

SUGGESTED GUIDELINES FOR MATRIX MEDITATIONS GROUPS

Some people have found that meeting weekly with others who are also reading Matrix Meditations is useful to them. These guidelines are meant to help such discussions be most useful and enjoyable. This is a beta version (12/10/10) and we'll appreciate any feedback you have about its value, or about improving it. (It draws from our experience with Meditation, Gestalt groups, person-centered groups, and intuition training.)

1. BEGIN WITH A MEDITATION. This brings peoples' energy from wherever else they have just been into the here and now. This beginning meditation might be entirely open, with each person doing whatever meditation they wish. Or it might be led by a member of the group, with one person giving the instructions out loud, which all then follow. This person might rotate, with a different person taking a term each time your group meets --or if there is consensus that there is a group leader, that person might give the instructions. When a group begins, generally it's a good strategy to proceed systematically through the cells, doing the meditation from one cell at the start of each group meeting. Or you may find that you want to stay with a cell for more than one meeting.

2. PROVIDE TIME FOR PEOPLE TO COMMENT ON WHATEVER THOUGHTS, FEELINGS, SENSATIONS, OR INTUITIONS CAME UP FOR THEM DURING THE BEGINNING MEDITATION.

3. AT SOME POINT DURING THE MEETING, PROVIDE TIME FOR PEOPLE TO COMMENT ON WHATEVER HAS COME UP IN THEIR LIVES OR MEDITATION PRACTICE THAT CONNECTS WITH THE BOOK SINCE THE PREVIOUS MEETING.

4. BE ATTENTIVE TO EACH OTHERS' FEELINGS AND CONCERNS. If someone makes a content that has emotional content, respond to that. Don't reply with a conceptual analysis of what they're talking about.

5. DON'T MIX PROCESS COMMENTS (THAT IS, PERSONAL FEELINGS AND CONCERNS) AND THEORETICAL DISCUSSION. Your group can do both these things, but do each separately, in its own time--things usually go better when everyone is attending to someone's personal experience, and when everyone is talking theory at the same time, than if one person goes into head-tripping while another is talking about their experience.

6. SPEAK FOR YOURSELF, AND NOT FOR OTHERS. Each of you "owns" your thoughts and feelings. That is, avoid such statements as "the group feels. . . ." or "people here feel. . . ." or even "I think most people here feel. . . ." Instead, speak for yourself. "I really like. . . I wonder how others here feel about it." When someone makes presumption about what others are thinking or feeling, it's appropriate for anyone in the group to say, "Well, let's take a moment to go around and hear a sentence or two about what each person actually does feel or think right now." (Almost always there are diverse reactions, many quite different from what was attributed to them.)

7. FOCUS ON PRESENT FEELINGS. When a person tells a story about the past or future, ask their present feelings about it.

8. "WHAT" AND "HOW" INSTEAD OF "WHY." Avoid "why did you. . . ?" or "why do you. . . ?" questions. These are usually either attacks or statements in disguise, and usually lead to either defensiveness, counterattack, or intellectualization. Useful interventions: Either, (1) if it's a statement in disguise, "I'd like to hear your statement that underlies that question;" or (2) point out that "what" and "how" questions avoid the problems above and are more likely to deepen awareness.

4. A PERSONAL FRAME OF REFERENCE. Ask someone who is labeling or name-calling to rephrase their comments as their own likes and dislikes. When someone makes a judgmental comment, insist that they own it: "I feel angry at. . ." rather than "You are. . ." The idea is not that someone should never be judgmental (since we all sometimes are), but when we are judgmental, to become aware of it and then respond in an alternative way. Be especially attentive to comments that include some form of one-upmanship. (A frequently useful starting point there is to ask the one-upped person, "How do you feel in response to that remark") if they don't spontaneously volunteer that information.

5. BE SPECIFIC. Ask someone who is describing a generalized response to another person to identify the specific behavior they are responding to. Whenever possible, refer to specific real events rather than speaking in abstractions or generalizations.

6. TUNE INTO WHEN ONE MAY BE HIDING BENEATH ANOTHER (LOOK FOR CLUSTERS OF FEELING.) When a person appears stuck in a repetitive response on a single emotional level, you might ask, "I wonder whether you have a sense of any other feeling beneath that one?"

7. "FEEL WITH" RATHER THAN "REASONING ABOUT." Instead of

trying to analyze what's going on with someone, try identifying with their situation and reactions by "feeling with" them

8. STEER CLEAR OF ANALYSIS AND INTELLECTUALIZATION about personal experiences. Instead, ask others to respond in terms of their own feelings and sharing their own related experiences. In regard to meditative and awareness processes, it's perfectly all right to analyze, conceptualize, and intellectualize, as long as you're trying to understand a process more deeply rather than trying to show how clever you are.

9. IDENTIFY GUESSES AS SUCH AND CHECK THEM OUT. Treat your interpretations or guesses about what's going on with people as guesses or hypotheses. Be tentative in your conclusions about others, avoid commitment to them, and avoid snap judgments. Be alert for further information that may confirm or disconfirm your guesses or hypotheses. If feasible and appropriate, articulate and check out your hypotheses: "I'm guessing that you want. . . Is that so?"

11. CREATE SPACE FOR QUIETER MEMBERS TO PARTICIPATE. If some group members have been silent, or if a few big-time talkers are taking all the air time, anyone in the group (or a designated facilitator) can explicitly invite their participation. One approach is to say, "I'd like to suggest that we take the next few minutes to hear from those who have not spoken yet," or "I'd like those of us who have been doing most of the talking to be silent for the next few minutes to hear whether others wish to speak. Alternatively, you might directly address those who have not spoken: ""Erin, I wonder whether you have some response to what's been going on?" or even address several people at once. "Jane, Ted, Mary (looking at each as you say their names) – do any of you have a comment at this point?" Use your intuition regarding which invitation fits. If there is a decision to be made, suggesting a simple go-around may be most efficient.

12. IF YOU'VE ALL BEEN TALKING FOR A WHILE, YOU MIGHT STOP AND DO ONE OF THE "ADVENTURES IN AWARENESS" THAT INVOLVE DOING SOMETHING ACTIVE. Then of course you can discuss that experience if you like.

13. SILENCE CAN BE GOLDEN. Silences are OK and sometimes very useful. Don't feel like all the time needs to be filled with talking--especially your commentary. Don't facilitate intrusively. Leave plenty of empty space where appropriate.

14. FOLLOW YUR INTUITION. Finally, if your intuition is fairly reliable, when it leads you in a different direction from what these guidelines suggest,

follow it anyway. But at the same time be open to information that tells you it was off the mark.

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<<http://www.matrixmeditations.com>> and
<<http://www.matrixmeditations.info>>**