

Liberation Pods

A Path Towards Living in Shared-Risk

The purpose of these liberation pods is to support people who are not already part of committed shared-risk groups to grow capacity in this area in addition to what happens on the course sessions.

The structure of these meetings was developed within the Nonviolent Global Liberation ([NGL](#)) community, where experimentation with voluntary and conscious movement towards actual risk sharing has been underway for a few years. Much of the text is used as is, without any changes, while some of it is specifically oriented to the unique experiment that this course is.

Stepping into full shared risk, after living so long under patriarchal conditions, is a stretch that is beyond imagination for many, and may create immense challenges when attempted. The structure proposed here is designed to support movement towards needs-based resource flow without creating further separation or leaving stimulated trauma unattended to. This structure is intended to do so by cultivating a supportive community and creating scaffolding to hold this process of stepping away from capitalism towards shared risk and needs-based resource flow.

Contents:

[Liberation Pods](#)

[A Path Towards Living in Shared-Risk](#)

[Contents:](#)

[What is a Liberation Pod](#)

[How to do it](#)

[General structure](#)

[Content by week](#)

[Aug 7: Why We Need Each Other: Shared Risk and the Commons](#)

[Aug 21: From Separation to Integration: Finding Choice within Togetherness](#)

[Aug 28: From Scarcity to Flow: Embracing Mutual Mothering](#)

[Sep 4: From Privacy to Transparency: Minding Everyone's Business](#)

[Sep 11: From Avoidance to Collective Learning: Sharing Feedback for Liberation](#)

[Sep 18: From Problem to Opportunity: Increasing Capacity to Engage with Conflict](#)

[Relevant patterns of patriarchal conditioning](#)

[Principles and agreements](#)

[Principles](#)

[Specific agreements](#)

[Decision Making Agreements](#)

[Resource Flow Agreements](#)

[Information Flow Agreement](#)

[Feedback Flow Agreements](#)

[Conflict Engagement Agreements](#)

[Facilitation Instructions](#)

[Giving feedback to the community](#)

[Additional topics or questions pods may want to explore](#)

What is a Liberation Pod

A liberation pod is a small group (4-5 people) that comes together with the purpose of supporting each other to surface and co-hold their patriarchal conditioning around resource flow, with an intention to prepare for entering shared risk in the future, either with each other or through building a shared-risk community with the capacity gained in this practice.

- Each pod is holding their own experiment based on what is within this manual and additional suggestions offered within the course. Each pod chooses what to focus on specifically each week. They will harvest learning, give feedback to the wider community, and seek support as needed.
- In addition to the specific liberation content, each pod is also experimenting with the experience of being in a pod and moving towards greater intimacy and purpose with others. For this purpose, the structure is designed to attempt to replicate the creation of secure attachment, which may support members to move towards shared risk, including in particular shifting patterns of orienting to resources, without going into survival patterns. Some of the specifics that are included here are: attunement, presence, responsiveness.
- Although pods are created and content is being provided only for the duration of the course, pods may choose to continue beyond the course.
- Liberation pods provide a growth/healing opportunity in the following areas:
 - Getting to know others and to be known by them on a deep level that is often not shared
 - Getting to know your own social location and its impacts on you and your life
 - Upskilling in Gift Consciousness (e.g. noticing and translating exchange thinking)
 - Increasing capacity to cultivate more accurate needs assessment (how to know what our needs are)
 - Making room for resource related trauma to surface and be attended to
 - Supporting others when their trauma surfaces (e.g. cultivating mourning practices)
 - Engaging with a systemic lens
 - Identifying and working with patterns and conditioning
 - Softening the edges of either/or thinking
 - Finding courage to speak truth in support of individual and collective liberation

How to do it

General structure

1. Preparing for a session

a. For everyone:

- i. Review content of course session and instructions within this manual (see [Content by week](#) section)

- ii. If anything is particularly challenging, seek support to be able to show up fully with others in the pod.
- b. For whoever facilitates on any given week
 - i. Review [facilitation agreements](#) ahead of time to orient
 - ii. Review content from the perspective of where you might have liberation edges that might make it challenging to facilitate, and seek support as needed for full presence at the pod session

2. Opening the session

- a. **Personal share:** What is it like for you to facilitate? This is so that you can get settled without going into performance or separation and still be a participant within the pod
- b. **Raise hand questions:** who read the materials for this session? Who needs any explanation? Any urgent requests about the session?
- c. **Celebrations in relation to our journey:** for the first session, this can be celebrations about choosing to take the course and/or to be part of a liberation pod

3. Set up:

- a. **Share Intentions:** What are you wanting to discover from today's meeting? (E.g. to understand/know self better? a liberation edge? New self agreements? Greater sense of connection to the pod? To know/be known by pod members? relationship/trust building? Togetherness? Being held in vulnerability?)
- b. **Reminder of Pod's [Agreements](#):** review all and focus on any that feel particularly relevant to the content or where the pod is that week, including how to orient to patriarchal conditioning.
- c. **Patriarchal Conditioning to look out for:** Choose a manageable number of [patterns](#) to work with and track during the session. For example, if there are four people in the pod, three people can hold some pattern for the session to notice when it comes up and engage in some practice. Remember: only track and comment for those people who actively want this, as just speaking vulnerably may be enough of a liberation stretch for many.

- 4. **Seed questions/topics:** Choose a question from the list provided (see [Content by week](#) section), seed it into the field, and then open to what emerges
 - a. **Remind speakers:** review options related to what happens when someone notices patriarchal conditioning
 - b. **Do a round on the topic:**
 - i. The speaker takes as much space as they need until they are complete (not necessarily everyone), continuing through the round until it's time to break into pairs.
 - ii. Before switching to a new speaker, open to hearing responses to those who shared, the impact of their sharing on the group. Remind people to stay in "heart responses", which is about how each person was touched by what they heard, rather than slipping into advice giving, diagnosing, etc.

c. Not aiming for “equality”

- i. Let go of the idea that each person will speak equal amounts of time. We can all learn from one person exploring, as conditioning may be similar or we may learn about people in other social locations.
- ii. At the same time, we want to be aware of patterns around who is speaking, when and how much, as this is another potential manifestation of conditioning. Facilitators can choose who to invite to speak first based on these patterns. I.e:
 1. Who is the least likely to speak first on their own without support or invitation? (e.g. what you know about specific people, and what you know about different people’s social location, etc.)
 2. Who has made a request for a topic or expressed a strong desire to share something?
 3. Who has not spoken in previous sessions?

d. Go slowly

- i. The purpose of this pod is to support liberation! It is not necessary to answer a specific question in a specific amount of time. The pods are designed to bring stuff up! So when stuff comes up, slow down and be with it. Let go of the expectation that the original question is the one that will be what is explored in the session.
- ii. Practice mindful presence with what is
- iii. Invite pauses, ring a bell
- iv. Breathe together.
- v. Repeat topic questions several times to dive deeper and deeper.

e. Mourning

- i. We take space for mourning whenever someone notices it arising. Anyone rings a bell when they notice mourning. We have a moment of silence, inviting sharing about what's going on. We do empathic guessing, etc.
- ii. We breathe between different people sharing. Anyone can ask for a pause or bell when they feel a need to slow down.
- iii. Pod members seek additional empathy/trauma support outside of the pod, to increase the field of coholding.

5. Anchoring

- a. **Break into pairs** to self connect, digest, and support each other to anchor learning in new agreements, practices, etc
- b. **Connect in the larger group**
 - i. Share learning from pairs
 - ii. Check in with intentions from the start
 - iii. Reports about patriarchal conditioning that was noticed? Any trends or patterns noticed?
 - iv. Any need to change agreements for the future? If so, mark that in a copy of this document

6. Closing:

- a. Final round of celebrations/appreciations, especially of facilitator; being as specific as possible
- b. Choosing facilitator for the next meeting

Content by week

The format remains the same as per the guidelines above and the agreements described below. The following are possible preparation questions for each week for everyone to engage with who wants to, as well as questions with which to seed the conversation each week.

1. Aug 7: Why We Need Each Other: Shared Risk and the Commons

- a. What do you know about your ancestral history in terms of elements such as access to resources (e.g. slave traders, plantation masters, enslaved people, factory owners, factory workers), displacement, land enclosures, witch hunting, colonization, systemic violence, etc.?
- b. What are you celebrating about experiences and experiments you have been part of where the focus was on significant community building that challenges patterns of separation? What have you learned? What have you discovered about your own challenges in walking in that direction?
- c. What is your vision of a shared risk community you would want to be part of? What are limitations and obstacles you have in terms of taking major steps towards forming it?
- d. Is there any instrumental relationship in your life that you could infuse with more transparency, vulnerability, or gifting? What may need to shift within you to take those steps?

2. Aug 21: From Separation to Integration: Finding Choice within Togetherness

- a. What are your strengths and limitations in relation to choice? What are the conditions under which you lose access to choice? What do you do then? What do you want to do instead?
- b. What do you look like at your most reactive? What are the stories of separation you are likely to rehearse in such moments? What can anyone do in those moments to remind you about togetherness?
- c. What appeals to you about finding choice *within* togetherness? Where do you see challenges for you and others from you being part of a shared-risk pod? What support would you need to keep moving towards choice and togetherness simultaneously?

3. Aug 28: From Scarcity to Flow: Embracing Mutual Mothering

- a. Where do you notice scarcity patterns within you? What keeps you from giving unconditionally? What keeps you from receiving unconditionally?
- b. Where is it difficult for you to honor your own capacity limits? What support do you need so that you stop short of overstretching or resentment?

- c. How does your culture or social location affect your relationship to your needs and to others' needs, your capacity to make requests or to say "no" to others' requests, and how easily you mobilize to attend to needs?

4. Sep 4: From Privacy to Transparency: Minding Everyone's Business

- a. What are some of the things that you often hide about yourself? What would it take for you to bring tenderness to those aspects? Can you sense what needs may be living within what you usually hide? What support do you need to embrace the practice of vulnerability?
- b. When do you experience wanting to protect your privacy? What step can you take to release at least some of the protection?
- c. What keeps you from asking personal or revealing questions of others? When you look inside those discomforts, what can you learn about yourself and about the culture or social location into which you were socialized?
- d. What messages were you taught in relation to money? How does this affect your willingness and capacity to share things about how much money you have access to and how you experience money? How do they affect your capacity and willingness to ask others questions about money in their lives?
- e. What messages were you taught in relation to sex and sexuality? How does this affect your willingness and capacity to share things about your relationship with sexuality or your sexual relationships? How do they affect your capacity and willingness to ask others questions about sex and sexuality in their lives?

5. Sep 11: From Avoidance to Collective Learning: Sharing Feedback for Liberation

- a. Are there times when you withhold speaking truth and sharing feedback? What inner messages are the ones that keep you from embracing the courage to speak truth with love (which is the essence of nonviolence?) Do you have any memory of a time, maybe long long ago, when you spoke truth with complete freedom?
- b. Do you have any practice for transforming judgments when they arise? If so, what support do you need to commit fully to the practice so that you can convert your own judgments to feedback? If not, what support do you need to start such a practice? Is there any judgment you have of anyone else in relation to which you can see your way through to truly recognizing your own meaning-making that led to it?
- c. What happens to you when someone else judges you? Is there anything you know about what may interfere with having full tenderness towards your own limitations? What support do you need to be able to find that tenderness? Have you ever experienced full acceptance, including of your limitations, from anyone?

6. Sep 18: From Problem to Opportunity: Increasing Capacity to Engage with Conflict

- a. What is a conflict you had with someone where you are satisfied with how you handled it? What made it possible for you to show up in the way you want? What support did you receive? What can you learn from this experience for other conflicts?
- b. When you are in a conflict field that you are not part of, how do you usually respond? How would you want to respond? What is your understanding about where the gap is coming from? What strengths do you have to bring into conflict fields? What is a time when you have stepped into a conflict field with presence and clarity? What made it possible?
- c. Do you easily lose trust when people do things you don't like and don't understand? What in your own understanding contributes to loss of trust within you? What support do you need to be able to imagine narratives that retain trust in others and in life?

Relevant patterns of patriarchal conditioning

The list of patterns below is not intended to be exhaustive, only suggestive. Pods, and especially the weekly facilitator, are encouraged to build on course material, and any other practices that may support the discovery and understanding of patriarchal patterns. These could be Nonviolent Communication, [The Compass](#), [Vision Mobilization](#) (VM), the Work that Reconnects, Permaculture, and more.

- Scarcity:
 - Scarcity thinking: e.g. contraction around not being or not having enough
 - Catastrophic thinking: e.g. totalizing, “always” and “never” related to potential bad outcomes
 - Attachment: e.g. seeing certain patriarchal or capitalist strategies as “needs” and being challenged to find other pathways to attend to the underlying needs. (See the section “Needs Constructs by Patriarchy” in the “Social Structures and Socialization” packet.)
- Separation:
 - Avoiding vulnerability: e.g. trying to “keep it together” for protection
 - Self sufficiency / hyper-independence: e.g. difficulty in asking for support with anything
 - either/or thinking: e.g. finding it difficult to see pathways that integrate our own needs with those of others
 - Exchange thinking: e.g. worrying about being taken advantage of if the giving and receiving are not matched
 - Mistrust: e.g. developing judgmental narratives about others when they do things that don't work for us and we don't understand why
 - Shame about access to resources: e.g. not having enough resources; having enough when others don't; having much more than enough
- Powerlessness:
 - Deserve thinking: e.g. difficulty in naming needs when not trusting that we “deserve” to have them met
 - Have to/should/must/can't: thought and language patterns that block access to choice

- Waiting: e.g. for someone else to attend to needs; for permission from leaders; etc.
- Numbness: e.g. not knowing what we want
- Other:
 - Shame/Guilt
 - Freedom/security triangle (for those who have awareness of The Compass)
 - Male/female training
 - Specific language integration: e.g. war metaphors

Principles and agreements

1. Principles

- a. Making space for mourning gives us access to the liberative potential of what we want that is within the mourning.
- b. Commitment to vulnerability supports moving with truth and within capacity together
- c. Trusting what people say about their capacity nurtures trust, attunement, and choice about the depth of vulnerability we chose to go to.
- d. When we receive adequate support, we are more likely to stay on the liberation path.

2. Specific agreements

- a. Decision Making Agreements
 - i. Within the course:
 1. The facilitator chooses the seed question for the session and makes timing/flow decisions within the session.
 2. The group chooses when to meet and for how long
 - ii. Beyond the course:
 1. The group chooses what topic the pod is focusing on.
 2. Any member can request a mourning circle for the next session at any time.
- b. Resource Flow Agreements
 - i. We follow the [meeting structure](#).
 - ii. We use the [Content by week](#).
 - iii. We use the list of [relevant patterns](#) to focus our liberation journey.
 - iv. We consult the [additional topics](#) provided as needed.
 - v. We use the [Facilitation agreements](#) offered.
 - vi. If we have questions, we bring them to the extra 30 min support period after each call.
- c. Information Flow Agreement
 - i. We have access to each other's contact information.
 - ii. We inform each other about any change of plans that may prevent us from attending a meeting.
 - iii. We use Zoom.

- iv. We take turns after each session to note new agreements, seed points, and principles in our private copy and bring to class in support of others' learning.
- d. Feedback Flow Agreements
 - i. Within session
 - 1. Each member fills in specifics for how they want to be engaged with, such as:
 - a. Please don't interrupt me until I'm complete.
 - b. I am currently working on identifying and transforming scarcity thinking, if you notice this, please do definitely interrupt me.
 - c. I am feeling very stretched by my participation in this pod; just answering questions is enough for me, please only offer appreciations without naming any patterns.
 - d. It supports me to hear a headline about what the feedback is before going into the feedback.
 - 2. The facilitator notes any situation in which we are unsure how to offer feedback to receive support later at the end of each course session.
 - ii. Beyond sessions
 - 1. We harvest [learning and feedback from our work together](#) to support the larger community of the course and for the liberation pods project as a whole.
 - 2. We take turns attending to this task.
- e. Conflict Engagement Agreements
 - i. When anything emerges between us that is challenging for either of us we:
 - 1. Ask to slow down
 - 2. Let one another know that something challenging is arising
 - 3. Give a headline (what the issue is about without going into the content or the emotionality of it)
 - 4. See what connection and care we may want to create before going into it
 - 5. We create connection and care by sharing appreciations or celebrations if accessible
 - 6. If neither of us have the capacity to hold what is alive in the moment and listen first we, we take a pause and return to it at a moment when at least one of us is open to receive.
 - ii. Overall, we rely on outside support rather than work out challenges within the group. If needed, we bring questions to the time at the end of each course session.

Facilitation Instructions

The facilitator is a pod member. Facilitation is rotated between pod members as part of the commitment to liberation. Even if someone feels very uncertain, support can be offered by anyone else within the pod who may be more experienced or confident in facilitating. Such support can be coaching or empathy, or anything else short of someone else stepping into facilitation.

What the facilitator is doing:

1. Choosing the seed question based on the topic chosen for the particular session.
2. Tracking time and making decisions about the pace of the session.
3. Holding the “container” of the session.
4. Participating in responding to the seed question as much as they can while holding the space, stepping back from participation if they notice they are affected by the topic such that their capacity to facilitate is diminished.
5. Choosing when to open up for responses from others in the group for more collective wisdom and holding
6. Tracking or asking someone to track when anyone seems "out" and what may be going on for them - e.g. mourning may be coming up

What the facilitator isn't doing:

1. Making decisions outside of the session
2. Facilitating every session, as facilitation is rotated
3. Being solely responsible for naming conditioning, identifying liberation edges, coming up with practices, offering empathy, listening, or coaching, etc. – everyone holds this responsibility!

Giving feedback to the community

There are two kinds of feedback that can be useful for the larger community: content, which will likely support primarily the learning within the course, and information about how well the Liberation Pod format works, which will likely support primarily the Liberation Pods project within NGL.

1. For increasing accuracy and thoroughness of content

Include within it information such as:

- a. What you did
- b. What you learned
- c. New patterns
- d. New pathways for working with patterns
- e. Missing elements related to content
- f. New seed questions

2. For supporting the robustness of the liberation pod form

Include within it information such as:

- a. Missing agreements
- b. Ways of doing things that worked and didn't work
- c. Additional principles
- d. Anything about how much facilitation works or not (e.g. in terms of supporting people with patterns and conditioning)

Additional topics or questions pods may want to explore

In addition to the specific points relevant to each week and to the focus on choosing specific patriarchal patterns to track, this manual also includes a number of other topics that facilitators or pods may choose to augment or even shift their focus on any given week. Those can be particularly meaningful for pods that want to continue after the course is complete.

- **Sharing Individual Financial Situations**

- Rotate pod members bringing forward their financial situations as the primary topic of the session. This can be a deep and fast way to increase knowing each other as well as an opportunity for a deep dive into vulnerability practice.
- If someone's situation changes, they request the next session be focused on updating the pod.
- If a new member joins, their first session is sharing about their situation.

- **Shifting to functioning in gift economy**

- Exploring ways of uncoupling giving from receiving, and engaging with any patterns and limitations that arise
- Thinking through material and sustainability needs in preparation for how much to ask for, either within an established structure such as financial gift hubs (FGHs), or directly from clients or workshop participants
 - Getting feedback from the group on what you consider to be a need and uncoupling that from patterns of consumption that are unsustainable for self and/or planet. Is it a strategy for something else that can be met in other nonmaterial ways? What ways can you change your lifestyle to require less financial income or material resources?
 - Getting feedback from the group on patterns of "making do" and not attending sufficiently to baseline needs because of conditioning based on social location leading to asking for less than you actually need. What areas of your life are you going without?
- Thinking about generating income and what liberation edges may be present here?

- **Exploring Known Liberation Edges**

- What patterns are you already aware of that you have in relation to walking towards shared risk?
- Do pod members already know a liberation edge they could receive support on?
- Following up with a liberation edge that surfaced in an earlier session

- **For those with VM experience**

- Creating a VM for the pod (updating from [template VM](#) that is specifically designed for those who are part of the VM community)
- Working on self-agreements within individual VM structures (only those who have an active VM practice can benefit from this)
- Getting support to articulate capacity assessment on resource flow
- Supporting each other to begin drafting instruction manual

- Supporting each other to transform limitations/conditioning that surfaced in previous sessions.
(Note: this can be especially potent if coupled with experience with The Compass)

- **Mourning Circles**

- Shifting focus and making space for mourning whenever it shows up regardless of chosen focus
- Scheduling a mourning circle instead of the usual format in relation to known patterns or what is unfolding in the course
- Specific for something that happened within the pod or related to the liberation edges
- Can be requested by a pod member as needed

- **Other Seed Questions**

- When are times when you experienced giving/receiving unconditionally?
- What was a time when you really struggled to give/receive unconditionally?
- In what ways do you struggle to give/receive?
- In what ways are you practicing unconditional giving/receiving in your life?
- When did you lose your trust in life?
- Is there anything you are not saying?

- **Focusing on Patriarchal Conditioning:**

Although focusing on a very small area within the vast range of patriarchal patterns is generally necessary in order to stay within capacity, this is an artificial choice. None of these patterns exist in a vacuum, they are connected to each other and to the world we live in. Even if you choose to focus on one at a time to stay within capacity or support integration, there are threads connecting it to other patterns that you may choose to follow or acknowledge and choose not to follow.

- Choosing a particular pattern for the whole pod and staying with it for several sessions
- Each person chooses a particular focus and stays with it for a few sessions, For example, one person may really want to work on noticing/addressing something specific and may focus on one form of conditioning for 4 sessions (and in their life outside of the sessions.)