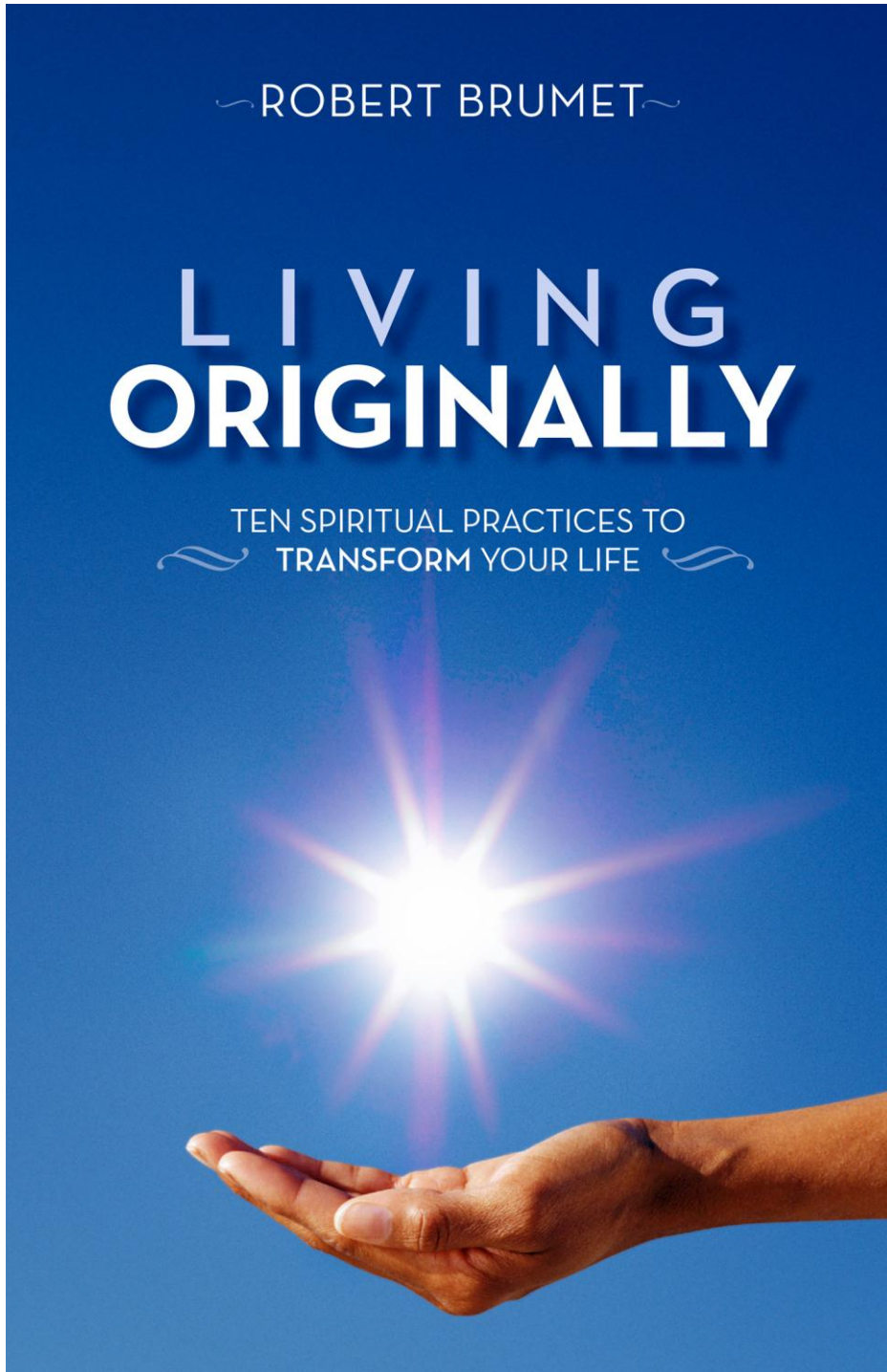


~ ROBERT BRUMET ~

LIVING ORIGINALLY

TEN SPIRITUAL PRACTICES TO
~ TRANSFORM YOUR LIFE ~



Facilitator's Guide

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Planning the Course

Structuring the Course

Living Originally is an instruction manual and a guidebook for spiritual practice. After describing the nature and purpose of spiritual practice, it identifies and describes 10 spiritual practices and guides the reader through the practice of each. The content of the book is not intended to be just read and discussed, but more important, the practices described in it are to be employed in one's everyday life.

The book contains 12 chapters describing 10 spiritual practices. A course can be constructed that studies all 12 chapters and engages all 10 practices. A different course can be created to study only the first seven chapters and engages only the first five practices.

Chapters 1 and 2 provide an overview of the book and the practices. Chapters 3 through 7 describe the first five practices, which are called the *core practices*. These practices are intended to be used virtually all of the time in our daily lives. Each of the core practices builds upon and includes the preceding practices. A course can be constructed based upon the core practices alone.

Chapters 8 through 12 describe the last five practices, which are called the *special practices*. These practices are designed to be employed only for a specified period of time. These practices do tend to build upon preceding practices, but they do not integrate together, as do the core practices. A course can be constructed to include both the core practices and the special practices, following the sequential order of all 12 chapters in the textbook.

Each spiritual practice needs to be employed for a certain period of time to be properly understood and to be effective for the practitioner. Experience has shown three weeks is about the minimum period of time for this to occur. Ideally, the course would be structured to cover one practice every four weeks, with meetings every two weeks.

The first meeting is called a *primary session*, wherein the new practice is reviewed and discussed. At this session, the students would briefly report on their experience with the preceding practice, but the majority of the primary session should be devoted to discussing the practice assigned to the current period.

It is helpful if the student has read the assigned chapter prior to attending the meeting. At the primary session, the instructor would review the current chapter and the practice it describes,

answering questions that arise and supporting the student in the upcoming practice. The teacher may also lead the students in some formal practice.

A support session should be scheduled midway through the practice period. The purpose of this session is to support the student in the current practice by addressing questions and offering guidance as needed. It's important that each student have the opportunity to report on her or his own practice and ask any relevant questions. No new material is introduced in these sessions.

If the course is designed to cover all 10 practices, there will be 12 primary class meetings and 10 intervening support sessions (one for each practice). No support session is needed after the first and the last primary session.

If offered on a four-week-per-practice format, the entire course would last about 11 months. If the course covers only the core practices, it would last about six months. A follow-up course covering the special practices could be offered at a later date. *(It is highly important that all participants in this course have completed the core practice training.)*

It is also possible that after completing the core practice training, some students may engage the special practices on their own. If this occurs, it is essential for them to have some type of support group. Having a designated leader or teacher would be helpful, but this is not as essential as it is with the core practices.

If the time span allotted to the course is by necessity limited to only a few months, it is best to engage just the first few practices. For example, in about three months you could cover Chapter 1 through Chapter 5, thereby engaging Practices 1, 2, and 3.

Sample Schedule for a 10-Practice Course (On a four-week-per-practice format)

Date	Chapter	Practice	P/S
1/8	1-2	Overview	P
1/22	3	1	P
2/5	3	1	S
2/19	4	2	P
3/5	4	2	S
3/19	5	3	P
4/2	5	3	S
4/16	6	4	P
4/30	6	4	S
5/14	7	5	P
5/28	7	5	S
*6/11	8	6	P
6/25	8	6	S
7/09	9	7	P
7/23	9	7	S
August Break			
9/03	10	8	P
9/17	10	8	S
10/01	11	9	P
10/15	11	9	S
10/29	12	10	P
11/12	12	10	S
11/26	Final Session		P

P/S: Designates Primary or Support session

*A Core-Practice-Only course would have the Final Session on June 11.

The Session Formats

The primary session is when a new chapter is studied and a new practice is introduced. Most of the time, the primary session is spent **introducing the new practice**; however, the session should **begin with a brief check-in** from each student, reporting on the preceding practice. After this is completed, **the teacher should give a brief overview of each section in the current chapter**; ideally, each student has already read the assigned chapter and is somewhat familiar with the material. Students may have questions or comments about topics in the chapter section as it is being addressed by the teacher. (See **Appendix A** for guidelines for providing supportive guidance to the student.)

Briefly review each section of the chapter in the sequence written, answering any questions that arise along the way. **The primary focus should be on how to engage the practice** and the reasons for doing so. Try to keep it immediate and relevant to the students' personal experiences. Do not let the discussion wander too far afield into metaphysical or psychological abstractions.

Be sure to **include the Perils on the Path** section with discussion of the far and near enemies of the practice so the student can be on the lookout for these occurring. If possible, allow time in your session to **briefly engage in some type of formal practice** as described in the chapter. Include a period of time toward the end of the session for each student to discuss their plan for engaging the practice in his or her everyday life.

The support sessions can be less structured than the primary sessions because **more time will be spent addressing the individual questions and issues of each student**. (See **Appendix B** for guidelines.) This is a good time to reemphasize the importance of setting a clear intention for the practice and for reminding the student this is not about reaching some goal of perfection. There are no successes or failures; there is only the issue of understanding the nature of spiritual practice and doing it, as well as seeing what prevents us from doing it.

It is important to establish some guidelines for group discussion. The group support can be helpful as long as the students are not engaged in trying to fix or correct one another. (See **Appendix C** for suggestions.) The support sessions can be informal, but it is highly important to stay with the intention for the gathering.

Guidelines for the Primary Sessions

Primary Session I: Chapters 1 and 2

Introduction

- Have each student talk about what “Living Originally” means to her or him.

Chapter 1

- Discuss transformative spirituality vs. translative spirituality.
- Discuss the role of personal will in spiritual transformation.
- Discuss the meaning of some of Paul’s teachings as quoted in Chapter 1.
- Discuss the role of adversity in spiritual transformation.

Chapter 2

- Discuss the role of spiritual practice in transformational spirituality.
- Discuss the structure of the book and the purpose of each section.
- Be sure the students understand the differences between the Core Practices and the Special Practices.
- Emphasize the importance of “returning to intention” rather than “striving for perfection” in the spiritual practices.

No support session is needed until Practice 1 begins.

Primary Session II

Chapter 3

Practice 1: Radical Self-Awareness

- Emphasize that “Awareness is not the same as thinking about something or about visualizing; it is direct and immediate awareness.” (Ring a bell and have students practice listening with direct awareness—without any thought or image.)
- Stress the importance of body awareness: feeling the body directly from the inside.
- Stress that “observing the mind” means complete objectivity in the observer; if judgment, analysis, or an attempt control is present, this is NOT the Observer at work.
- Discuss the importance of both the general and the formal forms of practice.
- Be sure to discuss Perils on the Path and the FAQ.
- Discuss the upcoming Support Session and the importance of attendance and ongoing support in doing the practices.

See Appendix B for Providing Guidance for the Support Sessions.

Primary Session III

Chapter 4

Practice 2: Deep Self-Acceptance

- Point out that this practice also incorporates the practice of Radical Self-Awareness.
- Remind students that Deep Self-Acceptance does not mean simply accepting an image of who we are, but accepting each experience as it arises; it is an ongoing process.
- This practice is the complete acceptance of each internal experience without editing, analyzing, judging, interpreting, or adding anything to it.
- Remind students that the practice is about internal experiences; we do not necessarily need to accept every external event or condition in our lives. (The Serenity Prayer is a great reminder of this.)
- Acceptance of an experience is not resignation; it is not grasping an experience. It does not mean we necessarily agree with, approve of, or even like the experience; it simply means we accept it as “what is” at this moment.
- Everything eventually changes when we accept it as it is, but *Deep Acceptance is not accepting something in order to make it change*; this is just a form of bargaining and is a subtle attempt to control our life experience. It is not consistent with this practice.
- Discuss “responding” vs. “reacting” to life circumstances. Point out the differences.
- Remind students that seeing resistance does *not* mean she or he has failed to do the practice correctly; indeed, the best way to engage the practice is to see when we are *not* doing it! Resistance is just another experience to be seen and accepted. Acceptance of resistance will eventually dissolve it.
- Talk about resistance in the form of aversion, such as fear, anger, and judgment. Talk about resistance in the form of craving and addiction.

- Discuss the upcoming Support Session and the importance of attendance and ongoing support in doing the practices.

See Appendix B for Providing Guidance for the Support Sessions.

Primary Session IV

Chapter 5

Practice 3: Unlimited Forgiveness

- Point out that this practice incorporates the first two practices of self-awareness and self-acceptance.
- Discuss how forgiveness is both a self-related and other-related practice.
- Discuss the two phases of forgiveness: 1) Releasing condemnation; 2) The process of healing.
- Talk about the relationship between forgiveness and the grief process.
- Discuss the Seven-Step Forgiveness Process.
- Discuss the relationship between forgiveness and transformation. Why is forgiveness so crucial?
- Talk about the price we pay for unforgiveness.
- Discuss the formal and general forms of forgiveness practice.
- If time permits, facilitate a formal forgiveness practice.
- Discuss the upcoming Support Session and the importance of attendance and ongoing support in doing the practices.

See Appendix B for Providing Guidance for the Support Sessions.

Primary Session V

Chapter 6

Practice 4: Universal Benevolence

- Point out that this practice incorporates the first three practices.
- Discuss the three separate intentions that form the general practice of Universal Benevolence: Appreciation; Kindness; Generosity. Have each person share what these words mean to her or him.
- Discuss how each of these intentions in Universal Benevolence can be transformational.
- Talk about some of the general and formal forms of practice for each of these. Have each person share examples from her or his own life.
- Discuss the near and far enemies of each of these practices. Talk about personal experiences the student may have had with each of these enemies.
- Discuss the upcoming Support Session and the importance of attendance and ongoing support in doing the practices.

See Appendix B for Providing Guidance for the Support Sessions.

Primary Session VI

Chapter 7

Practice 5: Compassionate Communication

- Point out that this practice incorporates the first four practices.
- Have students respond to these questions: What is Compassionate Communication? How is it different from “normal” communication?
- Discuss the importance of “right intention” for this practice. Have students give some examples of “wrong intention.”
- Discuss the Buddhist notion of Right Speech and its three criteria: “Is it true; is it kind; is it necessary?”
- Have students respond to these questions: How would my life change if I practiced Right Speech? How would my life change if everyone I know practiced Right Speech?
- Discuss the practice of listening as part of Compassionate Communication. Talk about the four levels of listening. Have students talk about times they have practiced or experienced each of these levels.
- Discuss how and why this practice can be transformational.
- Discuss the near and far enemies of Compassionate Communication. Have students come up with examples of each.
- Discuss the upcoming Support Session and the importance of attendance and ongoing support in doing the practices.

See Appendix B for Providing Guidance for the Support Sessions.

Primary Session VII

For courses studying only the Core Practices,

this will be your final session.

Go directly to *Guidelines for the Final Session* (p. 20).

For courses studying all 10 of the practices, this will be the end of the Core Practices and the beginning of the Special Practices.

- Refer students to *Introduction to the Special Practices* in the textbook.

Be sure to emphasize the following points:

- Each of the Special Practices incorporates all of the Core Practices.
- The special practices are to be practiced for a limited period of time. Core Practices are intended to be practiced indefinitely.
- The slogans adopted for each Special Practice are assumed to be true for the period of practice. Do not be concerned about whether or not the students believe they are “really” true. These are presented as spiritual practices—not as metaphysical principles.

(Continue to the next page.)

Primary Session VII

Chapter 8

Practice 6: Everything Is My Teacher

- Discuss conventional learning and deep learning. What are the key differences?
- Discuss the meaning of discipline and its role in spiritual practice.
- Discuss what it means to say the following transformation: “Transcends and includes the ego.”
- Discuss humility, what it really means, and why it is an important part of transformative spiritual practice.
- Discuss the practices of journal writing and voice dialogue. Be sure students are clear on the practice intentions and how to engage them effectively.
- Discuss the near and far enemies of this practice.
- Discuss the upcoming Support Session and the importance of attendance and ongoing support in doing the practices.

See Appendix B for Providing Guidance for the Support Sessions.

Primary Session VIII

Chapter 9

Practice 7: Dancing With Chaos

- Discuss the meaning of *chaos* as this term is used in the textbook.
- Point out the importance of *intention* and explain how it serves as an “attractor” in our lives.
- Discuss both the challenge and the power of chaos as it occurs in our lives.
- Discuss the relationship between chaos and creativity.
- Have each student address what it means to her or him to “Dance with chaos.”
- Discuss the near and far enemies of this practice.
- Discuss the upcoming Support Session and the importance of attendance and ongoing support in doing the practices.

See Appendix B for Providing Guidance for the Support Sessions.

Primary Session IX

Chapter 10

Practice 8: Death Is My Advisor

- Discuss the “denial of death” as it exists in our culture. What forms of expression does this take?
- Discuss the following: “If you knew you would die in 30 days, what cares/concerns would disappear? What would occupy your time and attention?”
- Invite students to consider the following questions as a part of this practice:
 - What do I fear most about dying?
 - Who and what will I miss the most when I die?
 - What is important for me to finish before I die?
 - What legacy do I want to leave to humanity when I die?
 - What do I want shared in my obituary ... in my eulogy ... in my epitaph?
- Discuss why this practice is transformational.
- Discuss the forms or practice and the near/far enemies.
- Discuss the FAQ.
- Discuss the upcoming Support Session and the importance of attendance and ongoing support in doing the practices.

See Appendix B for Providing Guidance for the Support Sessions.

Primary Session X

Chapter 11

Practice 9: Living in the Heart of Desire

- Discuss “The paradoxical role of *desire* in spiritual practice” as it is described in the textbook.
- Discuss the difference between “desire” and “attachment.” Have students give examples from their own lives.
- Discuss the meaning of “Desire in the Heart” and how one can discover and experience it.
- Have each student talk about “Living in the Heart of Desire” and what it means to her or him.
- Discuss why this practice is transformative.
- Discuss the forms of practice and the near/far enemies.
- Discuss the upcoming Support Session and the importance of attendance and ongoing support in doing the practices.

See Appendix B for Providing Guidance for the Support Sessions.

Primary Session XI

Chapter 12

Practice 10: I Am the Author of My Life

- Discuss the meaning of “I Am the Author of My Life” as it is described in the textbook. Have each student share what it means to her or him.
- Discuss the paradox of how each of us is *both* the lead character *and* the author of our “life story.” Discuss how this practice gradually shifts one’s identity from *character* to *author*.
- Discuss the importance of suspending all blame and self-pity as well as all “victim identification.” Explore any obstacles to this.
- Discuss the importance of applying this practice only to our own lives and not to the lives of others.
- Discuss why this practice is transformative.
- Discuss the relationship between our identification with “the story” and our suffering.
- Discuss the forms of this practice.
- Discuss the near and far enemies.
- Discuss the upcoming Support Session and the importance of attendance and ongoing support in doing the practices.

See Appendix B for Providing Guidance for the Support Sessions.

Guidelines for the Final Session (Session VII or Session XII)

The Present

- Lead a brief awareness meditation (approx. 10 minutes).
- Have each student briefly report her or his present moment experience.
- Have each student share his or her feelings about reaching the end of the course.

The Past

- Briefly review each practice.
- Have students report their experience with each individual practice.
 - Were they able to engage the practice effectively?
 - Were they able to incorporate the previous practices?
- Did they feel any sense of progression or development as they proceeded through the practices?
- What was the primary difference in their experience with the Core Practices vs. the Special Practices?
- Engage in an (optional) Course and/or Instructor Assessment Process. (See ***Guidelines for Assessment.***)

The Future

- Have each student talk about her or his intention for continuing the practices (or not).
 - Talk about the formation of an ongoing practice support group. (This is optional.)
 - Talk about the possibility of future classes (if planned or desired).
-

Guidelines for Assessment

Assessment can fall into **two general categories**: assessment of the **course** and assessment of the **facilitator**. Both of these can be highly important in planning future classes.

Assessment of the course can be divided into the areas of **course content** and **course structure**. It is important to get feedback on both of these.

Course assessment should be based upon evaluations and feedback from both students/participants and the instructor/facilitator.

Assessment of the facilitator by students should be **anonymous** and should be **structured by specific questions**. Assessment should be as clear, specific, and objective as possible.

Evaluations and feedback (for both the course and facilitator) should **contain both positive and negative elements** (for example, what worked well and what did not—and what might make it work better if offered again in the future).

Appendix A

Providing Guidance for the Primary Sessions

- The bulk of the primary session should be spent introducing the new practice. Give an overview of each section in the chapter but encourage the students to read the assigned chapter and become familiar with the material before the class meets.
- The best way for you to facilitate this course is to have had some experience of your own with the practice itself—then you can speak to and from that experience. Always be at least two weeks ahead of the students in engaging the practice sequences.
- This is a good time to reemphasize the importance of setting a clear intention for practice and for reminding the student this is not about reaching some goal of perfection.
- Remind the student that the practice is an end in itself—it is not a means to other ends. Be aware of students' attempts to “get somewhere” or to “figure something out”—these can be subtle traps. (It may be helpful to think of each practice as a form of yoga.)
- Be alert to students becoming discouraged or feeling like they are not “getting anywhere.” Remind them that the work is to just do the practice as best they can and then let go of any expectations or judgments. The only “bad” spiritual practice is the one that never happens!
- Also be alert to students finding it “very easy” to do the practices. Although the practices do not necessarily have to be difficult, finding them easy to do may be a sign that the student is not fully engaged or that one of the near enemies may be at work.
- There are no successes or failures—there is only the issue of understanding the nature of spiritual practice and doing it, as well as seeing what prevents us from doing it.
- Discussions should be limited to specific issues related to understanding and engaging the current practice. Be wary of any hypothetical or metaphysical question that can lead into an intellectual form of discussion. For example: “What would Charles Fillmore say about this?”

- If these questions are frequent or persistent, you may want to schedule a separate time to discuss these questions. However, do not let this get in the way of engaging the practice!
 - Before responding to a specific question or comment, it can be helpful to check out the student's motivation for asking the question. Sometimes the "real question" lies behind the presented question.
 - Remind students that it is not uncommon for suppressed emotions and memories to arise as they are engaging the practice. This is all part of the process.
 - Do not hesitate to recommend professional help if it seems necessary. It can be helpful to have a list of potential mental health resources available, if needed.
 - It can be helpful to periodically review the contents of Chapter 2: Engaging the Practices.
 - It may also be helpful to review the FAQ for the current chapter.
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Appendix B

Providing Guidance for the Support Sessions

The Support Sessions can be less structured than the primary sessions because more time will be spent addressing the individual questions and issues of each student.

Some questions to ask the students:

- What have been your experiences of the practice since we last met?
- What was particularly rewarding about doing the practice?
- What did you learn about yourself? What insights did you gain?
- What was your greatest difficulty in engaging the practice?
- What near or far enemies of the practice did you encounter?
- What might you do to improve your practice in terms of consistency and/or precision and clarity?
- When you did not engage the practice or when you had difficulty doing it, what were the conditions or circumstances? What were your thoughts and feelings? What beliefs were you holding?
- What do you experience right now as you talk about your experiences with the practice?

It is important that:

- Students are as specific as possible. Avoid generalities or abstractions.
- Students speak from their own experience and do not compare their experience with someone else's.

- Students are as objective and nonjudgmental as possible when sharing. Be aware of words like “good” or “bad” or “better” or “worse.”

The facilitator’s function is to:

- Support and encourage the student. Point out ways they may be engaging the practice even if they feel they are not doing it well.
 - Gently challenge the student if she or he does not follow #9-11 in her or his sharing.
 - Reaffirm the basic practice principles specified in Chapter 2: Engaging the Practice.
 - Reemphasize the importance of setting a clear intention for practice and reminding the student this is not about reaching some goal of perfection.
 - There are no successes or failures; there is only the question of understanding the intention of the spiritual practice and doing it.
 - Seeing when and how we don’t engage the practice is every bit as important as doing it.
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Appendix C

Guidelines for Group Discussion

It's important for each group to develop its own agreements regarding parameters for the group meeting and sharing. Below are some suggestions to structure this process.

The instructor/facilitator needs to be clear about the parameters she or he wishes to establish at the outset and what guidelines the group may establish by consensus. For example, at the outset the instructor may establish the time and length of each meeting and the requirements for attendance and expected student preparedness for each meeting. Once this is communicated, she or he may wish to establish some more guidelines based upon group agreement.

Some suggestions:

- Speak only from your own experience. As much as possible, avoid speaking about other's experience.
- Be as specific as possible when sharing; try to avoid generalizations and abstractions.
- As much as possible, speak from your present moment experience.
- Listen attentively to the current speaker; avoid interrupting those who are speaking.
- Avoid giving advice or correcting others. If you have something to say that is of this nature, ask the person if you can speak to her or him at a later time.
- Be aware of the time limitation when speaking. It may be well to establish some guidelines around this.
- Be clear when it is appropriate to give supportive feedback to another person. This can be established by the group or the instructor. It may be helpful to ask another if she or he wants feedback about what they've shared.

Supportive feedback ...

- Is sincere and comes from the heart.

- Is clear, specific, and honest.
 - Has the intention of aiding another person's growth process.
 - Is more than just a "pat on the back." It may include some compassionate confrontation.
 - Is as brief as possible.
-