

PEER SESSION PROTOCOL

Preamble

If you are here, I assume you either have some interest in learning about trauma and its effects, or you already identify as a trauma survivor.. Maybe you've read ahead and already put names to the typical experiences of a trauma survivor.... Emotional flashbacks, toxic shame. More likely, if you're like me before I found this book, you're one of the many people who hasn't been exposed to any kind of dialogue about trauma and trauma disorders. Maybe you're more familiar with some of the lived experiences....these could include Debilitating sensitivity to stressful triggers, intense mood swings, a pervasive sense of loneliness and abandonment, difficulties in your relationships, or dissociation. Whatever it is that brought you here, you can look at the number of other people here today and know that you are not alone in your experiences. You are not alone in your struggles, and you will not be alone in your recovery either. You, your feelings, and your lived experiences are all welcome in this space, and I want to thank you for being here today.

The idea behind this book club was to provide a space for trauma survivors to practice self compassion. We do this by practicing compassion as a group, and towards one another. We are here to validate one another's experiences, remind each other and ourselves that we are not alone, and to empower ourselves with the tools that can aid us in recovery.

Some house rules to start:

1. Taking a page from ACA, we do not engage in cross-talk.
2. Crosstalk is interrupting, giving advice, or making comments about another person's sharing. It is also talking to someone or making distracting noise during sharing time. In TBC, we don't crosstalk. When others share with us, just listen; our reality, our truth, our ideas, our feelings, our self-image, our beings are affirmed. When we focus only on our own recovery (keeping out of other people's), we are taking responsibility for our own lives. We do this by presenting all statements in the "I", first-person, form.

3. Secondly, we do not reference the content of someone else's shares, but we can make reference to emotions that were named.
4. For instance, if one speaker relates an experience of feeling scared or abandoned, another speaker can say something like "i can relate to the feeling of being scared or abandoned". Trauma survivors often struggle with invalidation of their own feelings, so we're hoping this can help serve as a small reminder of how valid these feelings are.
5. We do not give advice
6. We do not repeat what is said in the meetings (in any context). We also do not record the meetings in text/audio/video or any other format.
7. Finally, in terms of the procedure for sharing, we will be taking stack, which means if you want to share you have to use the "raise hand" feature, and then whoever is moderating will keep track of the order of who's speaking.

Since we're all new here, let's take this time to go around the room and introduce ourselves. You can tell us your name, where you're from, and your preferred gender pronouns if you'd like. You can also share how you're feeling today, but i'd encourage you to save any explanation of "why" you're feeling the way you're feeling until later on in the session.

Hi, my name is <NAME>, i'm calling from <LOCATION>, and i'm a trauma survivor. I am feeling...

Dumpling_palace's sample dialogue from the first session:

Just reflecting on my experience going through this first chapter, it was really empowering, but it was also really painful. I had a lot of moments where I put the book down after reading a sentence or a paragraph, because it had so much resonance with me. And I would have to sit and wait on that feeling to pass before I could pick the book up again. For me personally, in the past when i've had to describe my history or background to therapists i've always kind of felt as if i was telling a story. It just didn't seem real to me, and it didn't seem like it was me going through all of those things. But reading this chapter, i had moments where all those lived experiences felt so real. Not necessarily in the way of triggering an emotional flashback, but maybe just because

someone else was putting words to an experience I had, that I felt so alone with. And maybe that's what helped me to embrace my identity as a trauma survivor, and to accept some of the author's insights like how we aren't broken or defective - we just think we are. We're not damaged, but we are in pain. And i'm not sure i would be able to realize, and then emotionally accept all of that if it wasn't for the kind of trajectory that experiences like reading this book have put me on.