



**Adult Religious Education Council
(AREC)
Facilitator's Handbook**

**First Unitarian Church of Des Moines
A Unitarian Universalist Congregation**

Updated August, 2013

Our Unitarian Universalist Principals

There are seven Principles which Unitarian Universalist congregations affirm and promote:

1. The inherent worth and dignity of every person
2. Justice, equity and compassion in human relations
3. Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations
4. A free and responsible search for truth and meaning
5. The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large
6. The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all
7. Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

Unitarian Universalism draws from many sources:

- Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces which create and uphold life
- Words and deeds of prophetic women and men which challenge us to confront powers and structures of evil with justice, compassion, and the transforming power of love
- Wisdom from the world's religions which inspires us in our ethical and spiritual life
- Jewish and Christian teachings which call us to respond to God's love by loving our neighbors as ourselves
- Humanist teachings which counsel us to heed the guidance of reason and the results of science, and warn us against idolatries of the mind and spirit
- Spiritual teachings of earth-centered traditions which celebrate the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature

First Unitarian Church of Des Moines

Ends Statement and Mission of the AREC

First Unitarian Church of Des Moines invites people into a respectful, authentic and joyful religious community that nurtures meaningful connections, pursues justice, and inspires service.

Policy Governance Ends Statements (2009 – 2013)

1. Engage in a transformative, foundational, liberal religious experience. People of all ages and backgrounds:
 - a. Develop and articulate their personal theology
 - b. Explore what it means to be human
 - c. Find tools and resources that empower them to live more complete, meaningful lives
 - d. Deepen their religious and spiritual lives
2. Invite people of all ages and backgrounds into creative interchange and community. We
 - a. Provide a respectful home grounded in Unitarian Universalist principles for all
 - b. Use wide ways of reaching people who might identify as Unitarian Universalist
 - c. Create a safe environment to explore new ideas
 - d. Provide leadership and the physical, theological and social space for people to cross lines which divide them.
 - e. Nurture a caring and compassionate community for one another
3. Create alliances to advance justice in our congregation, community, and the interdependent web of all existence. We are:
 - a. A voice of affirmation, respect, and justice in the community.
 - b. An agent of change for individuals and within the community
 - c. The conveners around divisive issues
 - d. The catalyst for and incubator of ideas and initiatives to carry into the world.

Adopted 06/11/2009
Revised 10/27/2012

Mission of the Adult Religious Education Council

The Mission of the Adult Religious Education Council is to support First Unitarian Church of Des Moines' current Ends Statements by enabling people of all ages and backgrounds to develop and express their unique physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual lives. AREC does this by providing safe, sanctified spaces to explore paths for crossing divisions between people and ideas, putting ideas into action, and encouraging the pursuit of practices which foster respect, affirmation and justice for all people.

Revised 6/2013

Welcome To Your Role as an Adult Religious Education Facilitator

Thank you for your generosity of spirit in undertaking leadership in our Adult Religious Education Program at First Unitarian Church of Des Moines. Our Unitarian Universalist Congregation appreciates your contribution to help us grow our spiritual lives and to your dedication to strengthen the Unitarian Universalist Principles in our congregation and **wider community**. Anyone with a passion for the material and a willingness to facilitate a non-judgmental discussion can be a successful leader. The following materials are intended to provide support and ideas to deal with common issues that arise while facilitating an adult religious education experience. They are intended as suggestions, not prescriptions.

Above all, remember that participants come:

- Searching for new information, not only from you as the facilitator, but from others in the group
- To have an enjoyable learning experience, that challenges one's current level of understanding within a safe place.
- To find one's own truth
- To share one's thoughts and experiences
- And to find fellowship, so relationships can be formed and deepened

Please think of yourself as a guide, inspiring thought and growth, so that these things can happen for you and your participants.

In Community,

Adult Religious Education Council
First Unitarian Church of Des Moines 2013-14

Characteristics of a Facilitator

- Committed to the Unitarian Universalist Principles, the congregation, and the faith development components of this program
- Willing and able to thoroughly prepare for each workshop
- Effective at speaking and guiding the group process
- Flexible and willing to modify the workshop plans to support the full inclusion of all participants
- Able to listen deeply and encourage each individual to participate
- Able to exhibit respect for individuals, regardless of age, race, social class, gender identity, sexual orientation, and level of ability
- Able to honor the life experiences each participant will bring to the program

Characteristics of the Adult Learner

- Adult learners want information that is relevant to their current needs. They need to see that their learning and their day to day activities are related. Adults will commit to learning when the learning goals and objectives are considered **realistic** and **important** to them.
- It is probably more accurate to call adult learners participants, rather than students. As adults they come with a wide range of previous experiences, knowledge, self-direction, interests, and competencies. This diversity must be accommodated and acknowledged in the planning of the class, and if managed well, will only serve to enrich the program.
- Adult learning involves ego. When facilitators create an environment of support and equality that reduces adults' fears of being judged during learning. Participants will want to connect with the group and share their individual stories.
- Adult Learners need to participate in small group activities during the learning to move them beyond understanding to application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. Small – group activities provide an opportunity to share, reflect, and generalize their learning experiences.
- Adult learners choose their learning experiences, as it is not required of them. They want to be the origin of their own learning and will resist learning activities they believe are an attack on their competence. Thus in teaching adults, it is important to give participants some control over what, who, how, why, when, and where they learn.
- Adult participants can be subject to multiple demands and limited time. Consider how things can be made easier for them, without sacrificing their obligation to participate actively in the learning process.
- Adult participants have complex, highly developed learning capabilities and subtle understandings. They are not stuck in black and white perceptions of the world.
- Many participants in adult learning experiences are undergoing personal transitions in their lives. Adult education may be a bridge to major life direction changes.
- People of different ages learn differently, based on their life experiences and the impact of their environment.

Suggested Format for Each Class Session

Planning for your class: Decide on the curriculum or book you will use and the goals and objectives of your class. Remember that the Adult Religious Education Council and Lori Emison Clair, the Director of Congregational Life, are there to work with you in making your class a success.

Arrive at least 15 minutes before the class is to start. Make sure the room is set up as you would like and that all necessary equipment and handouts are prepared to use. Take time to center yourself and to prepare yourself for facilitating the class.

Be Welcoming and Engaging: Welcome and greet participants. Name Tags should be available for participants who are new to our congregation. The congregational life assistant will have a list of the people who have registered for the class in your classroom. If new members arrive, please welcome them and add their name to the bottom of the class list.

Opening the Session: This includes opening words and lighting a chalice. Chalice Lighting words can be found in our gray hymnals or on the UUA website. Opening the session may also include stating the goal and purpose of the class, check in or rounds, and a recent joy or concern.

Creating or Reviewing a Covenant: Covenants are important in clarifying how people are agreeing to be together.

Activities: The word activity is used so as to include a broad range of facilitating methods and approaches. The UUA curriculums offer ideas for activities.

Faith in Action / Taking It Home: This is basically a time for participants to share what they will take with them from the class experience.

Closing the Session: As part of the closing you may want to ask for feedback regarding the session experience. Be prepared with closing words and take time to extinguish the chalice.

Following Class: Please return the room to its original arrangement and remove supplies specific to your class with you. You are encouraged to review the questions for the facilitator's checklist, available later in the handbook, and take time to reflect on your experiences facilitating the class. Please let Lori Emison Clair, Director of Congregational Life, and/or the Adult Religious Education Council know of any issues or concerns you have regarding the class, and any needs for the future. Please return the completed attendance sheet to Lori Emison Clair's mail box in the office, and make a copy for yourself, in case you need to send out your own e-mail to class members

Additional Information for Each Segment of a Class Session

Planning for your class

Effective sessions don't just happen. Ensuring that everything goes smoothly means starting your preparations and keeping track of details right up to the minutes before a session begins. Following are steps one can take to ensure an effective learning experience.

First Step

Decide upon the topic or curriculum of your class. Be in communication with Lori Emison Clair or a member of the Adult Religious Education Council so that your ideas and needs are supported and coordinated with others to help create the best possible outcome.

Planning Your Classroom

Check out your space and decide how you want to create your environment: You should have been assigned a room by Lori Emison Clair, Director of Congregational Life. Take time to decide how you would like to arrange the room for a good learning experience. How you set up the table and chairs will affect how easily participants can work together as well as how they relate to the facilitator.

Chairs: Make sure that the number of chairs is about the same as the number of people you expect. If there are too many chairs, people will either huddle around the far side of the room or be too spread out. Arrange the chairs so that they face away from the door, which will allow people to come and go as needed without distracting others. If the room is larger than you like, arrange tables and chairs so that the group is working closely together.

Tables: If you have a group fewer than 15 people, a “U” shape seating arrangement may be best. If the group is larger than 15, use rectangular tables set up for about six people each. Avoid setting chairs and tables in rows, as in a classroom. This discourages group participation.

Equipment: Plan ahead for the best location for any equipment. If possible set up audiovisual equipment including VCRs, DVDs and flip charts so that all participants can see what you are showing without moving their seats. If the room is crowded, consider putting equipment such as a projector outside the room when not in use. Name tags, markers, masking tape, paper, pens and pencils, and chalices with unscented candles and matches are available in the church office. Please ask Lori Emison Clair, Director of Congregational Life if you are needing help. The Chalice Candle and Matches need to be returned to the church office after class so that children do not have access to matches.

Light: Position participants so they have ample lighting but do not face a sunny window.

Time: Be sure you have ready access to a clock or a watch so that you can subtly check the time as the class progresses. It is important to start and end on time.

Accommodating individuals with disabilities: When possible there should be sufficient room between the tables and chairs for someone in a wheelchair to maneuver easily. If your classroom is in the basement and the lift is needed, be sure to assist the individual in using the lift and that the person successfully arrives on the next floor. If able it is nice for someone to ride in the lift with the person so the individual is not alone in the lift.

Decide on the activities and materials for your class: Think through the goals and objectives for the class and decide on the activities or approach you would like to take to obtain your goal. There is an attached worksheet in the Form Section for you to complete to organize all of the components of each class session.

Meet with your Co-Facilitator if you have one and discuss your leadership style:

- What do you think are your strengths in leading discussions?
- What are your growing edges? What makes you nervous?
- How can you work together, as leaders, to use your existing strengths while supporting each other's growth?

To get your leadership conversation started, look back over your experiences as a participant in group discussions and workshops, asking:

- Which are memorable because they were engaging, or interesting, or offered new perspectives?
- Which are memorable because they did not work especially well?
- What is my personal style in a group setting? Do I usually like to (a) speak up first, (b) get the last word, (c) interject when I disagree with something, (d) speak only if I have something really important to say, or (e) have another pattern of which I should be aware?
- Consider your current role as a facilitator:

Spiritual Preparation

Pay attention to your own spiritual preparation work, ahead of leading the class. You may want to set aside time for personal study, prayer, meditation, and/or journaling. As you are planning your activities you are encouraged to take some time to center yourself within the session's purpose and content to reflect and call forth your own life experiences, beliefs and spirituality and relate these to the goals of the class. This will support and free you to be present and able to focus on providing the best possible learning experience.

“Hear your commission to love, to create community, and to heal. One at a time in personal relationships, ten at a time in covenant groups, hundreds at a time in our congregations, hundreds of thousands at a time in our religious movement, millions at a time as we take our commission deeper and deeper into humanity's heart as a justice-loving people who will transform the world.” —

Thandeka, contemporary Unitarian Universalist theologian

A Week before the Session

Connecting with Class Participants: Lori Emison Clair will have a roster of the people who have registered for the class. You are encouraged to make contact with participants either by phone, or e-mail to let them know you are pleased they will be coming to your class, and to let them know what books, (if any) or information they need to participate in the class. Participants are encouraged to order any needed books from Amazon through the church website.

Practice with the equipment you plan to use in class. Examples include making sure you know how to run the DVD player or projector, that the bulb in the projector is not burned out and that your power point presentation is “ready” to go. Create a backup plan in case your equipment does malfunction despite your preparation.

Prepare your flip charts, overheads or other visual aids. Make sure you have enough flip chart paper and that your felt tip markers are not dry.

Gather supplies: Many of the needed supplies are available in the church. Please contact Lori Emison Clair, Director of Congregational Life for assistance.

Building Access: If your class is meeting at a time that the church may not be open for other church activities, and you need a key to get in, please contact Jane White or Deb Dessert, to obtain a key and receive training on the alarm system.

Photocopy handouts Make arrangements with Lori Emison Clair if you would like your copies to be made at church. If you would like the staff to make the copies, please provide a master a week in advance of your class.

Meet with co-facilitator: Touch base with your co-facilitator and clarify plans and any tasks that need to be done before the class.

The Day of the First Session

Arrive at least 15 minutes before class starts

Make sure that the room is set up according to the plans you have previously developed. Position your equipment and make sure everything works. If the room is crowded, consider putting equipment such as a projector outside of the room when it is not in use. Take time to center yourself and reflect on the spiritual preparation you have done.

Be Welcoming and Engaging

As participants arrive, greet them, and recruit any helpers you'll need. This is the welcoming part of the process. Encourage people to be wearing their church name tag or encourage them to make a name tag. If needed, you might want to ask for assistance, i.e. someone to manage the lights for the video portion or to distribute handouts.

Opening the Session

This includes lighting a chalice and having opening words. There will be an LED battery operated chalice in the rooms on lower level and Candles/ chalices for Adult Religious Education in the church office for your use. Matches may be found in the cabinet in the office or in the kitchen. It is best to use an unscented candle as some people may be allergic to certain scents. Please have a chalice reading prepared to help set the tone for the meeting. Instead of opening words you may want to have a time for silence so people can transition themselves to focus on the group. Opening the session also includes check in, rounds, or a recent joy or concern. This will be the time when you will tell people the purpose or focus of the class. Additional ideas for check in can be found in the activities section under **Ideas for Group Participants to get to Know Each Other or Ice Breakers**. It is important to consider how much time you want to take for check in. Please set limits on the check in process as needed.

Creating or Reviewing a Covenant

A group covenant provides at least three benefits:

1. Expectations are clarified so that misunderstandings are less likely.
2. The agreement makes it clear that everyone, not just the leader(s) is responsible for the effectiveness and enjoyment of the group experience.
3. The guidelines provide a valid and specific reference for addressing problematic behavior. Leaders or participants can speak to a group member privately or within the group about their concern that a behavior is not keeping within the agreement.

Materials needed to create a covenant: Newsprint, markers, and tape. Make sure to tape the written newsprint in areas that are safe to use tape so as not to destroy the paint.

Description of Activity:

Explain that behavioral covenants are a foundational aspect of liberal congregations, and that establishing a covenant will remind the group that these workshops invite us to grow, not just in knowledge, but also in faith and in our understanding of one another.

It is invaluable for any group—whatever its primary focuses—to agree on expectations for behavior in their work together. Whether you call those written expectations covenants, agreements, or guidelines, they include a range of issues such as arriving on time, keeping confidentiality, the right to pass, “no put-downs,” etc.

There are various ways to develop agreements or covenants. One can invite participants to suggest guidelines for how they will be with one another during the program. Write all suggestions on the posted newsprint. After participant suggestions are exhausted, add any additional items from the list you prepared in advance. Ask participants if there are any items listed about which they have concerns. Discuss those items and decide as a group whether to keep, modify, or eliminate them.

Short-form covenanting is a time-efficient way to help a group agree to guidelines. Prepare a draft on newsprint before the first meeting and ask participants to respond. Invite them to add, delete or modify until everyone understands and accepts the expectations.

Long-form covenanting invites the group to generate its guidelines from scratch. Although it takes a little longer, it is more participatory and may foster more of a sense of ownership. One approach is to say something like: “Think of a time when you were a member of a productive and safe group. What would make this group productive and safe for you?” List responses and encourage discussion until consensus is reached. Then ask, “What do you think should happen if our behavior is not in keeping with our agreed-upon guidelines?” Discuss.

Save the covenant to review in future sessions. Ongoing groups like standing committees can review and renew their agreements annually, or whenever new members are added.

Three Covenant Examples

#1

- Start and end on time.
- Practice respectful dialogue.
- Honor diversity of opinion and approach.
- If you desire confidentiality, ask for it.
- Share the floor.
- Be mindful of the time.
- Learn something new.
- Nurture your spirit.

#2

- We agree to speak from our own experiences and perspectives
- We agree to listen respectfully to the experiences and perspectives of other people.
- We agree to pay attention to the group process, making sure that everyone has opportunity to speak and to listen.
- We agree to use this times as an opportunity for ethical, religious, and spiritual discernment, rather than as a time to debate politics or public policy.

#3

- Everything we share within the context of our conversations will be confidential, honored and respected. We may share general experiences or comments outside of our meetings, but without any comment that would identify the person who shared.
- Always use “I” Statements
- Avoid critiquing the source text and/or video or others’ experiences; focus on our own experiences and feelings
- Be honest and willing to share
- Listen with curiosity
- Be willing to learn and change
- Resist the desire to interrupt
- Build on others’ stories when sharing (make a connection with our own story or ask a follow up question)
- Suspend Judgment
- Be open to the kernel of wisdom in each person’s story.
- Members share the privilege and responsibility of helping the group to function.
- This covenant will be shared with newcomers and reviewed as necessary.
- Choose a word such as ROPES to say if there is a violation.

Activities and Class Facilitation Ideas

Be attentive to the differences in life experiences and historical knowledge participants bring to the group, particularly if their ages span a wide range. Some participants may be quite knowledgeable about Unitarian Universalism and the topic being discussed and will be able to add detail and new perspectives to the materials provided. Other may be new to Unitarian Universalism or to the information presented in the class. Keep the pace and level of material balanced with participant’s experience.

Ideas for Group Participants to get to Know Each Other or Ice Breakers

Following are some suggestions one may use to help participants get acquainted with each other. Some of these are ideas one can use as part of check in prior to reviewing the covenant. Others may be used as an activity after establishing the covenant, when it seems that the something is needed to facilitate more interaction among participants and to help them feel more comfortable with each other.

Introduce Oneself.- Participants introduce themselves and tell why they are here.

Variations: Participants tell how they first heard about the class; how they became interested in the subject; their occupations; hometown; favorite TV program; or the best book they have read in the last year.

Introduce One Another. - Divide the group into pairs. Each person talks about himself to the other, sometimes with specific instructions to share a certain piece of information. For example, "The one thing I am particularly proud of is....". After five minutes, participants introduce their partner to the rest of the group.

Character Descriptions.- Have participants write down one or two adjectives describing themselves. Put these on a stick-on badge. Have members of the assembled group and someone with similar or opposite adjectives and talk with the other person for five minutes.

I've Done Something You Haven't Done.- Have each person introduce themselves and then states something they have done that they think no one else in the group has done. If someone else has also done it, the student must state something else until he/she finds something that no one else has done.

Find Someone – Each person writes on a blank index card one to three statements, such as favorite color, interest, hobby, or vacation. Pass out cards so everyone gets someone else's card. Have that person find the person with their card and introduce themselves.

Famous Person – People write a famous name on a piece of paper and pin it on someone else's back. Person tries to guess what the name is pinned on his/her back by asking others around the room yes or no questions.

My Name - People introduce themselves and tell what they know about why they have their names (Their mother wanted to name me after her great aunt Helen who once climbed Pike's Peak in high heels, etc.) It could be first, middle, or nickname.

How Do You Feel? - Ask participants to write down words or phrases that describe their feelings on the first day. List the responses on the blackboard. Then ask them to write down what they think you as the convener are feeling this first day of class. List them on the blackboard in a second column and note the parallels. Briefly comment on your feelings and then discuss the joint participant/ facilitator responsibilities for learning in this workshop.

Common Ground.- This works best for small groups or for each small group sitting together as a team (4-6 persons). Give the group a specific time (perhaps 5 minutes) to write a list of everything they have in common. Tell them to avoid the obvious ("We're all taking this course"). When time is up, ask each small group how many items they have listed. For fun, ask them to share with the group at large some of the most interesting items.

Me Too. - This also works best for small groups or for each small group sitting together as a team (4-6 participants) Everyone in the group gets 10 pennies/toothpicks/scraps of paper. The first student states something he/she has done (e.g., water sliding). Everyone else who has done the same thing admits it and puts one penny in the middle of the table. The second person states something (e.g., I have eaten frog's legs). Everyone who has done it puts another penny in the

center. Continue until someone has run out of pennies.

These are just a few of hundreds of icebreakers. Be creative and design your own variation. Don't be afraid to experiment and try different approaches and above all, have fun

Discussion Guidelines for a Structured Process of Reflection

For Reflecting on books one could use the following Discussion Guidelines for a Structured Process of Reflection. Each participant will have the opportunity to randomly offer a reflection according to the following format. We will not move to the next topic of discussion until each person who wished to speak has spoken.

1. Experience Near reflections

- a. Share feelings associated with the reading
- b. Share associations with the reading
- c. Share Identification with the reading/related stories

2. Images

- a. Is there an image that holds your attention (can you refer to a particular passage in the text?)
- b. Any extended metaphors or key messages that the reading may represent?

3. Experience Distant reflections

- a. What is the meaning in/of this reading?
- b. What are connections between this reading and other related themes, issues or symbols?
- c. How is the divine (whatever that might mean for you) present in the reading?

Strategies for Brainstorming

Many activities in this program invite participants to brainstorm. There are many ways to lead this collaborative process, and not all of them involve shouting out ideas in a crowd! Here are some ways to vary the brainstorming in order to add interest or to better engage a particular group:

Word Cloud. This method works best to elicit general ideas about a topic when you expect one- or two-word answers, rather than phrases or detailed ideas. Use a pair of facilitators; have newsprint and markers in several different colors. Write the question or topic on newsprint. Invite participants to offer answers freely; one facilitator acts as scribe and the other solicits responses, listening and repeating the words, making sure everyone who speaks has their idea recorded. The scribe writes the words using different colors of markers, all over the page, in no particular order. Feel free to write sideways, big and small, randomly spaced. This keeps the

words from forming a list or an implied hierarchy. If you run out of room, use a second sheet. When you are finished, allow the group a moment to look at the newsprint. Then post the newsprint so everyone can view it for reference for the duration of each workshop.

Lists. This technique works best when you have something to compare/contrast, or several connected questions. Answers may be a little more detailed than in the Word Cloud, but still should be short phrases. Write the questions or topics at the top of several sheets of newsprint. Post them around the room, if possible.

One facilitator asks for responses to the question or topic on the first sheet, while the other facilitator records. Then move to the second, then third, and so on. Make sure you allow a roughly equal amount of time for each sheet as for the first!

Sticky Notes. Sticky notes work best when every person might have several responses to record, when people need a bit of reflection time before answering, or when the group includes people who are reluctant to "shout out" but who need to be heard.

Post the question or phrase on a sheet of newsprint. Hand out large sticky notes and thick markers to participants, and give them time to consider their responses. Invite them to write the words in large, clear print on the sticky notes, using one note for each response they wish to offer. When the time is up, collect the notes and read them aloud as you stick them to newsprint. If there are repeating themes, or duplicate notes, stick these together as you read them aloud, allowing participants to see clusters of ideas emerge.

This technique also works well if there are multiple topics for response. Post a sheet of newsprint for each topic and invite participants to stick their responses to the appropriate piece of newsprint. Once everyone is finished, read the responses aloud.

Note Cards. This works well for collecting ideas before discussing them in more detail. This method includes those who are reluctant to speak up in front of the group and can offer some anonymity. Note cards can help each idea be considered without regard to who submitted it. Hand out identical blank cards and pens/pencils to the group. Ask the question, or give the topic ("Social Action Committee Fundraising Ideas") and give people a few minute to think about and write their response. Collect the cards and mix them up. Invite a co-facilitator to write the responses on newsprint as you read them aloud, without comment.

To vote on ideas, hand everyone sticky dots or stickers, one for each vote. Invite them to place a sticker next to the idea they like best on the newsprint.

Strategies for Effective Group Facilitation

It is every facilitator's challenge. Whether in an adult RE program, a support group or a working committee, one individual can dominate the group by commanding an inordinate amount of the precious time available, usually by talking for excessively long periods, talking too frequently, and/or taking off on tangents. Often the other participants suffer in silence, but suffer they do, as does the effectiveness of the group's work. Facilitators have primary, but not sole, responsibility for addressing these situations.

Because prevention is the best cure, most of the suggestions below are designed to head off problems rather than confront them. However, there are also strategies for confrontation when it is necessary.

1. Group Covenant

It is invaluable for any group—whatever its primary focuses—to agree on expectations for behavior in their work together. Whether you call those written expectations covenants, agreements, or guidelines, they include a range of issues such as arriving on time, keeping confidentiality, the right to pass, “no put-downs,” etc. Ongoing groups like standing committees can review and renew their agreements annually, or whenever new members are added.

2. Begin on Time, End on Time

Take this responsibility very seriously. Promptness sends two important messages:

“We are a group that means what we say. We said we would start at 7, and we started at 7.” This gives leaders credibility and builds group trust. “This is a group that respects my time and my needs. The leaders said we would be done at 9, and we are done at 9. (And can go home to our families!)” Modeling respect for the group fosters other expressions of respect within the group.

3. Model Brevity

Leadership is not license to ramble. Make sure your thoughts are organized and succinctly presented. In check-ins and other sharing, be sure you share for less than the allotted time for each person.

4. Use a Talking Stick

Some groups use a “talking stick” (or feather, or whatever) which one must be holding in order to speak. This practice discourages people from spontaneously (and repeatedly) sharing their thoughts out of turn. It clearly gives the floor to one person at a time, and encourages shared responsibility for participation, since the speaker, not the leader, must decide who to hand it to next. (If it is placed in the center of the circle after each speaker, participants, not leaders, must still take responsibility for who will speak next.)

5. Pass a Watch

Check-ins can consume much more time than planned. If the group has agreed to a number of minutes for each person's sharing (such as 2 or 5 minutes), pass a watch with a second hand around the circle. Each person times the person next to them, and gently signals them when their time is almost up. As facilitator, you go first. This device is only appropriate if the group has agreed to limit their sharing to a certain time period. And, of course, common sense should prevail if someone is sharing a particularly painful or otherwise sensitive experience. In groups with a history of saying they want a short check-in and doing a long check-in, this is a consciousness-raiser that often does not have to be repeated.

6. Use a Timed Agenda

It is almost always helpful to post an agenda at the beginning of any meeting. People like to know what they are doing and where they are going. Next to each item, suggest a time, and do an agenda check with the group to get their agreement. This is no less important with support groups than with Board meetings, although the former will likely have a much less detailed agenda than the latter.

Use the timed agenda to enlist the whole group in taking responsibility for the process. If they fall behind in the timing, say "I'm concerned (or 'I notice') that we are behind our agreed-upon schedule. What do you suggest we do about this?" Let the group make suggestions. Usually, they volunteer that they need to be more focused and self-disciplined, particularly if you ask, "Shall we extend our meeting time by 45 minutes?"

Be aware that the group may decide that it really needs to spend the entire time on one activity. If this is the consensus of the group, then it is what they should do, as long as it is an intentional group decision. Responsibility, not inflexibility, is the goal.

7. Form Small Groups

People like to talk. One way to give everyone more time to talk within a limited timeframe is to divide participants into groups of two or more for discussion. When the whole group re-gathers, the small groups can share according to the time you have allotted—from as little as a word or phrase to a written report.

Use the promise of small group time to interrupt lengthy or tangential discourses, suggesting that the small group exercise will be a more appropriate place to share that story, etc.

8. Post an Unfinished Business List

Post a sheet of newsprint on which to list people's questions and concerns that cannot be addressed in the program without derailing the schedule or focus of the group. As people go off on tangents that are important to them, but not germane to the task at hand, interrupt politely, affirm that their issue deserves attention, explain that we cannot address it now, write it on the newsprint and promise to return to it. Be sure to return to it at the time you have set aside (end of session, end of program, whenever).

9. Leveling the Playing Field

Some people are quick to speak up; others need time for reflection. Some are comfortable competing for the floor; others are not and will not. The result is that a few people consistently speak first, more often and at greater length. But only if the discussion mode is “survival of the fittest,” (that is, most verbally aggressive). Below are some techniques to equalize opportunities to speak:

- **Moment of Reflection.** Tell the group you are about to put a question or topic before them for discussion, but you would like everyone to reflect silently for a minute (or two) after they hear the question. After you ask the question, do not allow anyone to break this silence except to ask a clarifying question. Then break the silence by calling on someone who has not spoken at length or by using one of the options below. This technique gives people the time they need to collect their thoughts.
- **Around the Circle.** Suggest that the group go around the circle with each person speaking briefly to the topic who wishes to do so. Start with someone who does not dominate.
- **Raising Hands.** Ask the group to agree that they will raise their hands when they wish to speak, and that everyone will refrain from interrupting when someone else has the floor. The facilitator makes a note of the order in which people raise their hands and periodically indicates who will have the floor next. For example, “Mary, John, Bill, then Cathy.” If this system seems “juvenile” or controlling, try it. It is actually very fair, inclusive, efficient, and relaxing because people can turn their attention to speaking and listening with respect rather than competing for the floor and trying to hold it against the threat of interruptions. A word of caution: it is important that the facilitator facilitate, and not take advantage of the process. If the facilitator wishes to participate in the discussion, he/she must symbolically raise a hand and add him/herself to the list.
- **Ask that people who have not yet spoken go next.** Remember, this is an invitation; it should not feel coercive or put anyone on the spot.
- **Body language.** Watch for body language indicating that someone wants to speak, but is hesitant to compete for the floor. Call on her/him in an encouraging way.
- **Eye Contact.** Try to avoid making eye contact with participants who have been talking too much. It is a green light for them to speak. (It is surprisingly hard to avoid looking at the person you have come to expect to speak out.

10. Process Check

Schedule a 5- to 10-minute group process check as a regular feature at the end of each session or meeting. Ask, “How was our process?” When you introduce this concept, make it clear that a process check is not an evaluation of the leader(s), but an invitation to everyone to reflect on their own participation and their experience of the group process as a whole. A process check encourages self-awareness, communicates that everyone shares responsibility for the process and gives people an opportunity to voice their concerns or suggestions.

11. When All Else Fails

Usually participants are reluctant to confront each other and look instead to the facilitator to handle dominating members. If preventative strategies have failed, try these interventions.

- **Interrupt.** Don’t be afraid to interrupt a speaker in front of the group. Letting one individual go on and on is disrespectful of all the participants. Examples of respectful but firm interruptions:

“Excuse me, Frank, but I’m concerned about the time.”

“I’m going to stop you there, Mary, because I’m concerned that we are moving off our focus.”

“Frank, can you summarize your point in 25 words or less, because we need to move on.”

“Mary, is this an issue we can put on the Unfinished Business list? We can’t address it right now.”

Usually people respond by cooperating, and usually if the facilitator is willing to interrupt garrulous behavior, the garrulous become quieter, the quiet become bolder, and a rough equality evolves. If appropriate, appeal to the group guidelines and the agenda as objective references for behavioral expectations.

- **Speak to the person privately.** When a participant is really not responding to preventative strategies or gentle confrontations in the group, speak with the individual at the break or after the meeting. You can be more candid in private.
- **Use “I” statements to state the problem:** “I am concerned about staying on our schedule.” “I am concerned that not everyone has an opportunity to speak when some people speak at length. It is my responsibility to bring everyone into the process.” Name the participant’s behavior if they don’t own it themselves. Be specific. “Frank, are you aware that you interrupted Mary, John and Louise when they were sharing? We agreed as a group to listen to each other respectfully.” Give him/her an opportunity to voice his/her concerns. “Mary, how is this group working for you? You seemed frustrated tonight. Is there something you need from me or the group?” Try to enlist their help in agreeing to a solution. Affirm them and appeal to their sense of fairness. “Frank, I value your

participation in this group, and I need to be respectful of everyone's time and needs. What do you think I should do when someone repeatedly interrupts others?"

Hopefully, the participant will acknowledge his/her behavior and modify it in the future. If the behavior continues unabated, it is likely that the person is not merely needy or thoughtless, but seriously hostile. Confronting the person may cause him/her to leave the group. This is the participant's choice, and if you have treated the person respectfully, you should not feel that his/her decision is your "failure".

Keep Them Interested

Pace Your Handouts

When passing out handouts, don't pass them out all at once. That diminishes the effect.

Pace it. Instead of handing out three pages at once, pass out one page at a time during the session. Two effects: Each handout gets more attention, so participants focus on each one more. and it is a slight physical activity that helps maintain their attention.

Stimulating handouts: use colored paper, different colors for different handouts, plenty of white space, one page handouts are best.

Make Them Stand Up

Getting them moving keeps them interested. Try to make them stand up at least twice during a one-hour session. Here are three ways to do it:

- "This point is so important I want you to stand up while I make it." So you make everybody stand up while you give this important point. It has to be a really important point and short. But when people stand up they will remember that point, more than if they heard it while sitting. (Interesting, huh?)
- "**Go get your handouts!**" Tell people to go over to the table to get a handout, or sheet of paper, or pen, or mint, or whatever.
- "**Pair Up!**" Say: "Find someone else in the room, not someone sitting next you, and talk for just three minutes on XXX topic." It gets people up, makes them think, and again regenerates interest.

Use Props

Three most common props:

- **A hat;** then relate the hat to the topic. One can get hats at garage sales, or antique markets as well. Sailor hat, derby hat, racing hat, sports hat, etc.
- **Magic Kit.** Go to your child's bedroom and find 3-4 toys. Or go to a cheap toy store. The Dollar Store has them. Get a cardboard box and tape colored paper around it. Print out in big letters MAGIC XXX Kit (whatever your topic is) and tape it to the side of the box. Then bring the box out during class and "explain" what each toy represents/does/etc. One can pretend one is selling the kit to the participants.

• **Light Lazer Pointer.** One can get a pointer at the circus and take out the batteries. When you flip the pointer, colored sections stream out. So as one is pointing to something on the flip chart or screen, flip it out and then use it as a pointer during the session.

Walk into them

This wakes them up. You can only do it once a session, but it's effective.

You have "presenter" space. You stay there. Your students have "participant" space. They stay there. But once just once per meeting, you walk into their space. Phil Donahue pioneered this on talk shows by walking into the audience.

You say something fairly quietly and almost an emotional point, because people are very 'touchy' when you are in their space. Stay there only a moment or two, then back out because it is only effective for a short period of time

Have Q and A

- Tell them in advance that you're going to take questions.
- If you don't get a question in the first 30 seconds, just wait. Silence. It's hard, but tell them you've got all day. This will force the first question. After that, questions usually "flow."
- Try to call on different people, not the same person.
- Stop after 10 minutes or so. Always leave them "hungry" for more.

Vary your body language

- Vary your presentation style for a few minutes, this gets people's attention and keeps them alert.
- Loudness of your voice. Just for a minutes talk a little louder. Just for another minute sometime later, reduce your voice level just for a minute.
- Speed of your voice. Just for a minute, and when the material is appropriate, talk faster. Just for a minute, and again when it is appropriate, slow down. Have three seconds of silence before and after making a point.
- Wave your arms. For a certain point or two, use your body language in more exaggerated ways. Wave your arms. Stoop over. Move around.
- Squat. This really works. The presenter squats and makes a point. Sometimes the presenter walks up to a participant and squats down in front of him/her/ and responds to a question or comment. May give a short "case study" or uses this person as an example.

Bonus Tip

Tips from various presenters are almost always not gimmicks. They are legitimate, real ways to facilitate learning. So you may feel a little stupid doing some of them. But remember: it's not about you, it's about your learners. Your participants will appreciate any/all techniques you can use to help them learn. Give one of these a try!

Integrating All Participants

People with obvious and not-so-obvious disabilities need accommodation in order to participate fully. As a presenter, you may or may not be aware of a participant's need for accommodations. In addition to accommodating the accessibility needs of participants who request them, you are urged to follow these Accessibility Guidelines for Workshop Presenters for every activity.

- Prepare a few large print copies of all handouts.
- Write clearly and use large letters on newsprint. Use black or brown markers for maximum visibility (red and green are difficult for some to see).
- Make a printed copy of information you plan to post on newsprint, to give to any who request it.
- Face the group when you are speaking and urge others to do the same. Be aware of facial hair or hand gestures that may prevent or interfere with lip reading.
- In a large space or with a large group of people, use a microphone for presentations and for questions and answers. If a particular activity will likely make it difficult for speakers to face those who are listening (e.g., a fishbowl, forced choice, or role play activity), obtain a portable microphone to pass from speaker to speaker.
- In a brainstorm activity, repeat clearly any word or phrase generated by the group in addition to writing it on newsprint.
- During small group work, position each group far enough from other groups to minimize noise interference.
- Keep aisles and doorways clear at all times during a workshop so people with mobility impairments or immediate needs can exit the room easily.
- Offer a variety of seating options, such as straight chairs, soft chairs, chairs with arms, and chairs without arms, so participants can find seating that best accommodates their needs.
- When re-arranging furniture for small groups or other purposes, ensure clear pathways.
- Enlist workshop participants in being vigilant about removing bags, books, coffee cups, and other obstacles from pathways.
- Use the phrase "Rise in body or spirit" rather than "Please stand."
- Use language that puts the person first, rather than the disability—for example, "a person who uses a wheelchair," rather than "a wheelchair-user"; "a child with dyslexia," rather than "a dyslexic child; "people with disabilities" rather than "the disabled."
- Do not put individuals on the spot to read aloud. Avoid read-a-louds that require everyone in the group to automatically take a turn. Request volunteers, or read the material yourself.
- Ask in advance about participants' food allergies. Add to your group covenant an agreement to avoid bringing problem foods for snacks or to always offer an alternate snack food.
- Ask in advance about allergies to scents or perfumes. If participants have allergies or sensitivities, invite members of the group to refrain from wearing perfumes and add this agreement to your covenant.

Faith in Action / Taking It Home

This is basically a time for participation to share what they will take with them from the experience of the group or for discussion about possible steps of action. Possible questions include:

- What will you take with you from the meeting?
- How will this experience enhance your spiritual journey?
- What action might you take?

Closing the Session

Be prepared with closing words and take time to extinguish the chalice. As part of the closing you may want to ask for feedback regarding the class experience. Depending on the time, you might ask for feedback regarding the group process, what they liked about the meeting, or what they wish would have happened that did not. You might request that they give one word to describe their feeling or a number from 1 to 10 to rate the meeting.

Following Class

Take time to reflect on the class and ask yourself what went well: What did not? Why? What was the best moment of the class? Why? Did anything surprise you? Review the next lesson and think about what needs to happen before the next meeting. Return the room to its original arrangement and please take supplies specific to your class with you. Turn in an attendance sheet in Lori's box and make a copy of the list for yourself.

Follow up Guidelines, Facilitator's Check List

These questions are designed to develop awareness of your individual classroom leadership style. Think back on the last session you facilitated and make some notes to yourself about the following.

Who are your participants?

- Do you know their names?
- Do you know their expectations for this class?
- Do you know their level of experience with the subject matter?
- Are the participants getting to know one another? How is this done?
- Do you have everyone's contact information?

How much time did you spend leading group wide discussion?

- Do class members generally participate readily?
- How are quiet members encouraged to participate?
- Do you allow enough "wait time" for slower members to respond?

Which participant's are most difficult to motivate? Which participants are easiest for you to motivate?

- When do you know you've "lost" a member?
- How do you influence the motivation level of your members?

Are you available to participants who need assistance?

- How do you make yourself approachable for questions?

How do you encourage your participants to reflect on the course materials between sessions?

What have you "learned" from your participants?

Remember to discuss any issues or concerns with the director of community life, Lori Emison Clair or a member of the Adult Religious Education Council.

To Change Schedule or Cancel a Class

For any changes to your schedule please contact Lori Emison Clair, Director of Congregational Life at dcl@ucdsm.org. Her cell phone number is 515-868-1500, in case you need to cancel the class that day.

Evaluations

Please plan enough time during your last class for participants to complete the evaluation form. You can obtain copies of the evaluation form from Lori Emison Clair or make copies of the form in the back of this handbook. Please place the completed forms in Lori Emison Clair's mailbox. We appreciate your willingness to complete the evaluations as they are helpful to us in planning future classes.

Forms

Session Planning Worksheet:

Name of Class:

Date:

Goals and Objectives of the session:

Welcoming and Entering: Please have participants check their name on the attendance sheet or add their name if they are new to the class.

Opening: What will you do for a chalice reading or for check in or rounds?

Covenant: Will the class have a covenant or is there one already developed? If so, does it need to be reviewed or again posted.

Activities:

Faith in Action / Taking It Home:

Closing Statement:

Needed Materials for Class:

Tasks to prepare for the class: Who will do them?

Room set up:

Participants Evaluation Form

We welcome your critique of this class, as well as your suggestions. We value your input in helping to create future classes. Please give your feedback to your facilitator or put it in Lori Emison Clair's mail box in the church office.

Name of Class:

Date:

Facilitator(s) of Class

Overall, what was your experience with this program?

What specifically did you find most helpful or useful about this program?

In what ways could this class be changed or improved (please be specific)?

Did this class meet your expectations? Why or Why not?

What impact, if any, do you think this class will have on your life going forward?

What other learning opportunities would you like to see offered in the future?

Would you be willing to facilitate a class at First Unitarian Church of Des Moines?

Please provide your name if you are willing to facilitate a class:

Thank you for your willingness to complete the evaluation form.

Facilitator Feedback Form

We welcome your critique of this class, as well as your suggestions. Thank you for your feedback! Please place your evaluation form in Lori Emison Clair's mail box in the office.

Your Name:

Date:

Name of Class:

Did you work with (a) co-facilitator(s)?

Overall, what was your experience with this class?

What specifically did you find most helpful or useful about this class?

In what ways could this class be changed or improved (please be specific)?

Did you enrich the class with any resources that you would recommend to others?

What impact, if any, do you think this class will have on your life going forward?

What impact, if any, do you think this class will have on our congregation going forward?

How can the Adult Religious Education Council provide better support?

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