

# Being Friends Together

Ways of Working > Guidelines for Facilitators

## Group learning agreement - adults

*Discuss and agree how the group will work together.*

In small groups and whole meeting groups all members of the group should have a chance to share and one or two persons should not dominate the spoken contributions (and this includes the facilitators). It may be helpful to state a few general guidelines, which are the foundation for the approaches below.

- **Come to the group with as much of ourselves as possible.** This means two things: to be as present as we can be (which may differ depending on the day, or the time of day or what else is happening) and to bring all of whom we are here—our joys and successes, our fears and failings. You may pass if you do not wish to speak to the topic or answer a question.
- **Presume welcome and extend welcome.** We support each other's participation and growth by giving and receiving hospitality.
- **No fixing.** No fixing, counselling, setting straight. Your tutor and fellow participants are there to support you through your journey rather than to set you straight.
- **When the going gets tough, turn to wonder.** When you find yourself reacting harshly, disagreeing with another, becoming judgemental or becoming defensive, ask questions like, "I wonder what my reaction teaches me about myself."
- **Speak for self.** Using 'I' statements, speak your truth in a way that respects the truths of others. Speak for a second time only after others have had a chance to speak once.
- **Listen with 'soft eyes'.** Listen to others with eyes of compassion and understanding.
- **Trust and learn from silence.** Silence is a rare gift in our busy world. Allow silence to be another member of the group. Leave silence between speakers.
- **Observe confidentiality.** The main issue in relation to confidentiality is how agreeing exceptions will work in practice. There will be times when people share ideas, approaches or experiences that are helpful to others. It is part of our Quaker tradition that we share and learn from each other within the Priesthood of

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all believers. However it is important to respect individuals' personal stories. A general principle is that it is ok to share ideas but not personal stories. The following is a suggestion which you can adapt to suit your group.

- Everything shared in pairs/small groups is confidential to those present **except for** agreed things which may be reported to the main group and discussed during the session.
- Everything shared in the whole group stays in the group and is not discussed outside the session **except for** agreed things which may be discussed outside the session between course members only.
- **Accept imperfection.** In ourselves and in others.

An extract from *Journey into Life: Inheriting the story of early Friends*, Gerald Hewitson, Quaker Books, 2013, reproduced with permission

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