

**BEST PRACTICES FOR RUNNING
EFFECTIVE MEETINGS AND HAVING
SUCCESSFUL DIALOGUE**

Conducting Successful Dialogue

Check out the Sisterhood of Salaam Shalom’s short videos (four-six minutes) and written tips on how to have a successful dialogue: <https://sosspeace.org/series1/>. They include: how to set your own group agreements, how to frame questions that lead to deeper understanding; compassionate listening, and detailed “activity” instructions for how to lead meetings with structured dialogue and sharing personal narratives.

The four best practices below are adapted with permission from the Interfaith Youth Core's (IFYC) Interfaith Leader's Guide.

Toolkit: Interfaith Leadership requires a framework through which participants view dialogue as a cooperative, rather than inherently rooted in conflict. Participants recognize that they are sharing individual, faith-based perspectives on shared values such as mercy, compassion, and hospitality. Ultimately, leaders influences not just fellow participants, but also their wider communities through story-telling, facilitating relationships, and mobilizing action for the common good.

There are some fundamental ways to put these tools into practice:

1. Establish a Safe, Inclusive Space

Within the context of interfaith dialogue, a safe space is one where each member is provided the emotional and psychological space necessary for establishing sustainable relationships. Everyone agrees to respect one another’s identities and privacy, to practice active listening, and to approach interactions with an open mind committed to genuinely learning about others and working for the common good. As explained in future sections, there are some logistical considerations to keep in mind as well.

2. Start with Stories

Stories have the power to transform because they allow us to frame our thoughts through specific context, they allow each person to share her experience, regardless of her expertise in religious traditions, and they allow others to gain insight into and appreciation for each person’s experience. Telling a story grounded within one’s own religious practice can often be received as less threatening than a conversation on say, the theological tenets of religion or various elements of Scripture. Not each person’s experience will be identical, but each woman is invited to share her beliefs and values in an inclusive setting. Story telling can help us not only connect with each other but can also help us make sense of our own narratives and the experiences we’ve lived. In some cases, they can even inspire individuals or groups to take action for a particular cause.

3. Practice Active Listening

As important as it is to start with your own story, it is equally essential to be a good listener. Storytelling is not just about sharing one’s own story but participating in an exchange.

Listening is a critical skill too often be taken for granted. We most often assume that what we

think we heard is what was said, but frequently, this is not the case. People communicate not only information, but emotion and intent too, and we must actively listen for these as well.

4. Mobilize for the Common Good

Many women come to interfaith dialogue groups like the Sisterhood of Salaam Shalom out of a desire not just to know others and their faith traditions but also to serve the common good. Often, once sustainable, respectful relationships have developed, women choose to take action to help a community or cause in need of support. This final step transforms the experience of interfaith relationships into concrete action and benefits not just the women involved but the larger community as well. The act of joining together across lines of difference can be a powerful one, demonstrating to all affected that sometimes, our best partners for change are those who, if not for the deliberately crafted interfaith relationships, we might never have found.

Suggested Group Agreements

https://sosspeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/SOSS_Agreements_Respectful_Meetings_032118.pdf

When talking about highly charged issues that are close to your heart, you may feel uncomfortable listening to perspectives that contradict your experience or position. It's easy to feel defensive and respond with a counter argument. But getting outside your comfort zone is often necessary to understand a different perspective. Remember, listening \neq agreeing!

With that in mind, group agreements define a shared set of behaviors, norms, and expectations for your group. Don't be discouraged if your chapter doesn't always live up to the ideal. Consider them your aspiration. These agreements are based upon the work of Essential Partners.¹

1. **I will speak for myself and from my own experience.** Speak with honesty and admit what you do not know. Begin sentences with "I notice" or "I wonder", as opposed to "you people" or "you think".
2. **I will listen with an open heart and mind.** Assume goodwill and don't let prior assumptions dissuade you from listening to and learning from each other. In addition to listening to the person's position, try to understand her feelings and values. You may never agree with her position, but you may discover shared values and make a human connection.
3. **I will set aside the need to persuade others to agree with me.** Acknowledge that there are many forms of religious expression within and between our faiths.
4. **I will not interrupt.** Wait until a speaker has finished before you respond and refrain from sidebar conversations. Using your cell phone is another type of interruption, so put it away during meetings.
5. **I will "step up" to share my thoughts and experiences and then "step back" so others may share theirs.** Give everyone an equal opportunity to speak, or in the words of renowned educator Peggy McIntosh, maintain an autocratic allocation of time for a democratic allocation of voice.²
6. **I will ask a clarifying question** if I don't understand something being said. For example, "what do you mean when you said ___?" or, "Can you say more about your personal connection to the issue?"
7. **I will "pass" if I don't want to speak.** But if a sister is often silent, check in with her after a meeting. Ask how she's feeling and how you might help her feel more comfortable sharing in the group.
8. **I will maintain confidentiality.** What's said in the group, stays in the group. But please, take what you learn out into the world!

¹ Essential Partners. <https://www.whatisessential.org/fdad>. *Fostering Dialogues Across Divides*, Chasin and Herzig. You can download this 100+page guide for free or \$40 for hard copy (includes shipping).

² <https://www.speakoutnow.org/speaker/mcintosh-peggy>

Developing Your Own Group Agreements

https://sosspeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/SOSS_Developing_Group_Agreements_032118.pdf

Objective: To develop a set of group norms when communication styles differ.

Introduction: We all grow up with a set of communication norms. They define the way we express our emotions, the way we speak to our elders, and many other verbal and nonverbal rules. They're not written down, but we usually know exactly what's allowed. Trouble is, the norms we follow aren't visible to others! Collectively setting group agreements is one way to reduce misunderstandings when our differing communication styles collide. In this activity you'll discuss your communication "comfort zones" and identify your "communication aspirations" as a group. Choose a facilitator before your meeting so she can review the instructions and be prepared to lead the activity.

Materials:

- Paper or notecards and pens.
- Two-three sheets of large post-it paper and a marker.
- One copy of the printed questions (outlined in #2) for each small group.
- Printed copies of the suggested group agreements, one for every sister. (Found in the online library.)

Two Options for Time:

1. One hour, with limited time for debrief.
2. Entire meeting, with time to debrief all the questions (preferable).

Process: (Facilitator also takes part in the small group discussion)

1. **Set the scene** by paraphrasing the introduction, describing why you want to collectively develop group agreements.
2. **Ask your sisters to get in groups of three.** Tell them they will have 30 minutes together to discuss three sets of questions. Give each group a copy of the list of questions (a), (b), and (c) below. For the first ten minutes, ask them to discuss the questions on communication norms. Remind everyone to share the airtime!
 - a. **Communication norms:** What were the communication norms within your family and culture when you were growing up? For example, "it wasn't OK to express anger". In what ways are you comfortable or uncomfortable with these norms now?
 - b. **Trust:** What will help you trust this group with your deepest feelings?

After ten minutes, let sisters know it's time to switch to the next question about strengths and weaknesses. Remind everyone should share airtime!

- c. **Strengths and weaknesses:** What personal strengths do you bring to a “difficult conversation”? For example, I’m a good listener. What are some of your weaknesses? For example, I easily get defensive when my position or beliefs are challenged.

While one sister is speaking, another can write down words or phrases to summarize her responses.

3. **Ask your sisters to return to the whole group** after the three rounds of questions.
4. Hang a large sheet of paper. The facilitator can ask another sister to summarize and write down the feelings that are expressed on the large sheet so everyone can see.
5. **Suggested de-brief for one-hour version:** Ask each sister to respond to the question, “what will help you trust the group with your deepest feelings?” Before you begin the debrief, note how much time is available for each sister to speak. Gently remind a sister to wrap up so everyone has a turn.
6. When everyone has shared, hand out the suggested list of group agreements. Compare your list to the suggested list and see if there are any agreements you want to add to your list.
7. **Suggested questions for facilitator debrief for full-meeting version:**
 - a. How might your personal strengths help you find the courage to talk about highly charged issues?
 - b. How might your sisters support you in the areas that are difficult for you?
 - c. What will help you trust the group with your deepest feelings?

Hang a large sheet of paper. The facilitator can ask another sister to summarize the feelings that are expressed so everyone can see. When you are finished, compare your list to the suggested group agreements and see if there are any you want to add to your list.

Addressing Conflict in Chapter Meetings: What to Do When Group Agreements are Broken

https://sosspeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/SOSS_Addressing_Conflict_in_Meetings_032118.pdf

Introduction: Group agreements sound good in theory. But it's likely that at some point during a meeting, someone will feel misunderstood or offended. It's important to regularly remind sisters that while they may have strong opinions about what is "right" and "wrong," beliefs and practices are personal. Our role is to listen to and respect each sister's experience, not to suggest that her beliefs or practices are incorrect. Remember, she's not representing her religion, she's representing herself! It's helpful to periodically post and review the group agreements during meetings and to review them before talking about a highly charged issue.

Here are **four general strategies** you can use if you notice tension in your chapter meeting or if someone explicitly says she's upset:

1. Name what you see
2. Ask for clarification
3. Seek input from others
4. Explore feelings

Since you may not know when a sister has said something that's offensive to another sister, remember to assume goodwill! Here are some examples to get you started.

What if...a sister "corrects" another sister, implying that she doesn't know enough about a religious practice to speak about it?

What if... a sister says that everyone should practice her faith in a certain way? For example, "every Jewish sister should keep a kosher home," or "you're not a good Muslim if you don't eat halal meat."

General response: "Remember, we each speak for ourselves and not on behalf of our religious group. Our practices may vary widely and part of the joy of inter-religious dialogue is learning about the range of belief and practice within each group. We've committed to 'step up' to share our thoughts and beliefs, and then 'step back' and listen to others." If the sister insists that information is incorrect, you might:

1. **Name what you see:** "It seems like there are different opinions and perspectives about (fill in the blank). Do people think it's possible for both to exist side-side?"
2. **Seek input from others:** "Does anyone else in the group have information that might shed light on different ways of looking at (fill in the blank)?"
3. **Ask for clarification:** "When you say (fill in the blank), do you mean (fill in the blank)?"
4. **Explore feelings:** "I'm noticing some tension in the room and wondering if anyone else is feeling uncomfortable?" If a sister says something that you feel is judgmental, you might ask a general question: "Has anyone ever felt judged because of her beliefs or practices? What was that like for you?"

Sharing Personal Narratives: Listening and Talking from the Heart

<https://sosspeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Sharing-Personal-Narratives.pdf>

Objective: To understand different perspectives on a highly charged topic through respectful sharing of personal stories.

Introduction:

This methodology was developed by Rabbi Justus Baird, Dean of the Auburn Seminary in Manhattan, and tested by two chapters of the Sisterhood in Princeton and Highland Park, NJ from September-December 2016.

Sisters share their personal experiences related to an issue and gain insight into the beliefs and values of sisters who may have a very different perspective. Consistent with Sisterhood values, the activity focuses on listening and understanding, rather than debating or trying to convince others to adopt a different point of view.

It is intended for Sisterhood chapters that have developed strong relationships marked by deep trust and respect, over the course of at least one year, and have expressed a desire to deepen their relationships by engaging in conversations that have the potential trigger strong or conflicting feelings.

Topics for this process might include: the Israeli/Palestinian conflict; racism; terrorism; modesty and dress; same-sex marriage or homosexuality; abortion; belief in God; feminism and patriarchy; body image; and group identities (am I an American first or a Jew/Muslim first?)

Time Required: 90-120 minutes

Methodology:

At the meeting prior:

1. Select a topic as a departure point for personal stories. Since not everyone will have a personal story on the topic, the issue should be generalized (e.g. “women’s roles in our faith communities vs. patriarchy). Related stories are welcomed.
2. Select a moderator from the group. Helpful moderator skills include the ability to: (a) listen deeply; (b) keep track of time; (c) help group stay focused on personal experiences; and, (d) manage group discussion so all members are heard.

At the meeting:

1. The Moderator role is to:
 - a. Place two chairs in the center of the room for a storyteller/ listener pair, with the remaining chairs in an outer circle. The moderator also places a “pressure valve” object in the center of the circle (e.g. stone, feather).

- b. Explain the activity objective to the group and remind them of the topic.
- c. Invite someone to be the first storyteller and asks someone from the other faith group to be the active listener. (A Jewish member listens to a Muslim member's story, and a Muslim member listens to a Jewish member's story.)
- d. Ask the storyteller to share her personal experiences related to the topic (2-3 minutes). It's important to clearly state that the purpose is to share specific incidents in her life, not to expound upon her views of "right or wrong". For example, if the topic is homosexuality, encourage the storyteller to focus on her experiences interacting with LGBTQ people, her feelings talking about homosexuality, and how her life experiences have shaped her views.
- e. Invite the listener to give a brief summary of the story, and then complete the sentence, "Given what I've heard, I imagine you might have felt _____," completing the sentence with a short list of feelings or emotions. "Do I have that right?"
- f. Invite the storyteller to respond to the listener's summary.
- g. Invite up to three members of the group to share a moment in the story that they connected with most. "I connected most with the part in your story when.... because...." These validating responses should be focused on connecting with the story and not on making a point or counterpoint.
- h. Explain that if anyone in the group is feeling too uncomfortable to continue, she may choose to pick up the "pressure valve" object or leave the room. In such a moment, the moderator should pause the process, invite reflection and support, and discern the best path forward. That path might include waiting for a few minutes for one or more people to process, asking for a member of the group to sit with the person who is unable to continue, or ending the process altogether.
- i. Invite another storyteller/listener pair into the center of the circle to repeat the process. Continue for as many pairs as time permits.

If there is time after everyone present has shared a story, the moderator may invite reflective discussion about what it was like to hear the stories. If there wasn't time for everyone to participate as a speaker and listener pair, the moderator can ask if the group would like to stay later or continue the process at the next group meeting. If there is time and interest, the moderator may choose to share a personal narrative.

The Sisterhood thanks Rabbi Justus Baird, Dean of the Auburn Seminary in Manhattan for his guidance and wisdom developing this process.

Dialogue vs. Debate³

<https://sosspeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Dialogue-vs-debate-summary-sheet.pdf>

Dialogue	Debate
Goal: To seek <u>mutual understanding</u> through use of carefully crafted questions.	Goal: To <u>win</u> . Attempt to prove the other side wrong.
Helps people to <u>re-examine</u> positions and assumptions.	Requires that people <u>defend</u> their positions and assumptions.
Use listening to <u>gain insight</u> into beliefs and concerns of others.	Use listening to <u>find flaws</u> and make counter arguments.
<u>Pre-meeting</u> communication <u>essential</u> to process.	<u>Pre-meeting</u> communication is <u>minimal</u> .
Participants <u>speak as individuals</u> with unique experiences	Participants <u>speak as representatives</u> of groups.
Assume that <u>many people have pieces to the answer</u> .	Assume that <u>there is a right answer</u> .
Participants <u>express uncertainty</u> as well as deeply held beliefs.	Participants express <u>total commitment</u> to their point of view.

³ Adapted from Fostering Dialogue Across Divides, Essential Partners, formerly, The Public Conversations Project, Maggie Herzig and Laura Chasin, p. 139.

Exploring Meaningful Dialogue

<https://sosspeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Brief-Introduction-to-Dialogue.pdf>

Introduction: Dialogue is a structured form of conversation that promotes understanding, fosters respect, and builds trust. When addressing a highly charged issue, it's easy to get mired in argument about who's right and who's wrong. Unlike a debate, where the goal is to win someone over to your position, the purpose of dialogue is to understand other people's perspectives on an issue. Through sharing personal experiences, dialogue helps us see that the "other" side is not a monolithic group, but instead incorporates many nuanced perspectives.

The Challenge: In a dialogue, it isn't appropriate to engage in a debate about facts and interpretations. Remember, you may NEVER agree. It's likely that you'll hear perspectives that contradict your point of view, and you won't be able to refute or challenge them. That can be very difficult, especially if the issue is at the core of your identity.

The Opportunity: However, after gaining more nuanced understanding through hearing personal stories, you may discover new options and possibilities:

1. It may be more difficult to hold an "I'm completely right and you're completely wrong" position.
2. You may be able to counter stereotypes based upon insights you've gleaned from the dialogue.
3. You may discover shared values that can lead you to joint action, in spite your disagreements.

Agreements: When your chapter has decided to have a dialogue, participants agree to a set of communication agreements that encourage respectful listening and honest sharing. A complete list is available in the online Sisterhood library. Key agreements include:

1. Speak for yourself, not on behalf of a group.
2. Listen to gain new understanding, not to convince someone to agree with your position.
3. Ask questions to clarify intent.

Pre-Dialogue Planning:

1. **Choose your topic.** Here are two ways to choose your topic. At a prior meeting:
 - a. Brainstorm as a group (15-20 minutes). Hang a large sheet of paper on the wall and ask women to suggest topics. If there is an obvious choice, you're good to go! If not, ask sisters to share their reasons for choosing a particular topic, as well as express any concerns.
 - b. Ask each sister to write down her top two dialogue topics on an individual slip of paper, then fold the paper, and put it in a bowl in the center of the room. Someone can read all the responses out loud and see if a consensus emerges. This method ensures that every sister, not just the more vocal ones, has input in the process. If there is no obvious choice, spend some time as a group narrowing your focus.

In either case, make sure you have consensus on the topic. If a sister isn't comfortable, we respectfully ask that you honor her wishes and hold your dialogue on a topic where everyone can agree. Then, sometime after your meeting, listen to her concerns. Assuming you can address them, address that dialogue at a future meeting.

2. **Choose two facilitators**, preferably one Jewish and one Muslim, to guide the process. Prior to the dialogue, the facilitators will:
 - a. **Develop the questions.** Remember that in a dialogue, it's critical to carefully sequence your questions. Start with a question that asks each sister to share something about her **life experience** that will help the group understand her relationship to and perspective on the issue. Then move to a question that explores **values, hopes, or fears**. Conclude with a question that explores any **areas of doubt or uncertainty**. Depending upon the size of your chapter, you may only respond to one question per meeting. Refer to the video and written resources, *Crafting Great Questions*, in the online library, for more detail.
 - b. **Communicate with chapter members** about the time, place, and topic. Your goal is 100% participation of chapter members. Remember that it's important to reach out to sisters via their preferred method of communication, which might include email, Facebook, WhatsApp, text, etc. Personal outreach sends the message that each woman's presence matters!

Materials Needed: Index cards and pens for each sister.

Facilitator Role at the Dialogue:

1. **Introduce the topic, goal, and dialogue structure.** It's important to clearly articulate the purpose of dialogue. Collectively read aloud your group agreements and ask if anyone has any questions or concerns. As the dialogue progresses, it's your role to remind participants of their commitment to the principles, especially if you sense one or more is not being followed.
2. **Describe the structure.** If your group is ten women or less, continue the dialogue in one group. If you have more than ten women, you may choose to split into two or more smaller groups. If you split into two groups, you may choose to have one facilitator in each group. If you break into more than two groups, the facilitators should circulate between groups to answer any questions and support the women to stay on track.
3. **Pose a question.** Whether you are in one or several groups, the facilitators pose the first question and then ask the group(s) to spend two-three minutes in silence. **Don't skip this step!** A brief period of silence gives everyone time to reflect upon responses to the question and jot down a few thoughts on an index card. Then, during the go-around, everyone can give her full attention to the speaker. Depending upon the size of your group(s) and the time available, you may pose a second (and third) dialogue question.
4. **Keep track of time.** The facilitator can set a phone alarm to keep track of time, or each speaker can hold the phone in turn, and pass it along to the next speaker when the alarm rings. Either way, it's the facilitator's role to let each sister know that she has three minutes (or whatever amount of time you choose) to respond. Remember the phrase: "autocratic

allocation of time for democratic allocation of voice.” While it may feel unnatural to speak for a set time, this structure ensures that every sister has a chance to speak. When the agreed upon time is over, ask the speaker to wrap up her thought and cede her turn. It can be helpful for the speaker to hold a “talking stick” or other object, a reminder that when you’re not holding the stick, it’s your turn to listen.

5. **Manage process.** During the personal sharing, your role is to gently remind speakers to stay focused on their personal relationship to the topic and avoid talking about the “facts” or “solutions to the problem”. If one or more sisters tries to debate the facts, it’s your job to respectfully remind the group to abide by the parameters of dialogue.
6. **Open for Q&A.** After everyone has had a chance to answer the question, or pass, if she so chooses, you can relax the format and open the floor for people to ask each other questions that may clarify what you heard. Remember the purpose of these questions is to better understand a sister’s experiences, not to convince her that her perspective is “wrong” or “she doesn’t understand your experience.”
7. **Model curiosity and openness.** Even though as a facilitator, you won’t take part in the personal sharing, you can help create a respectful and comfortable environment by asking questions out of genuine curiosity and encouraging sharing of personal experiences, not stating positions.
8. **Conclude.** Thank everyone for participating. You can ask people to share a word or two about her experience. If time is limited, you might ask everyone to write down one thing learned during the dialogue and place it in a bowl in the center of the room. Everyone can pick one and read it aloud.

Remember, the purpose of dialogue is to gain new understanding that can lead you to innovative solutions. It asks you to express your certainty as well as your uncertainty through answering three types of questions:

1. What are the **personal life experiences** that shape your beliefs? What can you learn about others to help you understand their perspective?
2. What is at the **heart of the matter** for you? What are your hopes and fears for the future? Can you discover common hopes or fears among your sisters, regardless of your different perspectives?
3. Do you have any **areas of uncertainty**? As you consider the issue, do one or more of your values conflict? Do you have any concerns or gray areas that you are willing to share? How might hearing uncertainly help you understand a sister with a very different perspective?

For more detailed information on running a dialogue, download the free guide, [Fostering Dialogue Across Divides](https://www.whatisessential.org/fdad), found on Essential Partner’s website:
<https://www.whatisessential.org/fdad>

The Five Practices of Compassionate Listening

<https://sosspeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/The-Five-Practices-of-Compassionate-ListeningSM-2.pdf>

The intention of Compassionate Listening is to access our deepest wisdom to transform separation and conflict into an opportunity for connection, healing and peace. **Compassionate listening is:**

- **A personal practice** – to cultivate inner strength, self-awareness, self-regulation and wisdom.
- **A skill set** – to enhance interpersonal relations and navigate challenging conversations.
- **A process** – to bring individuals or groups together to bridge their differences and transform conflict.
- **A healing gift** - to offer compassion to a person who feels marginalized or is in pain.

Some Assumptions: A First Step Toward Interfaith Dialogue

1. Compassionate Listening assumes that before authentic dialogue can occur, conflicting parties must first listen to each other. We cannot assume that we really know how it is to be another.
2. Compassionate Listening does not seek to change the other, but to love them. The more a person is loved, the more they are free to respond to inner truth.
3. Compassionate Listening assumes that to build peace we need to acknowledge the humanity and the suffering of the other. Misunderstanding, conflicts, and violence are the result of unhealed wounds.
4. Compassionate Listening trusts that when people truly feel heard, they will be more open to hearing the stories of those with whom they disagree.
5. Compassionate Listening is a practice of reconciliation, and is thus based in the belief that mutual understanding and respect are the foundations for building communities across the borders of difference.

We engage in Compassionate Listening through five core practices⁴:

1. **Cultivating Compassion.** This includes the ability to:
 - Anchor in your own heart and essence and connect to another.

⁴ Practicing the Art of Compassionate Listening, Andrea S. Cohen, with Leah Green and Susan Partnow, February 2017, 2nd Edition.

- Cultivate compassion for yourself.
 - Find the feelings of the other within you and allow that to guide an atmosphere of connection/healing.
 - Experience and express gratitude and appreciation for yourself and others.
 - Seek the gifts offered by conflict and hurt.
 - Practice forgiveness of yourself and of others.
 - Engage in on-going personal work to heal your own wounds.
2. **Developing the Fair Witness.** This includes the ability to:
- Build capacity to stay centered in the “fire” of intense interactions or strong emotion.
 - Notice, unpack and contain your own triggers.
 - Look at a situation objectively by “going to the balcony”, considering each person’s role and stepping into their shoes to see their perspective.
 - Suspend judgment of yourself and others.
 - Distinguish the impact of someone’s words or actions from their intention.
 - Use language that reflects non-judgment (the language of the Fair Witness) when asking questions or providing feedback to others.
 - Seek information and experiences that expand your open-mindedness and increase your capacity to hold complexity and ambiguity.
 - Maintain a process of self-exploration to enhance your awareness and discern the voice of deep wisdom from the field of inner chatter.
3. **Respecting Self and Others.** This includes the ability to:
- Resist giving advice unless asked.
 - Trust each person’s ability to solve his or her own problems (stay out of the rescue/drama triangle).
 - Discern how your emotional state impacts the group.
 - Practice self-care and take responsibility for your emotional well-being.
 - Be respectful of people’s differing tolerance levels and capacity for managing conflict.
 - Hold the intention to “do no harm.”
 - Take responsibility: “I am part of what is unfolding, not separate from it.”
 - Welcome connection yet set respectful limits, akin to creating a healthy membrane between yourself and another.
4. **Listening with the Heart.** This includes the ability to:
- Anchor in the heart when listening for the deeper qualities beneath the stories we hear.
 - Quiet your mind.
 - Stay grounded in your body.

- Create spaciousness to manage the tension created by a multiplicity of views and feelings.
 - Offer listening as a gift, choosing to keep your opinions, stories and interpretations out of the way (“less is more”).
5. **Speaking from the Heart.** This includes the ability to:
- Anchor your energy in the heart when seeking words of understanding and connection.
 - Be courageous in giving voice to what has truth and meaning.
 - Use language that reflects your ability to connect to the wholeness of the other.
 - Use language that reflects a healing intention.
 - Identify in words underlying needs.
 - Use “reflective listening” effectively.
 - Name the essence of the issue, feeling, or concerns expressed.
 - Reframe issue, need, or situation to promote strength and healing.

Listening Generously

“Listening creates a holy silence. When you listen generously to people, they can hear truth in themselves, often for the first time. And in the silence of listening, you can know yourself in everyone. Eventually, you may be able to hear, in everyone and beyond everyone, the unseen singing softly to itself and to you.” Rachel Naomi Remen, MD.