

The Heart of Healthy Community: Communication, Process, and Dealing with Conflict *With Diana Leafe Christian*

The purpose of this workshop is to consider the typical challenges that often come up in communities, and introduce effective ways experienced community members have found to reduce and resolve these challenges. These include processes which create a strong sense of trust and connection in the group, or that reduce the likelihood certain kinds of conflict, or that address conflict when it arises. I believe it significantly benefits a group's current functioning and later success to consider these issues and methods early in the group's life, and to orient new group members to these issues and methods, while you're still a core group and after move-in.

9:00 – 10:00 am. Three Common Sources of Community Conflict and Good Antidotes

(1) Communication styles, (2) fairness issues, (3) trust issues. Structural conflict review. Membership/Mission & Purpose/Decision-Making Method review. The magnifying mirror effect. The rock-polisher effect. What do we mean by "communication and process skills"? *Small group exercise: "What I don't want to experience in community!"*

10:15 am - 11:30 am. Communication Agreements

Differing communication styles and expectations about how to communicate, and about appropriate topics for meetings. *Small group exercise: Starting your Communication Agreement.*

11:45 am – 12:15 Fairness Issues

Fairness issues, resentment, and conflict. Three ways to help each other stay accountable to the group. A graduated series of consequences. Future Community Success Assessment Tool.

--lunch 12: 15 – 1:15 --

1:15 – 2:30 pm. Ten Ways to Build Trust and Connection

One of the best ways to reduce the impact of conflict is to do things that specifically build trust and connection, "community glue," in the group. *Exercise: Story Evening method.*

2:45 – 3:30. "When You Do That . . ."

"Tips for giving and receiving feedback gracefully and effectively. The challenging person—disruptive or draining behaviors or attitudes in a group. The "Many Raindrops Make a Flood" method of working with exceptionally challenging people.

3:30 – 5:00 pm. The Best Trust-and Connection Process I Know

This is a wonderful exercise core group or community members can practice regularly, and draws on several principles covered in today's workshop. *Exercise: Gifting Circle process.*