

Gathered Meeting Norms and Practices

(adapted from <https://www.whatashrinkthinks.com/gathered-meeting> - this is not a proprietary model, anyone is allowed to use it or modify it for their purposes).

The purpose of Gathered Meeting processing is to deepen our presence to self and others. We will be engaging in this contemplative practice of deepening presence through speaking, listening, and processing while letting go of needs that arise to control, fix, or judge what is spoken or heard.

This process has developed from Quaker process work and community meeting structures, such as Parker Palmer's Circle Processing, Twelve-Step Meeting sharing practices, and activist meeting structures.

The facilitator's job is to hold a container for the group by watching group process and reminding the gathering to follow these instructions:

Gathered Meeting - Norms

- Speak from the heart.
- Listen from your heart.
- Respect and hold space for difference amongst the group.
- Be lean of expression so that space is held for everyone who would like to speak.
- This is a rest, reflection, and process-centred space, not a problem-solving space.
- It is not anyone's job in the meeting to critique or persuade any other participant.
- We are gathering to share our personal *subjective experiences, needs, hopes, fears, and yearnings*, to hold them up alongside each other and to glimpse a larger view, to learn more about ourselves and others, as the group considers the questions and ideas that are offered as prompts. This is not a space to engage in objective statements.
- Discomfort is to be expected as we disrupt our default ways of processing, and we are each responsible for processing our own discomfort.
- Self-regulation is celebrated: fidget, doodle, daydream, meditate, take notes, close your eyes, and breathe, turn off your screens or mute whenever you need or want to for any reason.
- Please make your own decisions about your privacy, whether your screen is on or off, and your screen name.

If you hear something that makes you uncomfortable, that you disagree with, that you want to challenge – please remember it is not your job to correct other people's processes.

If you are uncomfortable, you are encouraged to think of a time in your own life where you have done or said something similar, phases in your own development when you were learning something, and what your own needs are in spaces where you still have plenty to learn.

If you feel the impulse to argue with another individual, the call is to consider your own struggles, your own growth, your own needs.

It is not possible to claim that gathered meetings are a 'safe space' in advance - this is dependent on individual experience. However, we will each work to honour the space and foster a sense of welcome.

Gathered meeting – basic process:

- The facilitator will read an overview of process and norms.
- The group takes a moment to ground ourselves. This is a moment of silence and body/breath awareness.
- The first question/prompt is read out loud by the facilitator.
- One by one, when you feel it is your turn, (or the talking object is passed to you) speak in response to the question.
- You may also "pass" or use your time to hold silence together with the group.
- To signal the end of your response please say 'that's what I have to offer' or something similar.
- The group may choose to offer gratitude after each response by saying "Thank You/We hear You" or making a gesture of acknowledgement.
- We will hold stillness for about 15 seconds between each speaker.
- After everyone has responded the facilitator offers the next question/prompt and the cycle repeats.

Optional - After we have completed our questions, we may go around the circle and those who would like to may share a word or sensation that arises from the time together.

Optional: - Afterthoughts – the group may decide to spend 15 minutes or so afterwards in informal socialization.