

COMEGA Circles of 8 Group Norms

Circles of 8 are the vehicle that COMEGA uses to "ground" the weekend workshop experience. They are a source of support and process in a small facilitated container where men can share and witness more deeply about their life experience and the experience of the larger circles, topic groups, rituals, and other activities of COMEGA. The following are the COMEGA Circles of 8 Group Norms:

a. Consensus - We honor community and flexibility. Altering or adding norms will be made by group consensus. Each man has a vote. All must agree to add or alter a norm. Any dissent keeps the standard norms in place.

b. Confidentiality - We honor the sacredness of a man's sharing. Each man's sharing within the group stays within the group. A sharing does not get brought up to that man outside of group, or to anyone else ever. If a man wants to talk about his share outside of group, it is up to him to raise it. Any man can alter confidentiality of his own share.

c. Timeliness - We honor our commitments. Group will start and end on time. Sharing is generally done in such a way that each man is afforded a turn to speak. It is requested that men honor their time commitments to the group.

d. I Statements - We honor our own truths. It is requested that men share from the first person, using the word "I", rather than the generalizations of "you" or "we" or "they".

e. Violence - We honor verbal/emotional/physical safety. There is no violence, physically or verbally in group. This is distinct from having feelings and expressions of anger. There are no put-downs of others.

f. Touch - We honor men's boundaries. Physical contact, touching, hugging, etc. takes place with permission asked and agreement granted prior to reaching to touch or hug.

g. Reflections - We honor how another man's sharing affects us. Reflections are couched in terms of "What I heard, what I saw, what I felt, and how it touches me". Sharing reflections helps create separation, knowing each others' boundaries. Sharing of reflections is discretionary.

h. Feedback - We honor men's opinions. This is discretionary. A man who shares may ask for feedback. A man in group may offer feedback. Men may decline to offer feedback when asked. A man may decline feedback when offered.

i. Passing - We honor men's privacy. A man may choose to not share on any specific subject or during any specific round of sharing.

j. Confrontation - We honor men's conflict(s) as a means of potential growth. The need for interpersonal process, truth, and resolution is important to human interactions. Group can be used to address breakdowns or concerns between two or more individuals. Group leadership may be asked to facilitate a breakdown, and/or may step in to address process during a breakdown.

k. Mandated Reporting - If there is a mandated reporter sitting in circle of 8, a facilitator shall make this known to group members, sharing that sharing certain information may trigger a conflict of interest in keeping confidentiality.

l. Sensitivity - We honor men's diversity. Discretion in discussion of subjects that either present as oppressive to an individual or class of people shall be acknowledged. A group facilitator may interrupt a share if, in his perspective, it is potentially oppressive to an individual in the group. An example of this may be talking about explicit sexual acts with a young participant in group.