar) and the two large candles in the back of the Chapel.
6. Hang the two Welcome signs (one on the Lyman Door and one on the door leading to the Winderweedle Center).
7. Make sure the Lyman Street door is unlocked by pushing the small button on the side below the lock.
8. Place a several of “Order of Service” handouts on the small table by the aisle.
9. Set up your reading materials on the front seat.
10. At 6:05 p.m., turn off music.
11. Gong once (slow, allow for a moment of silence between gongs).
12. Read the Psalm or prayer.
13. Gong three times.
14. Center for 20 minutes.
15. Gong three times.
16. Turn music back on.
17. After a couple of minutes of music, welcome everyone and invite participants to our Centering Prayer study group at the Winderweedle center. Explain the meeting will adjourn promptly at 7:30 p.m.
18. Turn the music back on.
19. After everyone has exited, turn off altar candles (let them cool off while you pick up) and the two candles at the back of the Chapel.
20. Put “order of service” handouts back in facilitator bag.
21. Put candles back on their rack.
22. Shut off music and put the amplifier back in the facilitator bag.
23. Pick up Welcome signs and put back in facilitator bag.
24. Exit Chapel.

Handout D

Order of Service



Centering Prayer Group *“Be still and know that I am God.” Psalm 46:10*

Welcome to our Centering Prayer Group where we come together as a community to experience God's presence in quiet peace and to support each other on this journey.

We invite you to sit quietly as we consent to God's loving presence and action in our lives.

Our Centering Prayer time will begin in a few minutes with three gongs. A scripture, or a prayer, will be read.

A gong will invite you to join us in Centering Prayer:

1. Choose a sacred word (for example, Abba, Jesus, or Mercy) as the symbol of your intention to consent to God's loving presence and action within.
2. Sitting comfortably and with eyes closed, settle briefly and silently introduce the sacred word.
3. When engaged with thoughts, return ever so gently to the sacred word.
4. At the end of the prayer period, remain in silence with eyes closed for a couple of

minutes

A gong will signal the end of the 20-minute Centering Prayer period.

When you are ready, please exit quietly. From October through June, those of us who like to meet for small group discussions regarding our rich Centering Prayer tradition and its potential to enrich our lives and the lives of those we love, will meet at the Winderweedle Center immediately after the Centering Prayer this period. We will adjourn promptly at 7:30 p.m.

Blessings!

The purpose of this Order of Service is to acquaint you with the format of our Centering Prayer time together.