



*Openness and
Authenticity
through
Accompaniment:*

*Core Traits and Skills Found in
Effective Small Group Settings*

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Companions on a Journey
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COLLEGE OF
Saint Benedict

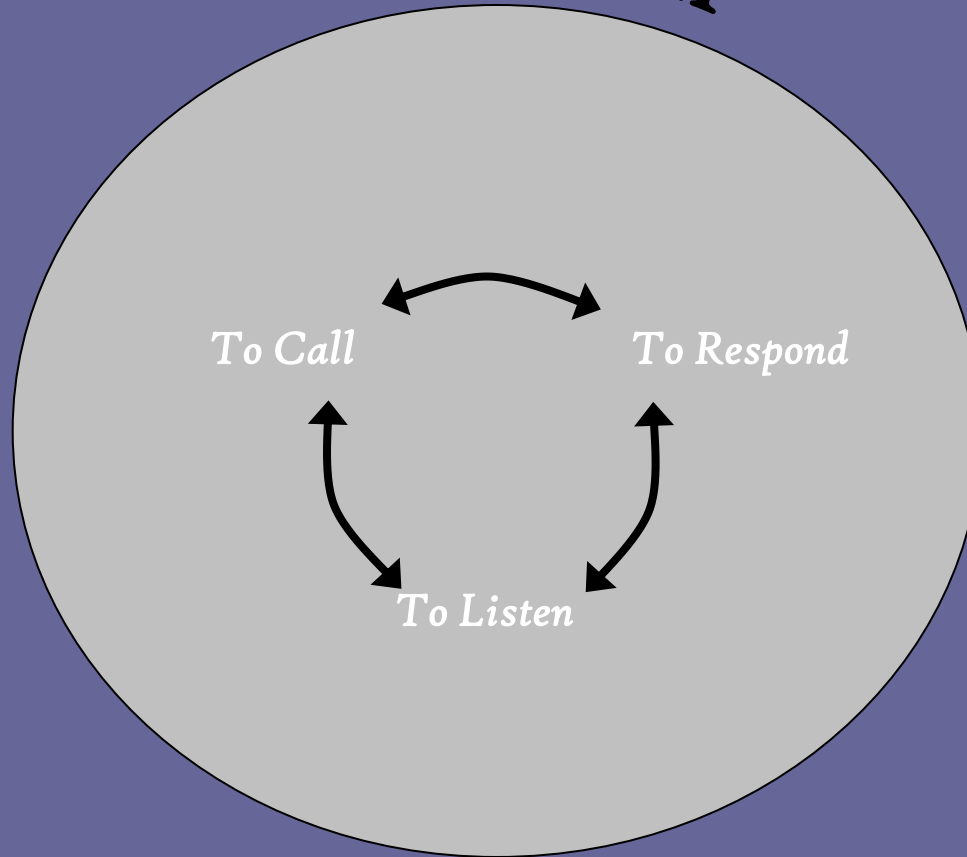
An Experience of Silence

Describe your experience of silence today.

or

Describe your experiences of silence in general.

Vocation



“Vocation” should be a verb, not a noun.

One does not find and have a vocation once and for all
so much as to live a full life that seeks
to enter actively into the process of listening, call and response.

Map for Spiritual Companionship Groups

<u>Time</u>	<u>Movement</u>	<u>Focus</u>	<u>Activity</u>
25 min.	Meal/Check-In	Reconnect to one another	Each person checks-in since the last session
3 min.	Opening Prayer	Create contemplative atmosphere	Varies according to group preferences
3 min.	Intro. of Theme	Help focus the sharing	Presenter may vary
80 min.	Sharing, Listening, Responding	Practice spiritual companionship	Silence/Sharing/ Silence/Responses/ Silence (For each person)
5 min.	Closing Prayer	Close our contemplative experience together	Varies according to group preferences
5 min.	Group Reflection	Prayerfully reflect on together	Use list of reflection of time reflection questions

Skills

- Empathic Listening
- Asking Good Questions
- Focused Sharing
- Discernment

Traits

- Inclusive
- On-going
- Inter-generational
- Experience-based
- Contemplative

Skills

3 Movements of Spiritual Companionship

Listening

5. Empathic listening

4. Attentive listening

3. Selective listening

2. Pretend listening

1. Ignoring

Responding

5. Call to openness

4. Desire to solve

3. The “I” response

2. Automatic
responding

1. Avoiding

Sharing

5. Authenticity

4. I have an agenda

3. My projected image

2. Automatic Sharing

1. Bottle-up

Skills

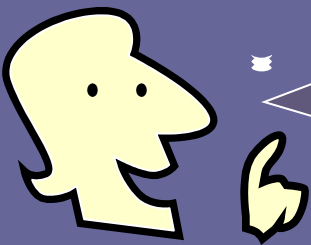
Habits of Discernment

- Sifting through options
- Setting priorities
- Recognizing internal emotional and spiritual experiences
- Decision making – “cutting away”
- Timing and decision making
- Sorting through internal and external voices

Traits

Inclusive—open to all

- Understanding of culture as many facets that “make-up” who we are, our “cultural make-up”
- Attention to various cultural factors
 - Age, gender, class, race/ethnicity, religion, personality, communication styles, education, marital status
- The importance of safety and trust
 - Creating a covenant agreement (Graham Standish)
 - RESPECT Guidelines for communication (Eric Law)
 - Safe Space Guidelines (Interfaith Youth Core)



Practice of Presence: We must choose how we want to be together and commit ourselves to uphold our agreement.

Traits

On-going—dynamic and active exploration

- Draws from our definition of vocation
- Engaging the “big,” complex questions
- Encourages comfort with ambiguity, unknowing
 - Ability to navigate unknowing is a key factor in promoting maturity in faith and social development
 - Parks, Fowler, Kohlberg—movement through stages

Our sophomores recognize,

Just because I have chosen a major does not mean that the rest of my life is now set in place.



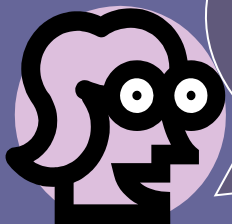
Traits

Inter-generational—adolescents on up

- Draw from students, faculty, staff, monastics
- Exploration of vocation through probing particular commitments
 - The pressing questions emerge again and again
 - Pattern-finding and cyclic learning
 - Modeling of different responses to shared life cycle tasks

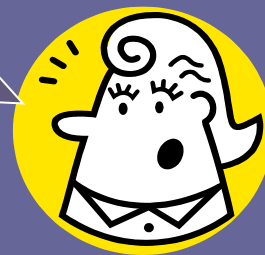
Our older women say,

Our younger women say,



Wow! She's
seventy and
still asking
these
questions!

I am so
impressed by
how articulate
the young
women are.



Traits

Experience-based— “real life” included

- Engaging all of life’s experiences helps participants move beyond dualistic perspectives, e.g. body/spirit, inner/outer, active/contemplative
- Meaning, purpose, sacred in everyday life— “a long look at daily life through the lens of the sacred”
- Meet others where they are: Practice of mutuality



Traits

Contemplative — an open, receptive stance



- Contemplative environment open to everyone
- Hospitality: making room for the “other”
- Openness and receptivity, keys to authenticity

Can you really get a group of strangers together and expect them to share deeply and authentically by the end of one day or within a few sessions?



Answer—yes.

Benefits of Group Spiritual Companionship

- The variety of participants helps me learn more
- Possibility of participants sharing gifts and talents
- Support from more people, e.g. mutual prayer and concern
- Facilitator is a participant, thus mutuality of all participants
- Joint accountability and responsibility
- All are on same basic competency ground; sense of unity
- One person is not always on the spot to respond
- One-to-one companionship is overwhelming for me
- Helps keep me faithful to my prayer life
- Builds strong sense of community
- Helps me see we all have common struggles
- Model could spread to parishes
- Group experience helps to see Christ in others more readily

Questions...

Based on your experiences in your varied settings, in what ways do you see these skills and characteristics appear or not appear on your campuses?

Based on current research trends, how do these skills and characteristics relate to best practices for engaging open and authentic dialogue?