

Inclusion:

All adults are welcome who are willing to align with our Healing and Community Principles.

Vital Cycles welcomes all adults who wish to heal from the effects of any trauma, large or small. That trauma may include emotional, physical or sexual trauma. We welcome diversity and include all people regardless of race, religion, sex, sexual orientation or age. We focus on the creation of a supportive environment for those who wish to heal from the effects of trauma as we seek to lessen pain and fill our lives with more joy. Because of the wide variety of reporting requirements for certain forms of abuse, groups focusing on healing from childhood abuse are limited to legal adults.

Groups may, given their collective wisdom choose a primary focus for a specific trauma, such as emotional neglect, sexual abuse, physical abuse, witness of violence or other traumas (see the website for the full range of traumas). These groups may choose to self-define because of a desire to create a group that focuses in depth on specific issues in an environment of mutual understanding.

We know that having been traumatized can make being in a community challenging for all of us. The Community Principle focuses on establishing safe, healing environments for the greatest number of trauma survivors.

Example 1: The Birmingham Alabama group did not think about a specific gender restriction when they founded a group with a focus on childhood sexual abuse, but all of the founders were women, and the group became comfortable in its ability to share about childhood sexual abuse freely and openly. After three months of existence, Joey showed up. At first, the group was uncomfortable, but recognized quickly that Joey's goals for being there were the same as theirs, and he rapidly became a "regular" at the group. The group chose to solidify its gender mix in its safety guidelines.

Example 2: The Sunday afternoon Singapore meeting chose to define a focus on individuals who had sustained physical abuse in their childhoods. In addition, the members chose to create a closed meeting, except for the first Sunday in each month, when those who were supporting members of the group in their healing process could also attend.

Example 3: After Jill had a stroke, she was concerned about her ability to function as part of her Vital Cycles Group. When she was able to return, the group continued to provide her with readings that were shared aloud. She read aloud slowly, but over time, her speech and speed improved. She was grateful for the compassionate acceptance of her home group!

Healing Environment:

Each group is responsible for adopting and gently implementing safety guidelines that are relevant to the group's focus and are consistent with our Community Principles.

Each Vital Cycles group, whether it is a support group or a service group, shares responsibility for creating, defining and maintaining its own healing environment. The collective wisdom of the group plays a critical role in creating and shaping that sense of safety. When gently but firmly stated, these safety guidelines create safe boundaries for individuals to share.

Sample safety guidelines are posted on the Vital Cycles website, www.vitalcycles.org and can be either directly applied by a group, adapted, or used as a model for the development of group-specific safety guidelines. Some issues to explore in creating an environment of clarity and safety include:

- Establishing clear start, stop and break times for the group
- Establishing cross-talk or no crosstalk formats for the group (many groups ask that the sharing of an individual be uninterrupted by others and, at its conclusion, be embraced as a complete thought by the group. Comments and support can be provided on an individual basis at the break or after the group ends. Other groups may choose to sustain crosstalk, with appropriate boundaries established.

In addition, part of creating a safe and healthy healing environment is creating a simple and effective business structure for the conduct of business. See the Equality Principle for more information on this. Regular conduct of business meetings can help keep the focus of the regular meeting on healing matters only.

Part of any healthy group is the opportunity to reach out to support the healing of others. Groups can welcome newcomers in any number of ways that seek to provide comfort and reassurance to newcomers as they arrive at the group. Trust in the strength of the individual Vital Cycles group can come over time as confidentiality is respected, boundaries are preserved and a healing environment is created. We are safe today, and with that knowledge we learn that the trauma is in the past.

We strive to create environments that are safe and healing. Thus, individual groups can choose to exclude those who do not strive to align with our healing and community principles. In addition, in our desire to create and maintain a healing environment individual groups may apply guidelines to create and enhance a sense of appropriate safety.

Example 1: The Tuesday Night Mexico City meeting was faced with a challenge of behavior when a member of the group, at a social event that was an anniversary party for the group, rather abruptly kissed another member on the mouth. The woman discussed it with the event planners, and at the next business meeting, the actions of Jim were reviewed. After careful discussion,

Jim was invited to discuss his behavior at the next business meeting, and was also asked to not attend that Vital Cycles meeting during the interim.

Example 2: The Wednesday Night Billings Montana meeting developed a practice of establishing a “newcomer mentor” for newcomers who arrived at the meeting. The Mentor would gently approach the newcomer during the break time, welcome them, and ask if they had any questions or concerns. The Group felt that this acknowledged the courage of the newcomer in showing up, and sought to create a level of comfort for the individual to return.

Example 3: The Sunday afternoon Houston meeting maintains a small supply of “You Are Not Alone” medallions that they provide to newcomers. In addition, annual anniversaries are celebrated with other medallions.

Confidentiality:

Trust is critical in our healing environments. We only share a member's identity and other personal information with that person's permission.

Respecting each person's right to privacy is critical to the creation and maintenance of a healthy and healing environment. For many of us, our childhood trust was violated by the effects of trauma, and thus confidentiality is paramount in our adult life. For all of us, we can heal more effectively when we make the choice who finds out about our histories, and when that happens. Personal information, such as our last names, telephone numbers, email addresses, mailing addresses, workplace or occupation must remain private unless given the permission to share by the individual in question.

The establishment of confidentiality does not come at the cost of appropriate healing dialogue. It can be helpful to talk to a peer/mentor or a therapist about the contents of a meeting, but the identity of the individual members of that group should never be revealed.

Personal safety or the safety and integrity of the group and its healing environment can, on rare occasions, be cause for breaking confidentiality. There may be times that the actions or activities of an individual may bear discussion at a business meeting or a called moment of collective wisdom. However, this should be done with as much care and respect as possible.

Example 1: In listening to the powerful sharing of Rick in her last Vital Cycles meeting, Sue came to some valuable and profound insights that support her own healing journey. In her next therapy session, Sue discusses those insights; referencing Rick's sharing with her therapist, but does not reveal Rick's name or any other identifying information. The point, after all, is the power of the information and insight presented in the sharing.

Example 2: In a group, a member embarks upon behavior that is persistently and consistently destructive to the safety of the meeting. He calls phone numbers that have been released to him in confidentiality, and speaks with spouses about the sharing of the individual in the group. In the next business meeting, the actions of that individual are discussed, and a course of action to review the behavior with the individual is developed. The group concludes that either the individual needs to modify his behavior or be told to not attend. While this is a difficult decision, the group reflects that the decision sustains its sense of safety.

Example 3: Pierre sees a newcomer who has just started attending his home Vital Cycles meeting, and the newcomer is standing with what appears to be a group of the newcomer's co-workers as they head out for lunch. Pierre greets the newcomer, but never gives any hints about knowing him from Vital Cycles.

Inner Wisdom:

We honor the right of all people to draw ideas, support and guidance from whatever practices, beliefs and sources they choose. Thus, in our groups we respect everyone's way of defining inner wisdom for themselves.

Vital Cycles welcomes many different beliefs regarding religion and spirituality as a key part of the foundation of the program. Thus, Vital Cycles credits each individual with the personal autonomy to define their inner wisdom and recognizes the inherent wisdom in all people regardless of their belief structure. To that end, Vital Cycles members neither proselytize our own beliefs nor attack the beliefs of others. All belief structures are equal.

In our process of healing from the effects of trauma, it may be necessary for some of us to share in a way that speaks to current or past belief structures. Such sharing supports a healing process so long as it neither promotes nor attacks the specific belief structures of each other. Vital Cycles strives for tolerance of belief structures that may be at variances. We ask that members be gently aware of the potential for variances in the group and strive to respect not only their own beliefs but the beliefs of others.

Example 1: Fernanda has recently found a rich and supportive religious community that has embraced her and has given her a venue for community involvement. She shares at a Vital Cycles group about the importance of that community to her, the value of feeling part of the group and the value of finding and enhancing her understanding of her personal theology. However, in her sharing, she avoids “promoting” that new community to others in the group.

Example 2: Bill is an atheist, a considered position developed after years of theological exploration. He shares, from time to time, about the rigidity of the theological beliefs with which he is raised, but in his sharing, avoids attacking the beliefs of others.

Example 3: Pedro has become a fervent member of a well-defined religious community. He has started to speak with Vital Cycles members at break about the possibility of their attending his new religious community. In addition, in his sharing, he invites other members to join him, and presses the opportunity upon them. After considered discussion, the Vital Cycles group discusses with Pedro the nature of the violation of boundaries and asks him to cease proselytizing.

Example 4: Sara found great strength in the religious beliefs that she was trained in her youth, and continues to find them a bulwark of strength. As she reflects upon the concepts of Inner Wisdom, she realizes that she has routinely discounted the beliefs of others in her group, in an unconscious desire to maintain her loyalty to one of the few positive attributes of her childhood history. As she focuses on this insight, she determines to be less judgmental of others in the group.

Example 5: Aiko was raised in what he came to believe was a restrictive religious environment in his childhood. He began to speak about his perceptions at his Vital Cycles group, but was careful to phrase his commentary about his childhood religion in the first-person singular, so that he would not offend others in the group who might have different belief structures. He found that focusing on the “first-person singular” actually facilitated his own clarity of thought and insight.

Equality:

All members share the opportunity for contribution to the identity and direction of their groups.

Starting and maintaining a group so that it sustains a healthy healing environment is a rich opportunity and responsibility. Vital Cycles encourages all members to contribute to shaping the identity and character of the groups they attend, including support groups and service groups. The members of a group become members simply by attending and striving to align with the Healing and Community Principles of Vital Cycles.

The collective wisdom of the group can be facilitated by regular business meetings (usually monthly), guided by the Community Principles. The establishment and maintenance of these regular business meetings to discuss and review the business matters at hand supports the sustaining of a healthy and safe group; these meetings allow an opportunity for Vital Cycles members to participate in shaping business decisions for the group. Although the specifics of business structure and the conduct of the business meeting are left to the collective wisdom of the individual group, which sustains autonomy over its actions, Vital Cycles recommends:

1. The development of a regular schedule for business meetings.
2. Establishment of a consistent format for the group. This may include the format of readings and time-structure for the group, and may also include a monthly format for the group as well.
3. Announcing the business meeting for several meetings prior to the date
4. Fair and equal voting to ensure that each member, without exception, has one equal vote and voice during the vote. In this way we recognize the equal value of all member votes. For example, the vote of a “newcomer” is as valued and valid as the vote of an “old timer”.
5. The establishment of “Best practices” for each, including the solicitation of minority opinions and the development of group decisions.
6. Most groups use a majority vote for decisions, but groups may also choose to use consensus (all feel good enough about the decision), or a certain percentage of votes, to make decisions.
7. The implementation of brainstorming tools and techniques that support the development of creative ideas quickly.
8. The definition of standing roles, such as:
 - Facilitator who facilitates business meetings
 - Treasurer who gathers donations, pays rent and sends contributions to Vital Cycles
 - Secretary who takes notes during business meetings
 - Literature person who downloads and prints Vital Cycles literature for the meeting
 - Space facilitator, who locates space for the group and for workshops, may negotiate rent and other aspects of the relationship with the space provider and may make specific accommodations for the group’s needs when the group meets.
9. In addition, the group may wish to establish term limits for each role, thus allowing responsibilities to be rotated and to provide everyone with the opportunity to “grow into service.”
10. The delegation of some tasks and responsibilities to subcommittees. Such groups would be empowered to move more quickly and efficiently to take action, while still reporting

back to the business meeting and the group as a whole. Such subcommittees may facilitate certain tasks, such as planning workshops and social events, developing group formats, selecting literature, etc.

11. The conduct of the business meeting should support the timely sharing of all individuals, including old-timers and newcomers, without requiring sharing.
12. Each member of the group has but one vote. Being elected to a volunteer service role does not confer any power or greater voice in decision-making.
13. Groups may delegate decision-making regarding specific tasks to certain roles for greater ease and speed of action.
14. Groups can determine whether they will use proxy voting, absentee voting or telephone call-in voting for certain situations.
15. In addition, groups may wish to create a basis for an impromptu “Healing Environment” meeting called in the moment to deal with an immediate circumstance.

Example 1: After three weeks of announcements, the Tuesday Night Phoenix group holds its business meeting. Joey, the group chair for the year, has prepared a preliminary agenda, and the group considers additional agenda items. Part of the agenda is to commit to a workshop that focuses on journaling, and a brainstorming session is sustained to discuss the probable content of the workshop. A subcommittee is created that is given the responsibility for determining a location and place and will continue to design the workshop. The subcommittee will report back at the next business meeting, which will be held on the next second Tuesday of the month.

Example 2: The founders of the Tuesday Night group in Lagos, Nigeria felt strongly about creating a group that chose to restrict membership to those who had experienced war crimes. Over time, the membership chose to reconsider this boundary, and in a series of business meetings, the group chose to place aside that boundary, thus accepting anyone who had sustained any violent trauma.

Example 3: During a meeting, a newcomer shares about currently physically abusing a child. David, feeling uncomfortable with the sharing, as it violates a core Community Principle, calls for a “Healing Environment Meeting” to be held immediately following the break. During that meeting, David speaks to his concerns, and all others who wish to are asked to speak as well. At the end of the “Healing Environment Meeting”, the group agrees to ask the newcomer to not return.

Flexibility:

Support groups and service groups have the freedom and responsibility to create and shape their healing environments as they wish, so long as they align with the Healing and Community Principles of Vital Cycles.

Vital Cycles promotes the freedom of choice of format and content so long as the activities remain consistent with Vital Cycles Healing and Community Principles. That freedom also indicates the responsibility to shape the development of a healing environment that remains vibrant, growing and active. The flexibility to experiment with new ideas and approaches allows each group to develop new best practices!

Individual Vital Cycles groups can develop their own group format. This may define a “no crosstalk/sharing” format, or may include a variety of formats. (“No crosstalk” means that, as an individual shares during the group meeting, other participants refrain from commenting or giving advice to the individual.) Some groups have found that their healing process is enhanced by “art night”, “play night” or “psychodrama night”. Some groups may choose to sponsor other activities, such as social events, retreats, workshops or other activities.

Service groups may form in response to the desire of individuals and/or groups to undertake activities and events. This may include a website, newsletter, telephone information line, email information chain, workshops, or retreats. These service groups respond to the needs of their members, and do not represent the individual groups as an aggregate entity with the Vital Cycles Board

In all of these matters, Vital Cycles encourages you to bring all of your creativity, skills, passion and talent as you sponsor Vital Cycles healing activities.

Example 1: After three years, there were three very active Vital Cycle groups meeting in central New York. After some discussion, Joey began to organize a local service group that had participants and individuals from each group. This service group created a mission of taking on healing activities that could best be sustained with collective resources, including workshops, an annual social night and an annual retreat. The quarterly meetings also became a resource for sharing group “best practices”. Over time, this group’s treasury allowed it to sponsor rent for new Vital Cycles groups until they could accumulate sufficient membership to pay their own way. In addition, the service group was able, via fundraising activities, to sponsor several “scholarships” to a nearby Vital Cycles retreat.

Example 2: After returning from a weekend healing retreat, Jill spoke to her Friday night group about the success of psychodrama, bringing with her the worksheet that had been used. The group decided to dedicate the “fifth Friday” to psychodrama instead of having an open format discussion.

Simplicity:

In order to focus our energies on the purpose of Vital Cycles we keep decision-making, organizational structure, policies and procedures clear and simple.

Our goal is to experience more joy and less pain by healing from the effects of trauma. In order to maintain our focus, we strive to keep the business structures of our groups and other Vital Cycles activities and events as simple as possible.

It can be easy to create a labyrinth of rules and regulations as a device for creating a sense of personal and organizational safety for the conduct of the group, business meetings and service groups. As groups create and sustain themselves over time, care can be taken to focus on “right-sizing” the decision-making process and organizational structure. Regular business meetings and careful and prudent re-evaluation of the group’s structure can sustain organic change and growth over time. Thus we have more time and energy to focus on healing. This approach also makes it easier for volunteers to make a difference and enjoy making contributions of time and money. We recommend using *the simplest process and the most minimal set of rules* to enable a healing environment.

Example 1: At the third business meeting of the Berlin, Germany Vital Cycles meeting, David suggested using Roger’s Rules of Order to run the meeting. As an alternative, Jill suggested using some simple group polling techniques that would guarantee that everyone would have a voice, and that everyone would have a single vote. After discussion, the group agreed to the simpler group process, but remained open to the use of more complex structures if the group grows. Over time, the group became comfortable with developing a “collective wisdom” and saved voting for those issues that were complex, or for decisions regarding the group’s treasury.

Example 2: At the founding meeting of the Willow Grove meeting, the members decided to create a threshold of “prudent reserve” for the group of \$50.00. Money in excess of that was to be distributed on a percentage basis to the Vital Cycles Global Service Group, with the balance to be used to sponsor scholarships to a Vital Cycles retreat.

Example 3: At first, the Monday evening Wilmington Sao Paulo, Brasil group established just three service roles, a facilitator, a treasurer and a secretary. Over time, the group became increasingly committed to sponsoring workshops that occurred on different nights than the group, so they chose to create an “events coordinator” position to help organize the workshops.

Transparency:

We build trust within our community by openly sharing all support group and service group information.

Vital Cycles continues operational clarity and develops trust by sharing all information about the business decisions of the group and service groups. We make information reasonably available to our members and in appropriate public outlets. However, the most closely held information within Vital Cycles is the personal information about individual members.

Example 1: Although the notes were brief, and focused mostly on the issue of how to distribute the group's treasury, Maria circulated the one-page meeting minutes to all that were comfortable releasing their email addresses. She carried a hardcopy to the group for anyone who wished to review it at break for two weeks.

Example 2: After discussion, the Bristol, England Group decided that their group format had some interesting variations from the original format that the group's founders pulled from the Vital Cycles website; they had generated an "art night" that provided a once/month alternative to their traditional sharing format. Jane forwarded the format to the Vital Cycles website information email, and was pleased to see their format posted on the site as an alternative choice several weeks later.

Example 3: The Vital Cycles Board, which is a service group, routinely publishes its meeting minutes, annual financial statement, and bylaws on the Vital Cycles website. These documents can be printed and reviewed by any interested party.

Outreach:

Vital Cycles members can speak to their own personal healing experience as a member, but cannot speak for the Vital Cycles Community as a whole. The Board of Trustees provides a spokesperson who can speak on behalf of the Board.

As we continue our healing, some of us may wish to reach out by sharing our story with others via writing, interviews and other communications media. Sharing our stories can be empowering and healing as we learn to speak with honesty and openness about our process of healing. As we do so, we need to remain mindful of the need to retain the confidentiality of other Vital Cycles members.

Most people on Earth have endured trauma that has left painful long term effects. Every person who experiences healing helps make the world a better place. We can offer Vital Cycles knowledge and tools to those who want it. However, we only offer gently, knowing that all individuals must decide for themselves when and if they are ready for healing. We cannot predict how Vital Cycles may work for others. We can only share our successful healing, and that we've seen that others have been healing (keeping confidentiality in mind).

Members, groups and service groups may reach out to the larger community via a rich variety of communication tools, including websites, direct mailings, public service announcements on radio, television and print media, fliers and word-of-mouth. Outreach goes hand-in-hand with transparency as we are clear and open about what Vital Cycles is about and how others can participate.

Example 1: The Paris, France Vital Cycles group was experiencing great growth, but knew that there were others in their community who could benefit from knowing about the existence of Vital Cycles. After a business meeting that used brainstorming tools to array a range of choices, the group decided to create a subcommittee that assembled a simple one-page flier that could be mailed to therapists and counselors in their geographic region. As word of the program expanded, the group grew, and eventually was able to nurture two new groups on different nights!

Example 2: Randy had assembled a unique combination of therapists, including a trauma therapist, a somatic worker and an acupuncturist to support his process of healing from childhood sexual abuse. His somatic practitioner interviewed Randy. The interview was taped and replayed on a local educational radio program. Randy shared freely about his process of healing, and referenced Vital Cycles as a core part of his program, keeping the focus on his own process of healing and being careful to protect the confidentiality of others in his home group. Randy wanted people to understand the power of peer support as he processed traumatic memories, so he spoke about the value of attending his local Vital Cycles meeting regularly to support those goals.

Independence:

Vital Cycles as a whole engages exclusively in Vital Cycles activities. All events that service groups co-sponsor with outside organizations, as well as contributions that are accepted must further our purpose and align with our principles.

The Purpose of Vital Cycles is to empower those who seek joy in living while healing the emotional impact of trauma. Vital Cycles groups, activities and events gratefully welcome contributions of time, energy and finances when those contributions enhance our purpose without compromising our Healing and Community Principles.

Service groups may choose to co-sponsor events and activities with other organizations when those events and activities support the Purpose of Vital Cycles. Each group or service group retains autonomy on these issues so long as they remain in alignment with the Healing and Community Principles.

This focused, flexibility enables Vital Cycles to help more people, and at the same time keep it focused clearly on our Purpose without conflict of interest.

- Example 1:** Sue has been asked to seek a new home for her group, and has discovered that a local church provides space for various twelve-step groups for free, so long as the individual group maintains the space by tidying up after the meeting. The group accepts the offer of free space, and determines that the money previously spent for rent can be used to sponsor a workshop once a quarter.
- Example 2:** Ellen and her group have arranged for a mass mailing of information about Vital Cycles to the therapeutic community in their region. The cost of the fliers, when printed in color, is high, and the printer has offered to print the fliers at cost if the group is willing to accept a tagline at the bottom of the flier announcing the printer's charity. The printer's goals don't seem to align with the Vital Cycles principles so Ellen declines and the group agrees to modify the design to read well in black and white, thus reducing the cost to the parameters that the group can afford.
- Example 3:** The Switzerland Service Group had a significant number of referrals from the Bern Rape Crisis Center. After several conversations, the two organizations collaborated on a Trauma Healing Day. Vital Cycles leaders led several groups onsite, and provided the opportunity for individuals to explore Vital Cycle's healing principles.
- Example 4:** The Southern Florida Service Group co-sponsored a series of workshops with the Miami Family Healing Center. Those interactive workshops focused on the dynamics of healing from the effects of trauma, and were led by experienced Vital Cycles members. The day closed with an open Vital Cycles meeting for those that chose to attend. That led, over time, to the Miami Family Healing Center offering space for a permanent Vital Cycles group.

Ideation:

The generous and compassionate exchange of ideas infuses our healing with possibilities. We offer ideas to others only when they want them, knowing they will choose what they will do.

The group process of any Vital Cycles group can generate enormous collective wisdom, energy, insight and creativity. We seek to find ways to build on these rich resources by supporting the free and open sharing of ideas, approaches, and thoughts in our business and planning meetings. We seek to create group processes that promote the giving and receiving of ideas, reflecting the flexibility of the group as it strives to develop and refine “best practices.” This may be challenging at first, as many of us are used to situations that thwarted free communication and creativity. The act of sharing freely can be healing. As we develop and refine our individual skills in our groups and Vital Cycles activities and events, we become increasingly confident in the ability of our inner wisdom to guide us in sharing our creativity.

The sharing of ideas can also be on a personal level as our own healing journey provides us with ideas that we believe may be of personal value to others. However, we offer ideas to others with great care, recognizing that each individual chooses to shape a healing process based on that individual’s own inner wisdom. There is a great difference between giving advice and offering ideas for others to take if they like. Offering ideas is much gentler and respectful. Yet even offering ideas should only be done if the person expresses openness to hearing them.

Example 1: The Buenos Aires group decided to develop a workshop format that would allow them to do deep healing together once a month. Those interested gathered together and used some “Ideation Guidelines” from the Vital Cycles website. Juan facilitated an ideation discussion in which everyone could propose whatever topic and format they wished. During that hour, individuals shared ideas from experiences in other groups, in retreats, and with their individual therapists. Maria wrote down every idea. At the end of the hour, they had filled their writing board with ideas! After voting to find out which were the favorite topics the group chose the top three voted topics, one for each of the following workshops. Because of the freedom of the discussion, individuals felt free to speak to their feelings and thoughts, and filling the volunteer roles needed became a very easy and even joyful task!

As a byproduct of their experience, Juan reviewed the brainstorming guidelines and proposed some changes, emailing them into the Vital Cycles website. Several weeks later, he was delighted to see his revised guidelines posted on the website, which could be downloaded by any other Vital Cycles group!

Example 2: During Jane’s sharing, Jill realized that she might be able to use some of Jane’s ideas to help her own healing. At break, Jill asked Jane if she would share more information. Jane shared her experience and the various ideas she

used without ever giving advice. Jane thanked her, and the two began a discussion that was deeply valuable to both of them about healing tools and techniques.

Appreciation:

We celebrate each other's strengths, vulnerabilities and contributions that make our community richer and more vibrant.

We learn to appreciate ourselves and others in Vital Cycles by celebrating each other's successes and by openly acknowledging our vulnerabilities. For some of us, this may be challenging at first, because we may not be used to viewing appreciation and vulnerability as powerful elements in healing. As we heal, we understand how much they help us. Celebrating each individual's contributions creates a rich foundation of confidence and honesty that strengthen our ability to heal.

To make the most effective healing environment we respectfully share our individual strengths. We strive to reach out to newcomers, seeking to create a safe place for personal exploration and healing. We volunteer, as we are able, finding ways to contribute the best of what we have to give. The more we heal, the more easily we can share openly about trauma and the related pain and challenges. The more openly we can share, the more easily we can heal.

We bring our whole selves to the community, including our unique knowledge, experience and insights. We may have special or unique talents that we can contribute, we may have time, and we may have the ability to contribute financially. Together, we are stronger, wiser and more resourceful.

Example 1: Although a relative “newcomer” to the local Vital Cycles group, Natisha discovered that the group was planning a social event. As the business meeting discussed the potential activities, Natisha offered to coordinate a “talent evening,” acting as MC and as a coordinator. She used ideas from her years as a camp counselor. The evening was a great success as Natisha encouraged more and more folks to stand up and sing, dance, or play, some of them for the first time in years. The group decided to make “talent night” a key part of what became an annual social event for the group.

Example 2: After a discussion about celebration of healing at a business meeting, the Sydney Saturday Night Vital Cycles meeting decided to set aside one meeting a year to celebrate their healing successes. This special anniversary meeting became a time for individuals to acknowledge the healing they had sustained in the previous year. The group made a decision to allow applause after each sharing of healing success. They were all thrilled and felt encouraged to continue healing and celebrating!