

Tips for Intimate and Open Virtual Discussions

To optimize the experience for virtual sharing at an intimate level, follow these tips to create a safe environment. Depend on the honor system and trust participants to comply to the best of their ability. It is understood that individual circumstances may make it difficult to implement all the tips outlined here.

- **Privacy** – Be in a room that is private and quiet. It is essential that you and the others cannot be overheard. You don't want any distractions. Let others know you cannot be interrupted, sudden emergencies notwithstanding.
- **Video** – Use the largest monitor possible – typically as desktop PC. A laptop is the next best option. A full-sized tablet comes in third. Avoid trying to use a smartphone, even if it is a larger one. The larger the screen, the better.
- **Audio** – Use headphones and an external mic. Ear buds with a built-in mic work too. Avoid using your computers speakers which enhances privacy for others on the call. The computer mic is OK if that's all you have.
- **Internet** – Make sure you have a decent connection speed. Faster speeds over WIFI usually work best vs. cellular. If you must use cell service, make sure you have a strong signal.
- **Cell Phones** – Turn it off. Or, turn off ringers and vibration. Turn off all notifications.
- **PC/Laptops/Tablets** – Close all other apps. Turn off notifications. We all know how distracting it is to see incoming emails during a call. Who among us has not sent a few texts or emails while on a video call? Give yourself permission to unplug from the rest of your digital world for a few hours. You will benefit greatly and enhance the value of the experience for everyone.
- **Safety** – Explicitly review that the call discussion is Confidential. Nothing from the call will be shared with anyone else. With that said, the experience is enhanced when participants take risks with vulnerability when sharing. Stretch 15% beyond your normal level of discomfort with disclosure. Allow yourself to be fully known.
- **Chat Function** – Host can consider disabling the Private-Chat and Group Chat functions. Simply raise your hands on the screen when you have something share.
- **Enjoy the Experience** – Intentionally seek valuable take-aways for yourself that you can apply to your life. The quality of the experience depends on everyone's whole-hearted engagement.

Connecting with yourself – How do you tell your life story? Why should you?

How we tell our story says something about us. We even choose how we see ourselves in our story. What we choose impacts how we feel about it. It gives us meaning. We choose what to share about our story. Life stories have high points and low points. The purpose for telling both parts of your story is to help others connect with you at a deeper level. *It's at the "heart" level where genuine caring is activated.*

Caring about each other at a deeper level is the foundation of trust and empathy. Our hearts are sometimes opened more by life's low points and challenges than by the high points, however, they share equal importance.

Sharing lower points often takes courage and appropriate levels of vulnerability. How much can I share? How safe is it? Self-disclosure is the technique. We encourage stories to be told with a slight push into your discomfort with vulnerability. Trust your own level. Listen to your heart.

Share only to the level of your comfort with disclosure and vulnerability. Consider stretching 10-15% into your discomfort zone. Always keep yourself safe.

1. Share your favorite memory of happiest times. Or just one happy event. Something meaningful and significant.
2. Share one of your life's most challenging times. Or just one challenging event. Something meaningful and significant.
3. Share a life lesson you have learned from the challenges you have faced. How does it affect how you treat others?
4. Share one thing going on in your life now that gives you joy and one thing that makes you sad.

Follow the directions for delivering your story in the time allotted. Brevity is important even for difficult topics.