

## 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](http://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.