

GUIDELINES

FOR STUDY CIRCLE PARTICIPANTS

Study Circles are highly participatory; they do not look to experts for the final word on an issue, but use expert opinion as only one way to inform ideas and choices.

All viewpoints are taken seriously and each member has an equal opportunity to participate so that the group can capitalize on the unique wisdom and experience of all of its members. The process—democratic discussion among equals—is as important as the content. Study Circles provide comfortable, open settings for everyone to explore public issues without the need to defend their position. People are invited to share their ideas, listen to one another, and learn together thus creating dialogue and not a debate.

The Golden Rules for a Successful Study Circle Experience

- Make a good faith effort to attend all meetings and arrive on time.
- Review the reading materials before each session.
- Listen attentively to one another. Listen with respect.
- Be curious. Maintain an open mind. Suspend judgment as best you can.
- Go for honesty and depth, but don't go on and on.
- One person talks at a time. Please don't interrupt.
- Stick to the issues.
- Question assumptions; look for new insights.
- When your views differ from those of others, disagree without being disagreeable.
- Sharing what we learn about issues outside the circle is encouraged. Personal stories should be kept confidential.
- Help the facilitator and timekeeper stay on track.
- If the scribe makes a mistake or misses an important point, speak up.