
RELATIONAL SHARING

In the Being Known™ community, we talk a lot about what it means to engage in communities that invite vulnerability and create brave spaces for intimacy. The following instructions will guide you as a very basic overview in the first steps of active listening, reflective listening, embodied reflection, and vulnerability. For more information about training to build support communities, please contact Curo Consulting, LLC at www.curoconsultinggroup.com.

PRE-INSTRUCTION

We are intended for life in relationship with other humans. Human brains and bodies require intimate connection with other brains and bodies to flourish. While the following information will touch on some of the essential structures of building intimate connections with others, there is much more to consider and much more involved in the sustaining and maintaining of supportive, intimate relationships and communities.

This worksheet is intended as a supplement within a broader training and body of information. While helpful on its own, this is an insufficient resource if considered in isolation. *Please note, engagement in group sharing through the Being Known™ model is not an adequate substitute for mental health treatment with a licensed professional.*

START HERE

In any group sharing situation it is important to establish the structure and ground rules of the space. Whether it is a one time share or an ongoing engagement, it will be important for all participants to understand the expectations of participating.

1. Establish who will hold “lead” of the group. This does not need to mean anyone is in charge or has any elevated expectation or experience. The lead is simply the person who will progress the group through the next few stages, pointing to each of the steps.
2. Name the expectation for confidentiality. In most share groups, there should be a reasonable expectation that things “said in the group stay in the group” unless there are safety issues that need to be addressed. If anyone discloses that they are in imminent danger, please notify the facilitator of the workshop.
3. Set an amount of time for the group share and agree upon that together unless it is predetermined by the situation at hand. Decide if everyone will take turns sharing or if the group will focus on one person or combination of people for the time period.
4. Take a deep breath and move to Step 1.

Note: If you are applying this information to a one-on-one relationship, it may still be helpful to be sure the boundaries and expectations in the relationship are clear, especially if you are in a position of power or if you are a mandated reporter.

STEP 1: SHARING

Depending upon the setting, you may have a set of questions from your event facilitator, or you may be embarking on an open sharing and reflection time. Either way, be brave! It is hard to be the first one to share, but it is also a deeply beautiful offering for yourself and others. Remember that silence can be a really important way to start, allow for a little of that while you reflect and begin. So, take a collective breath as a group, re-ask the prompting question if you have one, and begin.

During one person's sharing, the listeners should be attentive and engaged, but refrain from interruptions or reflections until the sharing is complete. If the person sharing needs help and requests questions, choose from one of these:

- You mentioned feeling _____, can you say more about that?
- I am curious if you would expand on _____.
- Can you say more about _____?
- How did _____ make you feel in the moment?

When one person's sharing is complete, pause as a group to breathe and reflect on your experience of the sharing. Move on to Step 2

STEP 2: PAUSE AND SELF-ASSESS

As you listen to one person sharing their experience, it is often the case that we will have feelings and activation in our own bodies. This is important and can be very good information for us and the group. This would be a wonderful time to practice S.I.F.T.- B. (ask your facilitator for more information if this is not a familiar concept.) As you pause to reflect on sharing, consider the following questions you might ask yourself before reflecting or responding:

- What am I feeling in my body? What was that feeling prompted by?
- What am I sensing, imaging, feeling, thinking? What does that make me want to do?
- What am I remembering as I listen to this sharing?
- How am I feeling toward the person sharing?

STEP 3: RESPOND AND REFLECT

As you consider responding to the sharer, be aware of the goal of this time. We are not here to “fix” or “solve” anyone’s problems today. We are here with the intention of practicing presence with others and with our own experience in the practice of emotional intimacy. The goal is to help everyone in the group feel understood, empathized with, and known to the degree that is possible. That happens when we are willing to pause and fully feel our own feelings along with the person who is sharing. When responding, choose from one of the following statements:

- That sounds really painful/complicated/exciting/etc. Thank you for letting us be with you in that experience.
- When you said _____, I felt _____ (sensation) in my own body.
- I started feeling _____ (name feeling) when you said _____.
- I resonated with you when you said _____.
- I never considered what _____ would be like, thank you for telling us what it was like for you.

If there is time for ongoing reflection and processing, you might revisit the questions in Step 1 to practice curiosity and expansion in the sharing time.

Responses to Avoid:

- Toxic Positivity (ex. “It will be ok, don’t worry”, “at least it wasn’t as bad as ___”)
- Negating Statements (ex. “I am sure he didn’t mean _____”, “There’s no way _____ happened.”)
- Assuming Meaning (ex. “You must be so happy that _____”, “You must feel so lucky that _____”)
- Advice Giving (ex. “Well when I was in that place, I did _____.” “What really helped me was _____”)
- Comparison (ex. “You think that’s bad? _____ (inserts own story))
- Judgment (ex. “I can’t believe you did _____” “If you had only ___”)
- Labeling (ex. “You are a really _____ person”)

If any of these responses arise in you, find a way to determine where you might be curious. Asking a question can be a good way to avoid responding in an unhelpful way.

STEP 4: REPEAT

After you have given space for sharing and response/reflection from everyone who would like to engage, it is time to move on to the next person who wants to share. For the purposes of this group, we are going to avoid “cross-talk” which is more of what might happen in a

well-established community group or even in a therapeutic processing group. (Cross-talk refers to opinions or commentary given by other members in response to someone sharing in the group.) Continue to follow the pattern of share and response until everyone in the group who desires it has had an opportunity to share.

If you get stuck on any of these steps, please alert your facilitator who will come to assist you.