



Starting Your Own LIVING VALUES Study Group

The benefit from exploring these Values together is the wonderful transformation you witness that occurs when people acknowledge and are empowered by their Values and begin to live their lives through them.

When each of us becomes willing to demonstrate the quality of living in Values to others we offer the motivation for them to change their way of seeing their world. This is particularly beneficial in group dynamics where people live together.

The very best way to come to fully embrace and bring this material into your life is to share it with others – exploring Values with others is fun and playful.

You can offer a 'closed circle' for a special set of friends or you can be bold and offer an 'open circle' to a wider group of people in your community. Whether you offer a group in your home on a casual basis or develop a more active role in your community you will find that bringing people together to explore the Values in their lives brings great benefit to all, including most importantly, yourself.

Regardless of where you live, your group and its development are important to us. While there is no teacher or teaching required for Living Values there are some recommended ways of successfully running your group.

Through the LVE Study Group concept – you are not alone; we have experience on how to set up and manage a regular small group gathering and we are pleased to supply the information and guidelines that have proven successful in the past. We use a professionally designed interactive and playful 12 week Study Program that anyone can facilitate with basic common sense, practical tips and regular guidance.

The Program is based on 12 Universal Values in this order (very important) .

Peace, Respect, Love,
Tolerance, Happiness, Responsibility,
Cooperation, Humility, Honesty,
Simplicity, Freedom, Unity

Your priority reference point is the Values Contemplation questions. Using these questions when in doubt personally, or in a group situation will provide the correct direction. Each question asked of you is designed to direct your focus to the Right Choice in every moment.

(these questions are on the last page of this Study Group information - also found in the full Study program for use in conjunction with the wheel activity)

Information to Help You

This following information provided by a very well respected life coach and teacher offers really helpful advice in establishing a successful community group activity.

GUIDELINES FOR AN EFFECTIVE GROUP

Overview provided by Phil Golding - Psychotherapist, Healer, Life-Coach, Author, Philosopher

Setting up a network of Living Values groups among inmates in a corrective facility environment is a wonderful ideal, which deserves to be supported. In fact, I believe achieving such a goal is essential for our highest growth. However, as is always the case, people can under-estimate what it takes to achieve such a goal.

Creating group energy and maintaining it for an indefinite period is an art that requires a good deal of personal development and understanding. While this does not mean that we need a Phd. before we can start such a group, it does mean you need to understand that by starting such a group, you are placing yourself on a definite path of awakening, and the responsibility to make the effort to undertake this awakening needs to be accepted and taken seriously. Take for granted that you are going to make mistakes, that you are going to have many false starts, and that you are going to be confronted with the complex realities of group dynamics.

As always, the ideal is always difficult to achieve, so while endeavoring to achieve this ideal we get more opportunity to gain self-awareness and learn about acceptance!

Below are some guidelines for your Living Values group you may find useful.

KEEP THE GROUP GROUNDED.

We all like to chase the big ideal and the far-out experiences, but success lies in your everyday personal affairs. That is where your personal Values growth opportunities are. Bringing the principles down into the ups and downs of your daily life is the best way I know to sustain a continual personal growth.

People are always coming and going in my group, but the ones who are ready to get real and till the soil of their own personal issues are the ones who stay and grow. I have long since learned not to worry about the fly-by-nighters, or the rainbow chasers as I like to call them. I was one myself. It is a stage we all go through. We are searching but we don't really know what for, but we think it has to be easy and instant. We do not yet realize that the ease comes from accepting the reality of the path and surrendering to it.

It is important to set a regular date and get the commitment from people to attend on this date and at an agreed specific time. Always start on that time. For the 12 week program I have found a 2 to 3 hour session every week is able to maintain momentum without straining relationships.

A SUCCESSFUL GROUP IS NOT A NUMBERS GAME.

Most people who inquire about my group for the first time ask me how many people attend my group as though the number is relevant to something. Some of the best groups I have attended have consisted of me and just one other person. Our ego thinks there is something wrong if that is all there is. Two people who are truly committed create far more power than a dozen rainbow chasers. In fact, a group starts with just one person. If you are truly serious, committed and

willing to learn, you have already entered a hall of great Souls who are working hard and continuously on your behalf. Have faith and keep working on yourself.

WE ARE OF EQUAL WORTH, BUT WE DON'T HAVE EQUAL CAPABILITIES.

Even though a Living Values group is a group of equals, it will often benefit by having a facilitator who is there to provide hard won strength of character, experience and wisdom. Such a person may be skilled in group facilitation or aspiring to be a Living Values accredited facilitator and may be a little further down the track than most of the group, even though the difference in integration is usually not that great between the members of such a group. We are all equal in value but not necessarily in ability. There will always be those who we can reach forward to whilst at the same time reaching back to those walking the path behind us. Humility tells us how to recognize the words of someone wiser and more experienced, and how to help someone less experienced. This is a dynamic that exists in every group of learning and has its rightful place, being a reality of the evolutionary process.

A facilitator therefore needs to be given the lead. Be patient. A good facilitator will try to strike a balance between structure and any sharing from the group. The facilitator is the focal point, guardian, and director of the group energy and *never in Living Values*, the teacher.

MAINTAIN A CONSISTANT PURPOSEFUL GROUP STRUCTURE

A certain amount of structure is necessary within a sharing group to maintain pure, positive and focused energy, and there are some useful guide-lines that help maintain the right energy flow of the type of mutual sharing group that I am referring to. For me, the most important of these are:

1. Respect the role of the facilitator.

For the purpose of maintaining a clear strong energy in a group, every group needs a facilitator, even if it is just someone from the group volunteering for that session. Their style of facilitating may not be exactly yours, but it may work well anyway. Give the person the benefit of the doubt. However, once you have given the person a chance; by all means give suggestions for improvement, preferably in a non-attached and constructive way. Remember the principle of goodwill and cooperation. Remember that Living Values must be applied to everything – in particular, to the study group environment.

Setting the group guidelines is very important at the outset. These need to come from the group and be agreed to verbally. Once established this list should always be displayed. Such points might be: Punctuality, Starting and finishing on time, Only one person speaking at a time, Confidentiality, No 'fixing', No advice, Keep to the point, No stories, No teaching....etc.,

2. Allow each person their turn to share, without interruption or cross talk.

This may seem a bit rigid and there is room for some flexibility, but I have found that the energy level is best maintained this way. This counteracts the urge to jump in and "fix" people just because they are expressing their feelings. We are not in the group to psycho-analyze one another or to fix anyone. We can actually do that better for ourselves as we are talking. This is because there is a certain power about honestly and openly sharing in such a group, which enables each speaker to gain access to their own intuition. As sharers, we actually gain insight as we speak. Such a structure also helps us to learn how to truly listen and connect with other people, rather than only being focused on what we want to jump in and say next. Interruptions interfere with this inner-connection.

As the sharing continues around the group, each member picks up on the other members' sharing, and the insights gained collectively raise the energy of the group. Some people like to jot down thoughts and insights so they don't forget them when it comes to their turn to speak. Others prefer to take it as it comes. Either way, the sharing is basically free and spontaneous, within this guiding structure. Once the sharer has finished talking, other members can ask the sharer questions to clarify their own understanding, which in turn helps the whole group. But remember, it is not about giving advice or saving one another.

As a member is speaking, those who are listening can consciously send energy in the form of positive thought to this person, encouraging them to think from their highest available state of consciousness. This is just another way of sending them love. Also, while we are doing this we are less likely to jump in with our five cents worth! This helps to focus the healing and transformative energies of the group even more, plus energize ourselves in the process.

3. Be Real.

None of us are perfect communicators. Being sincere means we have a go, we just do our best on the day. The ideal is to speak intelligently from the heart, which means maintaining a connection between heart, head, and Soul.

This enables us to be emotionally honest in our sharing without having to push our emotions down, or push them onto others. We are able to speak with sincerity, and if there is a tear that needs to be shed, then the atmosphere is there for it to flow freely. By 'having a go' we soon get the feel for it. This is how we grow. Learning about Values and Ideals is only a small part of what it takes to expand our consciousness. The heart only needs enough knowledge to enable it to make the next small jump. Many small steps make a journey.

4. Respect the collective wisdom of the group.

Decisions affecting the group as a whole need to be made democratically by the group. If you don't agree with the final decision, just wait and see. Rarely is there a decision, made by an intelligent group of people that is so wrong. Often we get too attached to our own personal issues, which is another good reason why the collective wisdom of the group is better. In the same vein, it is important to be vigilant when someone is imposing their will on the group. Often we don't like to speak up for fear of conflict. Dealing with issues quickly, honestly in the moment, even if we have to gently insist on it, is better for all concerned in the long run. If ever in doubt go back to the Values for guidance.

5. At each meeting, maintain focus on the Values.

Each meeting should contain; a circle feedback on the week's experience of what was discovered living in the last Value, followed by exploring the next designated Value by collectively participating in one of the new Value's activities, finish by asking what each person discovered through the activity, and ensuring everyone is willing to take that Value as the focus of their week. Do not allow the group to become a chat-fest or a gossip session, the energy focus breaks up, the link with the group Soul is lost, and the focus is once again limited to the ego personality.

6. Respect confidentiality.

This type of group is about being real, about facing the truth about ourselves and most importantly, building an atmosphere of caring and acceptance whilst awakening to Living Values. What is spoken about privately at a meeting, regarding members personally, stays at that meeting. General issues can certainly be talked about afterwards, but gossip and personal criticism is avoided, which is a fundamental cornerstone to the principle of goodwill and cooperation.

Values Contemplation - Questions to Ask Myself

Honesty: Do I look for loopholes in order to avoid expressing my truth? Do I expect others to be honest with me when I am not honest with them? Am I willing to be honest even though I may be adversely affected by the outcome? Am I truthful with myself, my relationships and my environment? Am I willing to accept I may be wrong?

sometimes? Do I recognise the inter-dependence of all things? Do I need to be independent? Can I accept help from others, whether I want it or not?

Freedom: Do I feel freedom to be as I am ...to abide in knowing that I exist and I am of worth? How often do I feel free from mind-noise; from self-judgement and criticism; from complication and confusion? Do I feel trapped in my relationship, in my work, or do I know I have the freedom to make another choice?

Simplicity: To what degree do I accept the present moment – what life is offering me now? Do I accept my life situation with willing ease or do I create struggle? Do I accumulate things, knowledge, people, and acquaintances? Do I trust that I have what I need? Do I respect simplicity or do I seek complexity? Am I often caught up in shoulds and self-judgement.

Unity: Am I feeling whole, connected to life around me, to opportunity, or do I feel separation and isolation? How aligned are my heart, my head and my actions? Can I see myself as part of the greater community, or do I hold myself apart in some way?

Love: How am I motivated in my actions by Love? When do I feel pure unconditional love? How do I express my love toward myself and others, how openly and honestly? How willing am I to express my love toward all those around me?

Peace: Can I hold my simplicity and keep still in myself even when external circumstances erupt into chaos? Do I create a peaceful atmosphere? Do I know the feeling of peace? Is it for me a lasting or transient feeling? Is it a feeling, or is it for me a state of being?

Respect: Do I honour the worth of others and self in my day to day interactions? Do I honour what I have with gratitude? How do I personally honour my life and all life forms?

Tolerance: Where am I intolerant of others or circumstances? Where am I intolerant of myself? Where is my threshold? What conditions support my tolerance, Is my tolerance limited by other stronger feelings such as resentment and fear, or can I knowingly acknowledge another's worth and need to exist regardless of that which I don't like or understand? If someone or some condition is harmful to me, can I discern it, and do I find ways to care for myself in order to restore my tolerance?

Responsibility: Do I like responsibility or avoid responsibility? To what extent am I responsible for myself? To what extent do I expect others to meet my needs? Do I blame external circumstance when things go wrong? Do I accept and take responsible action to make the best of a situation?

Humility: How often am I willing to be present to my vulnerability; to my discomfort? How often do I respond in defence? Do I ask for help from others? Can I ask another for forgiveness? Can I forgive myself? Do I trust that life will present me with the challenges and opportunities that I truly need, or do I resist what I have and complain about how things could be different? Do I accept the consequences of my actions in a spirit of self-empathy and learning, or do I judge harshly myself and others?

Happiness: How often do I feel joy, contentment, or peace? Do I allow myself to be happy? Do I let my circumstances determine my happiness? Do I let my past or future determine my happiness? Do I let my relationships determine my happiness? Do I let my work determine my happiness? Do I let my health determine my happiness? Do I let my appearance determine my happiness? Do I let my possessions determine my happiness? Do I let my achievements determine my happiness? Do I let my failures determine my happiness? Do I let my fears determine my happiness? Do I let my doubts determine my happiness? Do I let my insecurities determine my happiness? Do I let my weaknesses determine my happiness? Do I let my strengths determine my happiness? Do I let my talents determine my happiness? Do I let my abilities determine my happiness? Do I let my skills determine my happiness? Do I let my knowledge determine my happiness? Do I let my wisdom determine my happiness? Do I let my understanding determine my happiness? Do I let my insight determine my happiness? Do I let my intuition determine my happiness? Do I let my spirit determine my happiness? Do I let my soul determine my happiness? Do I let my heart determine my happiness? Do I let my mind determine my happiness? Do I let my body determine my happiness? Do I let my senses determine my happiness? Do I let my emotions determine my happiness? Do I let my thoughts determine my happiness? Do I let my feelings determine my happiness? Do I let my desires determine my happiness? Do I let my needs determine my happiness? Do I let my wants determine my happiness? Do I let my fears determine my happiness? Do I let my doubts determine my happiness? Do I let my insecurities determine my happiness? Do I let my weaknesses determine my happiness? Do I let my strengths determine my happiness? Do I let my talents determine my happiness? Do I let my abilities determine my happiness? Do I let my skills determine my happiness? Do I let my knowledge determine my happiness? Do I let my wisdom determine my happiness? Do I let my understanding determine my happiness? Do I let my insight determine my happiness? Do I let my intuition determine my happiness? Do I let my spirit determine my happiness? Do I let my soul determine my happiness? Do I let my heart determine my happiness? Do I let my mind determine my happiness? Do I let my body determine my happiness? Do I let my senses determine my happiness? Do I let my emotions determine my happiness? Do I let my thoughts determine my happiness? Do I let my feelings determine my happiness? Do I let my desires determine my happiness? Do I let my needs determine my happiness? Do I let my wants determine my happiness?