



Sparking stories from lives affected by incest and sexual abuse to be told and heard.

Online Writing Circle Guidelines

1. We each have a unique voice that deserves to be heard and nurtured. We will be hearing our unique voices through the act of writing.
2. We treat each other with respect and compassion, bearing in mind that we each bring different experiences, emotions and challenges to this circle.
3. Everything written in the workshop is confidential and voluntary.
4. While writing within the safe confines of the group may feel therapeutic, this is not a therapy group. Our focus is on finding our voice and articulating our experience through our writing.
5. We treat all work as fiction: when we comment we refer to the writer as “the narrator.”
6. We respond to each other’s writing with **positive comments**. We do not give criticism, make suggestions, ask questions, or comment on our own experiences.

Feedback plays a vital role in creating a supportive and nurturing environment. It contributes to the emotional well-being of both the narrator and the feedback providers while fostering a sense of belonging. It gives the narrator a sense of being heard and understood, which can boost their confidence and motivation to continue sharing. The act of supporting others can also enhance the provider’s own well-being, promoting a sense of empathy and connection within our community. There can be a pull for feedback providers to share experiences of their own, similar to the narrator’s, which can feel like being empathetic. But expounding on one’s own “similar” experience dilutes the focus of the narrator’s story. For this reason, we ask all members to only give feedback and responses specifically about the pieces read aloud.

- When you are listening, notice what stays with you, what resonates with you. That’s what we will be reflecting back to each writer.
- Either speak your reflection or enter it in the chat.
- If a specific reflection doesn’t come to mind simply entering a “Thank you” in the chat is fine.

7. We encourage using a slow pace when reading – this helps the narrator fully experience their voice and gives listeners time to absorb and register what is resonating with them.
8. There will be moments of silence – breathe them in – especially after you’ve read and are waiting for feedback.
9. On rare occasions a session may need to be extended up to 10 minutes due to delays, such as a late start, to give feedback to all readers.

P.S. from Donna

I have found the act of reading my writing aloud to be the most effective way, however momentary, to diminish, muffle or sometimes even silence the voice of the critic in the back of my head that is chanting to me: “don’t read what you wrote because _____(fill in the blank)

- it’s stupid
- it will bore people
- someone’s feelings will be hurt
- it’s not as good as what anyone else here wrote
- they’re going to think you’re weird
- it will upset someone, or
- it’s just stupid

The act of reading out loud mostly drowns out the critic so, come on, read us what you wrote.

Technology Guidelines

These guidelines are essential to maintain a nurturing and safe environment.

1. We ask that you join the circle through a computer or tablet with a microphone or with the use of a headset and avoid using a phone to connect.
2. Please participate in a sound protected space to avoid audio interference (TV’s, radios, pets, etc.), in a space where you are comfortable and there won’t be any interruptions.
3. If a sound interferes in your space – hit “mute” to maintain quality of connection for all.
4. Please enter the session a few minutes early so your sound can be checked and so we can start on time. We will wait no more than 5 minutes after the start time for latecomers.
5. When 7 writers are present, we will limit feedback responses to one minute each, you will hear a chime when your time is up.
6. If you have to miss a session, we will record it and share it with you.
7. Please let us know if you can’t attend a session, need to arrive late or leave early.

