

Group Works:

A Pattern Language for Bringing Life to Meetings and Other Gatherings

Why is it that some meetings and group sessions bring life to your soul, while others leave you wishing you'd never stepped in the room? What happens at the best ones, that makes them productive, fulfilling, and sometimes even magic? More than 50 facilitators and others worked collaboratively over three years to birth this expression of the core wisdom at the heart of successful group meetings.


The new deck *Group Works: A Pattern Language for Bringing Life to Meetings and Other Gatherings* contains 91 cards naming what skilled facilitators do over and over again to make things work. The content is more specific than values, and less specific than tips and techniques, cutting across existing methodologies with a designer's eye to capture patterns that repeat. The deck can be used to plan sessions, reflect on and debrief from them, provide guidance mid-stride, and share responsibility for making the process go well. It has the potential to provide a common reference point for practitioners coming from wildly different approaches, and to serve as a framework and learning tool for those studying the field.

The deck consists of 91 full-colour cards (plus a few blanks to add your own patterns), a five-panel explanatory category/legend card, and an accompanying booklet offering the purpose and history of the project and suggesting uses for the cards in group process work.



Each card is laid out as follows:

Holding Space



Be fully present, aware of what's happening in the whole gathering right now—physically, energetically, emotionally, and intellectually. Open and hold the psychological and spiritual space to provide a steady centre and container. Calmly maintain trust, safety, and focus.

related: Appropriate Boundaries
~ Balance Process and Content ~ Dwell with Emotions
~ Embrace Dissonance and Difference
~ Opening and Welcome ~ Presence
~ Priority Focus

Pattern Title: An evocative name to express the concept.

Pattern Image: A visual depiction either literal or metaphorical.

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Pattern "Heart": Up to 50 words of text expressing the core of that pattern, mainly the What and Why of it.

Category Icon: A symbol and colour designating which of nine categories this pattern has been primarily assigned to.

Related Patterns: Up to seven other patterns that are most closely related to or most useful to consult when considering how to enact this pattern. Part of the web that makes this whole thing a pattern language.

These cards have been created by a group of volunteers (the Group Pattern Language Project) as a public service and are being gifted into the commons. The deck is yours for free download and for sale as a lovely printed package; a phone app is also under development. Get your own copy, join our learning community, give us feedback, and more. See www.groupworksdeck.org for more information.

