

Guide For Group Leaders

The small group check-in and discussion sessions almost run themselves. As soon as someone starts sharing their experiences, other students will find links or aspects in common. However, a little preparation can enhance the quality of the discussions. Please refer to the guide below to assist you in gracefully and successfully holding the space for your Level Two Home Study group.

Role of the Facilitator

- To gently guide discussions utilizing questioning, paraphrasing and reflection techniques. Less talk is better!
- Engage all members. Draw participants out as needed.
- Listen to the emotion as well as content of message (both head and heart).
- Clarify topics and keep discussions on track (to the extent that it's needed or desired).
- Show enthusiasm for participants' input.
- Report back to lead trainer any issues or topics that need clarification or attention.
- Be honest, open and authentic.

TIP

Don't try to TEACH or PREACH; Say very little, keep things simple and stay focused on the participants' experiences.

Role of the Participant (which you can share with the group)

- Participate in discussions; Engage in dialogue.
- Listen to others.
- Maintain confidences.
- Abide by group process rules (ground rules).
- Be honest, open, genuine and authentic.

TIP

Do participate in the discussion, but don't monopolize the conversation. Take an interest in your teammates.

Role of Study Groups

- To support participants as they complete the course requirements.
- Provide a safe environment for discussions as participants practice the meditations and complete their homework.
- Opportunity to share and compare experiences.

TIP

Support your teammates. Use the group to help yourself and others stay committed to the process. Keep up!

Skillful Questioning Techniques

The purpose of asking questions is to...

- Stimulate participation and interest in topics
- Guide discussion
- Relate to the participants' real world experiences

Good questions should...

- Have a purpose
- Be clear and concise
- Be limited to one idea
- Tie back to the objectives of course or task
- Engage the participants

Types of Questions

- 1) **RECALL** – review material previously covered (*So what did the SSSji say about relays?*)
- 2) **OPINION** – Questions that solicit participants' opinions (*Why did you think we meditated first?*)
- 3) **COMPARISON** – Comparing two or more concepts (*What's the main difference between "paradox" and "contrast"?*)
- 4) **CASE SCENARIO** – Offer a situation. Ask how they would handle it. (*What if your partner did X? What would you do then?*)
- 5) **DEVIL'S ADVOCATE** – Argue against your material and ask participants to argue for it. (*I mean why do we even bother to practice this kriya before the exercise? Don't we already know how to meditate?*)

Question Methods

- 1) **OVERHEAD** – question is tossed out for anyone to answer (*Who is willing to share their experience with the last exercise? Anyone?*)
- 2) **DIRECT** – Group Leader selects a specific participant to answer (*What was your experience Nirvair?*)
- 3) **HAND OFF** – Group Leader receives a question and 'gives it back' to group or individual (*So what do you think all think about that? OR What do you think, Amrit?*)
- 4) **REVERSE** – Group Leader receives a question and sends it back (*Okay Dharma Singh, I see what you're looking for... let me ask you how do YOU think you might handle that...)* Be prepared for "I don't know – that's why I asked you")

AVOID...

- Lecturing, as opposed to soliciting input and listening to responses.
- Asking ineffective questions that lead to long discussions that are off track
- Over-questioning participants
- Providing evaluative statements (e.g. too complimentary or too critical; Be neutral)
- Sharing inappropriate stories
- Asking Yes/No questions; Instead, ask open-ended questions to encourage more in-depth sharing (e.g. Don't ask: *So are you guys getting this?* Instead ASK: *Would one of you please describe your understanding or experience?*)

ALLOW...

- Silence (to a certain extent) – participants need time to process; don't feel like you have to fill in the gaps
- Everyone's experience; be respectful of each person's experience and story
- Feedback (even negative)
- Yourself to be part of the group; Share your experiences. Be real.

Fielding & Answering Questions **(from Participants)**

How you field questions reveals your...

- level of expertise
- ability to listen
- opinion of participant
- interest in the material
- level of nervousness

The Process of Fielding Questions

- 1) **Clarify/restate** – *“What do you mean when you say...?”*
- 2) **Acknowledge/credit** – *“Thank you for raising that issue...”*
- 3) **Address issues** – relay, paraphrase, or delay (e.g. put in “parking lot” and get back to participants later) *“So what you are asking is...”*
- 4) **Confirm** – “Does that answer your question?”

AT COURSE

Greeting/Welcome & Introductions

After forming the discussion groups, the group leader welcomes each person and asks individuals to introduce themselves.

Establish Ground Rules for Discussion

Ask group how they want to operate. Get “buy in” to set of discussion ground rules.

Sample Ground Rules:

- Everyone to participate and be involved in the discussions
- Listen to other team members; Take turns speaking
- Respect other’s opinions and points of view
- Provide alternative points of view or opinions
- Everyone is responsible for holding the group to the ground rules.
- Maintain confidentiality (what is said in the room; stays in the room)

BEGINNING Group Discussions

Tune in: *Ong Namō, Guru Dev Namō*

OR

Chant: *Ad Guray Nameh...*

OR

Other Develop your own groups’ check in ritual (see below)

Options for the Daily Check-in Process

- ❑ **Name** – have person state his/her name whenever talking
- ❑ **Check Mood States and/or Energy Levels (ups and downs)** – *how are you feeling?*
- ❑ **Check time constraints** – *does anyone have to leave early or are there going to be “late arrivals”?*
- ❑ **Review/clarify task, topic or expectations** – Ask open-ended questions about the topic of discussion. Allow time to answer.

- ❑ **Rumors & Elephants** – identify and address any potential “undiscussables” which appear to be dominating the awareness or attentiveness of those in the meeting
- ❑ **Questions & Reflections** – What are questions or reflections based upon prior meetings or interactions among meeting members.

ENDING Group Discussions

- ❑ Try to wrap up discussion (may not be able to complete discussion or exercise)
- ❑ If incomplete, agree to come back to topic later
- ❑ May want to summarize key points covered.
- ❑ Bring conversation to a close
- ❑ Find a method to end group

OPTIONS for Ending Discussions:

Chant *Long Sat Nams*

OR

Say Prayer

OR

Sit in Silence

OR

Group Hug

OR

Sing *Long Time Sun*