

## **APPENDICES to Interhelp Community Guidelines**

Included:

- A. Facilitator's Checklist**
- B. Creating a Welcoming Space (Opening Welcome, Sharing Gender Pronouns)**
- C. Understanding and Undoing Systems of Oppression**
- D. Methods of Learning, Feedback, and Dialogue**
- E. Proposal for Giving and Receiving Feedback on Harm**
- F. Protecting the Container of the Community**
- G. Honoring the Impact of Trauma**

Yet to come/to be added:

- H. Inner Awareness and Self-Regulation**

## **A) *Facilitator's Checklist***

### **Values**

- Everyone belongs
- Diversity valued
- Equity
- Commitment to anti-oppression and justice
- Health
- Social safety
- Inclusivity and mutual respect
- Healing
- Transformation
- Willingness to explore decolonization
- Inclusive of all beings in the web of life

### **Norms**

#### Attendance:

- Be present (as much as you are able, set distractions aside)
- Participate
- Silence noise-making devices
- Arrive on time

#### Communication:

- Listen attentively
- Make space/take space according to socialization
- Speak from your own experience – use “I” statements
- Confidentiality – ask permission to share or discuss statements others make

#### Self-responsibility:

- Take responsibility for your thoughts, feelings and actions
- Acknowledge impact
- Take care of your needs (This does not mean you have to do everything on your own! Ask for help if you need it. The self is part of larger social systems.)

#### Learning and growth:

- Move from judgment to curiosity
- Be willing to give, receive and act upon feedback
- Grow in awareness of group dynamics, with special attention to harm

#### Respect autonomy, boundaries and safety:

- Honor pronouns
- Ask consent before touch
- Attune to non-verbal communication
- Be cautious of sharing info that may be re-traumatizing for others
- Incorporate mechanisms and processes for interrupting and transforming harm

## **B) *Creating a Welcoming Space***

**Craft an inclusive Opening Welcome for your workshop.** Here's [one](#) created for Interhelp's 2018 Fall Workshop. In addition to welcoming participants, this piece honors and thanks the elements and beings of the place where we met. Tools for Change also has a sample [Diversity Welcome](#).

**Sharing Gender Pronouns.** You may wish to invite participants to share their gender pronouns. See this [document](#) for background material on this topic. Alternately, you might ask participants to choose one aspect of their identity to share. This way no one is "on the spot," being requested to share something they may prefer not to share or may even feel unsafe sharing.

Tools for Change provides lots of additional information to help us "tend and mend" our community spaces. Here's their [toolkit](#).

## ***C) Understanding and Undoing Systems of Oppression***

A growing edge in the Work That Reconnects and Interhelp Network is better attending to power, privilege and oppression dynamics as they arise in groups. This includes attending to the dynamics of many intersecting systems of oppression including but not limited to racism, cisheterosexism, classism, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, ableism, and ageism. Attending to these dynamics means growing in awareness and skillfulness such that one can not only notice, but also intervene and shift dynamics of oppression. One intention of these guidelines is to help both facilitators and participants grow in this area.

For more information about evolutions in the Work That Reconnects with respect to power, privilege and oppression, please see especially these articles in the August 2017 special issue of *Deep Times*:

[Intersectionalization of the Work That Reconnects](#) by Sarah Thompson

[Building Safety, Inclusion and Belonging in WTR: Considerations of Social Identity, Power and Privilege, and Intrapersonal, Interpersonal and Group Dynamics](#) by Erica Peng

## ***D) Methods of Learning, Feedback and Dialogue***

Conflicts happen as a normal part of life. As we live into these agreements, we're skill-building and developing the capacity to communicate constructively. Alongside the agreements, we will grow in our ability to acknowledge and share feedback when a misunderstanding or a breach or wounding occurs.

Here we provide descriptions of four helpful practices as examples of how situations could be handled. We invite people to think of actual situations they have experienced, or to frame possible situations they can imagine, to be used in our skill-building practice sessions.

### **IDENTIFYING HARM IMMEDIATELY – RESPONSIVENESS DURING A WORKSHOP**

Actual incident 2018

Situation: Older participants were pushing the youngest participants to speak more within the whole group even though their body language showed their discomfort. A basic ground rule stated that people would respect each other's right to speak or not speak. Despite this, an older person pushed on and pointedly posed a question directed just to the younger group.

Actions of support: A participant (who was not part of either age identity group) spoke up and identified the dynamic: “I feel that we are putting a few people on the spot.”

The leader supported and extended the intervention and moved into a constructive action. “Let’s use the question that has been offered, but we’ll have everybody answer it. We’ll get into pairs.” The leader formed the pairs purposefully to facilitate meaningful dialogue.

Afterward, members of the younger age group privately expressed appreciation to the leader and said they felt protected and understood.

## **MAKING A REQUEST TO TALK LATER – INFORMAL DIALOGUE CIRCLE**

General method described

“There’s something between us I’d like to discuss with you.” The person holds back on sharing the content at that moment but seeks consent on having a discussion. “I’d love to have a support person with me as we talk and you’re welcome to have a support person, too. Is there a time today we could talk?”

They seek a private place to meet as four people. The person who initiated, speaks: “Here’s what’s going on for me....” Or, “I wonder if...”

Next, room is made for the other person to share how it looked and felt to them as they grow to understand one another’s intentions. For closure, it can be helpful to share, “I realize now...” , or “Next time... “

## **PRE-PLANNING AND GIVING CLEAR GUIDANCE**

Actual incident 2018

Pre-Planning: Co-leaders felt it was important to ask people to share their personal pronouns when they shared their name and where they were from. They guessed that the practice might be unfamiliar to some participants, so the older leader planned to be the one to introduce the practice and to be ready to intervene if there was discomfort, aversion or confusion. If anyone handled the sharing of pronouns in a joking manner, they would use that occasion for education. The younger leader uses “they/them” pronouns, and the leaders decided that the older leader would make any needed intervention as an illustration of solidarity.

Situation: The sharing proceeded around the circle. When one person spoke her pronouns, she made a joke of discomfort. As planned the older leader reinforced the importance and did so in a way that was friendly, clear and matter of fact. Then another participant, an older person, said she wouldn’t do it, with an implication that it was her right not to participate. She motioned for the next person to speak as if to wash her hands of the whole matter.

Analysis: Three values were competing at that moment and the leader had to decide immediately which to prioritize. Was it more important to give weight to the personal right to pass? Was it more important to emphasize stretching and growing? How did all of this fit with learning about solidarity? Each of these three values had been laid out in the opening talk on agreements. Now there was a clash.

Intervention using pause, naming the reality and clear guidance: The older leader broke in before the next person in the circle spoke and said she wanted to pause. Then she named what had occurred with nuances added: “I know this is the beginning of the workshop and we want to make everyone feel welcome. I also want to reinforce why we share pronouns and urge you to participate in this expression of solidarity together. I’m going to ask you to stretch. Would you please share your pronouns with your name before we move on to the next speaker?”

Result: The mood in the circle was relief rather than a feeling of broken-ness. It felt like a turning point, showing that the intentions and values were real. Because the theme of the workshop was ageism, taking on the challenge was particularly relevant.

Follow-up: The leader placed herself in the same small group with this participant in the next exercise; this gave a chance to check in. The woman who had felt resistant explained that grammar was important to her and she couldn’t go against it. Another participant reinforced the value of solidarity and echoed the same direction the leader had taken. He urged her to try on this learning from the next generation.

### **GIVING FEEDBACK AFTER A BREACH**

Actual incident; Interhelp Council 1980s

Situation: A woman attending a workshop led by Chet (name changed) reported to the council that she felt he was flirtatious with her and that this was inappropriate for a leader. Other women confirmed having a similar perception of Chet, who was indeed actively looking for a new partner.

What helped: Chet was asked to meet with four members of the council who gathered together seated on a rug. The council asked him to select one of them to sit right next to him and be his designated support person.

Another member took on the role of being the main representative to give him feedback. She also chose a support person to sit close to her. This created a personal one-to-one conversation ringed by help for all concerned.

She spoke directly and described the feedback they had received in a clear and non-punishing manner. Chet agreed that he had stepped across a boundary and became accountable. He took on the work of growing and changing.

**Skill-building:** In summary, we believe that going over what we have done or wish we had done helps us grow in understanding. When we process challenges together, the learning is exponential. Readers are invited to think of situations that they can bring to a conversation or skill-building session. The one caveat is we don’t want to break confidentiality, or embarrass anyone. Consider whether the anecdote should be altered in order to keep the sharing within these guidelines.

## ***E) A Proposal for Giving and Receiving Feedback on Harm***

When harm is experienced, there are three possible reactions/responses:

1. Avoid – ignore or pretend it didn’t happen, suppress it
2. Attack – attack the person who did or said something that hurt

3. Engage – for a transformative learning experience  
In order to engage in transforming a system, feedback is needed.

## GIVING FEEDBACK

**If you have experienced harm**, first check in with yourself. Do you have the inner and outer capacity for engaging? If yes, here is a menu of possible options for naming harm if/when you experience it:

1. Mentally note to self and commit to do processing later on your own or with a friend.
2. Speak with the person privately afterward, or request a friend/ally to speak with the person afterward either with you or without you depending on what feels OK to you.
3. Quick “ouch, oops” – registers aloud to person who caused the harm, doesn’t otherwise interrupt group process, but signals to person to do further learning about the impact of what happened.
4. Ask full group if they are willing to process in whole group. Knowing that we won’t have time to process every hurt as a full group, and in alignment with the community agreement about balancing self care and care of the group, ask your inner tuning fork (inner wisdom/knowing) if it is really important to you personally for this to be addressed in the whole group at that time and if it would benefit group learning.

For a learning community, it is important that feedback not be given with a “gotcha” tone, and at the same time, let’s not be tone-policing people who have been oppressed and make their tone/expression more important than the oppression that is being named.

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**If you have witnessed harm** (either to yourself or others) and want to “call the person in” for learning and growth, possible steps could include:

1. Assess if you feel you have the capacity to hold space for someone by “calling them in” at that moment, or want to attempt later. You may want to seek help. If you do have the emotional energy:
2. Briefly recap what someone said or did – mention the specific action;
3. Share your thoughts and feelings about why and how it was hurtful;
4. Make a request for how you would like them to change their behavior or speech.

Steps 2-4 echo Ganote, Cheung, and Souza's technique called "opening the front door" as well as the Nonviolent Communication process ([NVC](#)) of sharing observations, feelings, needs and requests.

## RECEIVING FEEDBACK

**Once someone has named harm** they have experienced through your words or actions, ideal steps are:

1. Hear the feedback and really take it in – allow it to register.
2. While it is not necessary to defend your actions or intentions aloud to the person who has named harm, you could internally show yourself empathy and compassion.
3. Invite spaciousness and move toward curiosity by allowing the possibility that your behavior was likely part of a bigger system of social conditioning that you are swimming in. Taking this collective, historical, systemic lens can help circumvent the default response of hyperindividualism: shame and defensiveness. Rather than being a flawed “bad apple,” you are a human being who has been conditioned in some toxic ways. You can know this for yourself without having to declare/explain it to the person who named harm. Lifting up to a structural or systemic lens can help with realizing that a single individual cannot alone take responsibility for an entire system of oppression, but what they can do is attend to their own role and begin to address that. Sometimes it can help to process later with friends to see the

systemic connections, if they are not immediately evident. Remember, if we have systemic privilege, it is often not easy to see the systems of oppression in operation until we have engaged in learning on the topic.

4. Acknowledge the feedback – either internally or aloud depending on what feels right. If you feel grateful to receive this information, you might say thank you, knowing that it may have taken courage for the person to name the harm.
5. Depending on the circumstance and if you feel called to, you may want to offer a quick apology. This does not need to be long and drawn out. It should center the person who experienced harm, not yourself.
6. Commit to repair – i.e., commit to learning more about the system of oppression you were consciously or unconsciously acting out, so you can grow in understanding of harm and complicity; commit to not saying or repeating the behavior that was named.

To summarize – hold yourself with compassion AND own/acknowledge the harm/feedback, apologize if appropriate, and commit to repair.

*Credits: Aravinda Ananda compiled these proposals drawing on many sources including but not limited to: Sarah Pirtle, the blog on norasamaran.com, conversations with Naava Smolash, Sandra Kim's "Healing from Toxic Whiteness" and "Compassionate Activism" approaches, Patricia St. Onge, Nonviolent Communication, and Ganote, Cheung, and Souza's technique called "opening the front door."*

## ***F) Protecting the Container of the Community***

Many kinds of challenges can affect workshop spaces. Here we want to show the difference between challenges that we can embrace and that invite us to grow together, and other challenges that are “too much” and affect the safety of the container.

The realities of oppression and trauma are an outrage. We must name these realities, so that the outrage of oppression is acknowledged in the room and the group carries this outrage together. The challenge of truth-telling asks us to make our container big enough to hold what needs to be said.

When we come together with different social locations in respect to violence and oppression, we are challenged – and this is not the fault of any of us. When we bring up the topic of boundaries this isn't meant to be about silencing or censorship.

An important question is: Can a group embrace a speaker and what they need to say?

Think about how to respond to a person who says, in effect, “I have to say this. There should be a place in this world where finally I get to say this and be heard.”

The group could respond supportively by saying their own truth, such as: “We want to be there for you. You deserve to be heard. We also want you to notice us and think about us. How can we do this together?” A co-leader might offer time in a private place to fully hear the person.

A very different kind of challenge arises when a participant is disrupting the container. It might be prudent to remind the participant of the agreements and possibly even ask them to leave.

How do we discern what levels of challenge your workshop group can support? What does it mean to “cross a line?” When will a group be able bounce back if a line is crossed? When is a disruption too much, requiring that limits be set? Our investigation is not meant to shame or ostracize but to assess when boundaries need to be set to protect the group.

**Step One: Be clear and name what is occurring.**

The Sojourner Truth School tells trainers that if someone is disrupting, have the whole group go into pairs and pair yourself with the person in question. In your own words spell out which agreements you feel they are having trouble keeping. Or articulate a general sense that they aren't buying into the need to have guidelines. Let them know that this is having an impact and ask if they would like to work with this.

### **Step Two: Try additional direct support.**

It might be helpful for one of the facilitators to become their buddy and coach. Make the expectations clear. Be explicit about what they need to do in order to be able to stay and participate.

**Step Three: Evaluate how this is working.** Bring not only your compassion but also your need for accountability.

These questions can help you think through what is occurring:

Are they able to be responsible for themselves?

Do they value the need for social agreements?

Do they feel it is their job to follow these agreements?

Are they willing to work with feedback?

Are people being harmed as a result of their behavior?

### **Step Four: Do they need to leave? Prioritize protecting the community.**

The facilitators have the right to examine whether, despite clear efforts to welcome and include someone, a disruption is happening that is harming the overall intentions of the group. Another question along the above spectrum is: Are they at the point where their departure is called for?

To help with discernment, here are examples of disruptive behavior. It is difficult:

- when feedback is given by the facilitation team or given by other participants and a person consistently isn't able to take in the feedback, pay attention to it, and make use of it.
- if a person is frequently sharing sexualized jokes during small group sharings, informal conversations and in other interactions as their way of relating.
- when a person consistently isn't able to take in the stories and the needs of others. This means that when they are sharing in a pair, their partner isn't receiving attention and able to take a turn.
- if a person is in an "emergency" stage where powerful, painful emotions are needing to be expressed more or less continually. What is surfacing may be emerging to such an extent that the person does not have inner "stop and start" control.

To have an environment of learning, it is crucial that participants be able to take in and respond to social requests. If a person resists feedback, this interferes with the basic foundation of the workshop community. In cases like these, facilitators have the right and responsibility to request that they leave the workshop.

In closing, the community created within a workshop provides an invaluable place to learn and grow. The facilitator is entrusted with both nurturing and protecting this container.



## G) *Honoring the Impact of Trauma*

In developing these guidelines, we realized how important it is to respect how trauma affecting a person's life may also impact their experience in workshop space. The energy of the group may also be affected, as well as the group's process of working toward wholeness, integrity and support of all. This is a relatively new area of exploration among Work That Reconnects facilitators. We are recognizing it as one of the many intersecting systems of oppression (see Appendix "Understanding and Undoing Systems of Oppression").

One definition of trauma is an experience that is too painful or overwhelming for a person to handle. For this reason, the body goes into a protective mode. These responses to trauma can become incorporated into the body. When people experience unexpected triggering and re-traumatization, their body is reliving the original trauma in the present moment.

So many people in our violent world – which includes our workshop spaces – have been traumatized by violence. There is a stigma against having trauma and there is pressure not to talk about it. In this work, whatever our identity and life experience is, we deserve to be supported. We are learning how to be allies for each other.

Since WTR workshops emphasize honesty and experiential learning, it is important to explore ways that safety is navigated. For example, looking through the lens of trauma, we see that an invitation for participants to share their family backgrounds can inadvertently be challenging, or even triggering, for people who grew up in violent households, who have been separated from their family for political reasons, or who are dealing with loss and grief.

Here we offer an example of what it might feel like, from the inside, for a participant who is being triggered in a workshop space (this is a quotation from a person's personal experience):

*I try to be skillful and self-responsible. That's my aim. When I get triggered, it arises suddenly without warning. It's like being hit between the eyes. Figure ground shifts, and what felt safe no longer does. I'm flailing to get my bearings. That's because I'm defending myself. My angry self that couldn't come out back then when I was in danger, kept me alive. It's arising. I'm trying to bring my adult self back, but right now I'm awash in feelings that seem I'm back in danger again. Trauma can feel like being hit by an object in space and set spinning.*

Even if the possibility of being triggered is not an issue at a given time, people with trauma may simply want to have aspects of their personal experience kept private. Also, they may be mindful that their story might be hard for others to understand or hear about.

It can be helpful to understand that people who are healing from trauma don't necessarily like the term "survivor." Another possible framework is to think of people with this experience as "transformers."

Facilitators need to understand that experiences like these will likely occur in our workshop spaces.

### **Building skills in working with trauma**

The following suggestions for working skillfully with trauma contain much of use in any workshop process. Here you will find:

- some simple ways to move toward creating safety for all
- what support looks like and how to plan ahead for it

- how to create a strong container that cares for all
- how to support participants to know needs and limits
- some practices to help us care for each other

This section closes with “Listening that Creates Solidarity” by Sarah Pirtle.

**A simple way to begin creating safety is for the facilitator to offer ways that help can be asked for and given.** For example, facilitators – and also participants – can explicitly set up options at the start of the workshop relating to needs and self-care. A participant might say, “I want to tell the group that from time to time I might take a break for a few minutes. I’m taking care of myself.” Or, “I have a lot of back pain and you’ll notice that I stand up often.”

A facilitator can help set up awareness around touch. For example, “Touch is by consent. Feel free to say if you don’t want to hold hands or be hugged.”

In the course of a workshop, a person may turn toward someone on the facilitation team or another participant and ask, “Would you meet with me for ten minutes in the next room and give me a chance to say what’s happening for me?”

Participants can also set up what they need during pair sharing. “During our sharing, I want to ask you not to speak. That will make it easier for me to focus on what I want to say.”

**Talk as a group about being supportive and plan ahead of time for possible ways to provide support.** A facilitator might offer this analogy about what support looks and feels like:

*When people climb an icy Alaskan mountain, they connect in rope teams. Each day at least once as they are climbing, the ice breaks unexpectedly and one member of the team falls into a crevasse. They yell, “falling!” The others stabilize themselves, and this alertness and the tautness of the rope gives the person who has fallen the combined strength they need to climb back up out of the crevasse.*

A person can’t always give a signal when unexpected upset arises, but we can all be aware that sudden difficulties will occur. They are part of the climb, and part of the territory.

A triggered person can try to send a signal in their own unique way. They might say, “I’m really upset right now.” “I feel really off balance.” “I need someone to listen.” “I’m so angry.”

However, having the ability in the moment to know what is happening inside and to speak about it can be difficult, and at times may feel impossible. When others get the sense that help is needed, they can move into a place of compassion rather than reactivity, aversion, or meeting upset with more upset.

This “rope team” can endeavor to say, “I am with you.” For instance, you might approach someone who is upset and simply be next to them. You might ask if they’d like a hand to hold or a hand on their shoulder.

Words like this may help: “It’s okay. We’re with you. I wonder if you are feeling under stress.” Or, “Tell me more about how you are.” The rope team is giving the message, “I hear you. I want to help.”

That's the ideal scenario. We know that a real-life incident can be messy, startling or confusing. In a large group, the facilitator can decide whether to move the conversation out of the whole circle and into a private location. Even if comments are directed toward the facilitator, there are still times when a third person could bring the speaker into a close, private conversation.

Trauma dislocates and disconnects people. Through all these means, we all are looking for reconnection.

**We work to create a strong container that cares for all.** A person who has experienced trauma works hard to stay centered, to share appropriately, and to be supportive of others. By the nature of the Work That Reconnects, things get opened up. This movement toward opening can be in conflict with the effort to “stay buttoned up.” It is important to comprehend this tension.

It's such a poignant dynamic: People who carry a weight realize that what they carry often can't be shared because it may be destabilizing, not only for themselves but also for other group members and for the whole. In WTR spaces, it may be easier to hear someone talk about the pollution of a river near their home than it is to hear about violence and its reverberations through people's lives.

On the other hand, some people dealing with trauma say that simply hearing the words “violence,” “trauma,” or “assault” is unnerving. For them, having these topics brought up may feel like being invaded by a reality they are already trying hard to manage.

We are inter-connected in one web, and need each other – but we don't want the community we create to “capsize.” We are learning to hold each other, while also holding ourselves. A dynamic balance is involved. How do we honor lived experience while being mindful about what the container of a specific setting can or can't offer? What can we do so that our containers expand?

### **Support participants to know needs and limits; boundaries.**

We are all learners on the subject of violence and trauma. One person might be learning how to speak up and intervene when an agreement is broken. Another might be learning how to “edit” their story to respond to a container. Another might be examining numbness and learning how their voice has been silenced. Still another person might be learning how to validate and acknowledge others. All of these learning processes can be held with self-compassion.

Each participant needs to be self-responsible for learning what helps them keep an inner balance.

We all need to examine what our boundaries are, what these boundaries are about, and how these boundaries serve us. Facilitators we can give explicit permission for each person to have the boundaries they need in sharing and listening. Participants need to know that the workshop process will support their own discernment about these boundaries and related needs for self-protection.

Every group that is working on inclusion also sets up boundaries. We are learning to honor lived experience while being mindful about what the container of a specific setting can or can't offer. And we are learning to expand what these containers can hold, while maintaining safety for all.

A note on boundaries for facilitators: Facilitators work to stay centered and balanced, and to care of their own personal needs. When we lead, this isn't a time to ask a group to shift focus and attend to us. If we share our personal stories as a leader, it needs to be clear that we aren't

making an indirect request for help. It is recommended that facilitation teams meet before and after to give care and attention to each other so that the time during the workshop can be directed toward the participants.

The Appendix “Protecting the Container of the Community,” addresses how to discern whether or not a given workshop setting can indeed serve as the container in certain challenging situations.

### **Here are some of the practices we can use to give the care we want to take with each other:**

All group members must seek to ensure that there is room for everyone in the group to talk. We search for a balance between extending support to others and asking to receive support.

We each become aware of our inner “stop and start” with emotions. Sometimes “self-talk” can help. Here’s an example: “I’m really getting wound up. What do I need to say to myself? I think I need to go outside for a break soon. Meanwhile I will write myself a note and let the fury I’m feeling come out in writing.”

We learn when and where we can take a turn and share our personal pain from hard experiences. Again using self-talk: “I’d better go out and walk for a few minutes. Maybe I can ask someone to walk with me.”

If some things that we might share could be traumatizing for others to hear, we learn to edit or talk more generally. We might ask permission before sharing some aspects of our experience; for example: “Can I share the general headlines of what I’m dealing with right now?”

Through this sensitive negotiation, the pain of what happened may ease and listeners and the speaker may join in creating a new story of being heard. (See the essay below, “Listening that Creates Solidarity.”)

In addition, any person could have a buddy who is helping them with what they want to learn and be more skillful about. This buddy system would be set in the context of self-responsibility.

When there is a tear in the web of interconnection, when there is a tension, we seek to apply cherishing to all people involved. We strive to get bigger together.

In closing let’s hear more from the person quoted above, sharing their experience of being triggered and their suggestions for building a supportive feeling of connection:

*When I act in unexpected ways, afterwards I try to make amends. But I want the other people, too, to comprehend the broader picture. It comes from trauma. What a helpless feeling it is to all of a sudden feel lifted out of myself and thrown back into the past.*

*I want to hold myself accountable but it’s more complicated than that. I want to apologize but I also want to be met with understanding. It can help if someone says with compassion, “You must have been really scared,” or “You must have felt really overwhelmed.” Or, “I understand you were really upset.” A question like, “Did you feel helpless just then?” can also assist. Or, “Did something throw you off? What was it?”*

*I don’t want there to be a mess. If the processing only focuses on the harm that erupted when I felt triggered, then the full dynamic of the problem isn’t being acknowledged. I want a chance to figure out what it was that contributed to my feeling unsafe or accused or blamed, and by expressing this, it’s easier to come back into balance.*

*Being asked, "What would help you right now?" is another simple way to give support.*

This offering hints at the kind of healing and integration that is possible. By learning how to truly see and be allies for each other, we hope to heal and strengthen the webs of our interconnections, in our workshops spaces and, moving out from there, into our world.

## **Listening that Creates Solidarity** **by Sarah Pirtle**

I want to honor what I have learned from the work of Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela who in South Africa served on the Human Rights Violations Committee of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). While studying with her at Omega Institute, we watched footage of the Truth Commission in action.

Afterward, I pulled together this insight from what Pumla had said:

*When our stories are heard and received  
and when we let ourselves notice  
that they are heard and received,  
we the tellers of the stories change,*

*and the people who hear them are changed.*

*Thereafter when we think of the events,  
we are no longer inside them isolated and alone.  
Thereafter the caring of the listener  
is now woven inside the story.*

This helped me learn more about building the capacity to hear and hold each others' truths. At a course at the School for International Training in Brattleboro, Vermont, Dr. Paula Green divided the participants (from 17 countries) into smaller groups to listen to each other. I remember a person who hadn't spoken pouring out her hidden story of escaping from Tibet to India and how her father died on the way.

After she spoke, she covered her face in shame. She was afraid of how we would receive her. At that moment I "leaned into" what Pumla had taught. In the awkward silence, I spoke. I told her that we are with her now. Her story includes us and we truly care about what happened to her. She looked up and took in our eyes. We became stitched together. Her courage in speaking brought us into a new place. One person shared, "I feel we have become a constellation of hope."

Yet to come:

### **Appendix H: Inner Awareness and Self Regulation**