

Resilience 101

Leader Guide

A Resource From:

**RESILIENT
LEADERS
PROJECT**



The
Seattle
School
OF THEOLOGY
& PSYCHOLOGY

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Introduction

Welcome to the Leader Guide for Resilience 101! The video series that accompanies this guide is available on YouTube and Vimeo - we hope it's a useful resource to you.

Find the series videos here:

Vimeo: <https://vimeo.com/showcase/8864515>

YouTube: <https://bit.ly/3Gk9Fee>

We made the video series in response to requests from alumni of our 7-month Certificate in Resilient Service who wanted to share their learnings with their congregations, campuses, and communities. We also heard that a Leader Guide to facilitate conversations around those topics would be beneficial to their guiding others through the next steps of their resilience journeys. We hope it is useful for you and your communities, as well.



Grace and peace,

Kate Rae Davis
Director of Resilient Leaders Project

Using This Guide

This guide is designed for leaders of groups to use as an accompaniment to the Resilience 101 video series. The series is available on YouTube and Vimeo.

Find the series videos here:

Vimeo: <https://vimeo.com/showcase/8864515>

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This guide includes a recommended schedule and discussion topics for engaging the series as a group. Both the timing and the topics are **suggestions**; you know your group, culture, and context better than we do. We offer this guide as a starting point for you to think through the group experience, and know you may need to modify any (or many!) parts. That's okay! The suggestions here aren't the only right way to lead a group through this material.

The guide is structured for **groups to watch the videos together and then discuss immediately following**. Within the group, each person has the opportunity to articulate what they learned and how that learning will apply in their lives going forward. Hearing others' reflection often helps our own, both through finding language for shared experiences and in articulating what's different between experiences.

Discussion topics are likely to be something you want to modify, and you are welcome to do so! You should determine what feels like an appropriate and comfortable amount of sharing for your group, which will entail finding a balance of feeling “safe enough” to share, but also “vulnerable enough” to grow. A couple of the major factors will be group size, familiarity, format, and intentions — more on that in Group Structure, Schedule & Materials, below.

Leaders

I Role of the Leader

As a leader, you play a significant role in cultivating transformation within your group. Being entrusted with leadership should be held with humility and care. While the course is designed to teach a centering prayer practice in an independent, self-paced way, we know that transformation occurs more deeply through relationships, which require a leader who can provide a safe space, direction, and affirmation. Hurt and healing both occur through relationships.

Your role as leader for this group is not one of teacher or prayer expert, but of a gentle guide who desires goodness for each group member. As you encourage others to share honestly about their spiritual practice, keep in mind that sharing spiritual experiences may be new for some members; this may be an area of their lives that has not been engaged, or not been engaged kindly. Our assumption is that you have done your personal work and are able to attune well to others both individually and within a group. You should find yourself listening more than speaking, and asking curious questions more than educating. There may be those in your group who need spiritual engagement beyond your time together — encouraging next steps beyond the group time may be a necessary part of your role.

I Essential Functions of a Leader

There are three essential functions of a leader of any group:

- **Hold time boundaries:** An underestimated component of what makes groups feel safe and enjoyable is starting and ending on time. It demonstrates trustworthiness by signaling to members that you will hold to the commitments you've stated and that you'll honor those commitments by respecting their time. This is true both for the start and end times of the entire session and for the sharing time allotted to each member.
- **Help everyone stay on track:** What is the intent of the group? Conversations should support that intent. A likely intention of group members may be to develop a regular practice of centering prayer, in which case a conversational tangent might need to be paused and redirected. That can feel uncomfortable, but cultivates trustworthiness and honors the intent people had of joining, ultimately leading to a better group experience. However, perhaps the goal is simply to get to know one another — in which case some conversational drift may be welcome. Determining when a conversation needs intervention to get back on track (or even determining what “the track” is and where it's going) will take some thoughtfulness on your part.
- **Facilitate logistics:** There are some tasks that just need to be done in order for a group to gather. These include deciding on start and end times, setting the location and sharing the address (if meeting onsite) or deciding the platform and sharing the link (if virtual), and (if on-site) coordinating hospitality like drinks or light snacks. Fulfilling these tasks, or coordinating who will be doing so, is an important part of gathering a group.

Groups

The pace, structure, and topics for your groups will be influenced by:

Size: Groups of 4-6 tend to feel safe and allow for more open sharing, and more depth of sharing, as the time is split between just a few people. Groups of 7-11 mean that each person gets less time to share. Groups of 12 or more begin to feel large, which may limit people's willingness to share deeply. This guide was written for small groups; we recommend no more than 8 (including the leader).

Familiarity: or how well group members already know one another. If this is their first experience together, or if there's a new member, you may want to do some additional sessions on "group set up" matters. If they all know each other well, some of our suggestions may be unnecessary.

Format: meeting on-site or virtually will have distinct needs and likely different openness to sharing.

Intention and desires of group members: Perhaps they're new to prayer and are looking for guidance in this (admittedly strange) practice. Perhaps they are mostly looking to get to know new people. Perhaps they're hoping centering prayer will help them with a major life decision or circumstance.

Once you've identified some likely intentions, read this guide alongside those intentions— what will help towards those intentions? What needs to be modified? What components might detract, and may need to be bypassed? Use this guide as a starting point to create the course plan that's appropriate to your group.

We recommend:

- Scheduling 4-5 meetings at the beginning of the course, or before beginning — enough to work through all the course material together.
- Choosing a regular day/time, whether weekly, every other week, or monthly.
- Each meeting lasts 1.5-2 hours.
- Sticking to the rhythm to create a sense of consistency and familiarity.

Group members shouldn't need any materials, though they may want to bring a journal or notebook for personal reflection.

Virtual Groups: Tips & Best Practices

For those of you meeting remotely, here are some tips for how to ground yourself and be present to online learning and meeting as a group.

- **Create a ritual for entering your virtual space.** When we are in person, the act of entering the room can be considered a ritual. It can be as simple as a phrase that names you are now all together in a sacred space. This could also be the lighting of a candle or a welcome to everyone with a breathing or centering exercise.
- **Expect, name, and allow for technology failures.** Internet connections fail, technology gremlins strike when least expected. This may be hard and grace will be needed.
- **Greet each participant by name and do so often.** There is something very grounding by being called by name online. It also helps to alleviate any confusion as to who you are talking to.
- **Set your intention to co-regulate virtually.** Allow your 'thinking' brain to do what your 'body' brain does naturally in person. Be mindful that our thinking brains have to make up for what our physical bodies might lose virtually.
- **Ask your group to visually (not virtually) raise their hand.** This gives you a visual cue that can be helpful.
- **Use language even more.** Our bodies' nonverbal ways of communicating do not all transfer to online work. We might find that we need to use more words (and intention) to convey what our bodies would normally do without us having to think about it. Be intentional with your body language.
- **Go slow (and then slower still).** There seems to be a need for longer pauses virtually. Silence can be drawn out even longer in this space.
- **Name and tend to fatigue.** Going virtual tends to make people wearier. Allow for playfulness and lightness in the space.

Week 1

Already Resilient

We suggest that your first week together be used to set the stage for the series, establish expectations, and allow group members to get to know one another.

Keep a realistic and steady pace for your group. 90-120 minutes is the suggested timeframe for group meetings, whether you are meeting in-person or virtual. This first meeting is crucial for you to model the time constraints you want others to honor moving forward. Begin on time, regardless of how many are in attendance, and end on time. If possible, put an overview of the meeting on a whiteboard or the screen so everyone knows what's happening now and next.

Greet each participant as they arrive (by name, preferably). If meeting in person, provide name tags to put people at ease in terms of trying to remember names. A virtual format should allow each person to add their name to their online profile.

Overview, based on a 90-minute meeting:

- Welcome & Introductions (30 min)
- Logistics (5 min)
- Group Rules (25 min)
- Group Discussion (20 min)
- Preparing for Next Time & Questions (10 min)

Welcome & Introductions (30 min)

Begin with introductions: share the format for introductions (name and what drew them to the group), then introduce yourself first. Keep your introduction simple, and model sharing concisely and authentically. Pace yourself so each group member has sufficient time to introduce themselves and share what brought them to this series.

Logistics (5 min)

- Share the link to the video series with everyone so they can refer to it later, if desired. Review the meeting dates and times.
- Overview the general outline of the series

Group Covenant (25 min)

You can ask people what they would need to feel safe, or bring a set from your experience or that is familiar to them (as may be the case in a church small group). We suggest commitments to honor one another's:

- **Time** by arriving and starting on time, ending on time, and notifying someone if absence is necessary.
- **Respect** in what we say and how we say it, building one another up, leading with curiosity, and giving the benefit of the doubt.
- **Presence** by being fully present, engaged, and listening, with phones or notifications silenced.
- **Confidentiality**, keeping group sharing within the group, including refraining from sharing with partners or out-of-state friends.
- **Togetherness** over triangles; any disputes or concerns that may arise within the group should be addressed when the group is together.

Week 1

Already Resilient

Watch Video “Already Resilient” & Discuss (20 min)

Let your group know how and when you plan to send them discussion questions ahead of the meeting so that they have a chance to reflect. For example, “Going forward, I will email you discussion questions on Monday, so you have them before our meeting on Wednesday.”

Group Discussion (20 min)

The video for this gathering is short to give you all time to get to know each other.

Watch the video together, then choose one of the below questions to discuss:

- What do you think it means to be resilient? What does resilience look like, when you see it in someone else?
- When have you recognized resilience in your life before?
- What does resilience feel like? Where do we feel resilience in our bodies?
- Do you agree that we’re all already resilient? Why or why not?
- When are times you do feel resilient? When are times you don’t?

Preparing for Next Time & Questions (10 min)

Allow your group a few minutes for questions to surface. Usually, leaving a few moments of silence will lead to a question. This question is also typically on the mind of every other group member. Thank them for bringing this question for the group, and bring clarity. This models humility and open feedback.

Be sure to end at the time you indicated. By doing this, you build trustworthiness by demonstrating consistency and honoring their time.

Structure for Meetings Weeks 2 - 5

Your group will develop a steady rhythm for reflecting on their experience. If meeting in-person, continue to bring name tags. Remember that keeping to your timeframe is a significant way to build trustworthiness and model healthy containment. We find it helpful to continue the 90- to 120-minute timeframe each week with the following schedule.

Before meeting, we recommend sending an email reminder to your group with the date, time, and location of your next meeting. It is also good to invite the group to bring their journal.

Overview for each meeting, based on a 90-minute meeting:

- Check-In (25 min)
- Watch Video & Discussion (60 min)
- Preparing for Next Time (5 min)

Check-In (25 min)

Offer some informal time for checking in. You may wish to invite each person to share a word or sentence about how they are as they come into your time together. Depending on how talkative your group is, this may take less time.

Watch Video & Discussion (60 min)

Make sure everyone can hear well. If meeting virtually, know that sometimes "sharing screen" for video leads to low quality — you may want to share the link for everyone to watch on their own browsers, at the same time. The bulk of your time together will be spent in discussion to integrate learning.

As a leader, the format of this discussion is up to you. You may want to try to cover all the questions; you may want to pick just one or two. Perhaps you sense that all group members are comfortable enough to contribute as they feel led; in that case, you can simply pose the question and allow the group to discuss with one another.

Or, you may want to facilitate sharing as a series of monologues, in which everyone starts with an equal chance to share. This may be especially beneficial for quieter groups in which a discussion is hard to cultivate, or for groups in which one or two members tend to dominate the conversation, leaving voices unheard. If you choose this method of facilitation, you may want to decide on signals to let people know where they are on time, such as a wave for half-way through the time, 3 fingers for 3 minutes remaining, and 1 finger for 1 minute remaining.

Finally, you may want to use a "write to speak" method of facilitation. After posing each question, invite 3-5 minutes of silence for everyone to journal their thoughts and initial responses. Then, invite each person to share, followed by conversation. This can be helpful in groups in which some members are internal processors.

Recommended discussion questions for each lesson are below.

Preparing for Next Week (5 min)

Remind everyone of the date, time, and location of the next meeting. Invite any questions or need for clarification that may arise.

Week 2:

Resilience

Check-In

Watch Video “Resilience” & Discuss

In advance of your meeting, choose one to three questions to discuss.

- What stood out to you in the teaching about what resilience is? Why is that significant to you?
- This lesson defined resilience as the ability to grow in meaningful ways in response to challenges or suffering. Tell us about a specific time when you grew in response to challenges or suffering. What helped you to be resilient in that moment?
- Which essential component of resilience do you think you’re strongest in: people, practices, or purpose? What advice would you give someone who is weak in that component?
- Which essential component of resilience do you feel weakest in? What is a question or curiosity you have about that component?
- In what ways does your “place” (the organizations and cultures you are living in) support your wellbeing? In what ways does it undermine your wellbeing?
- “Resilience isn’t only about my flourishing, but ultimately about cultivating a system of flourishing for everyone.” Who in your life would benefit from your increased resilience? How might increasing your own resilience increase the flourishing of others?

Preparing for Next Week

Week 3:

Purpose

Check-In

Watch Video “Purpose” & Discuss

In advance of your meeting, choose one to three questions to discuss.

- Think about a time you felt most alive. What was happening? How did you respond? What did the situation demand of you? What did you learn about yourself as a result of that moment?
When you felt most alive: Was it when you were at rest, or under stress? What might that tell you about how you learn and grow?
- How might you describe your sense of purpose — the “North Star” you are journeying towards — at this point in your life?
What questions do you have about your purpose?
- Consider your agency, what is and isn’t in your power to control.
What do you need to let go of that is beyond your control in order to live into your purpose with greater peace?
What is one step you could take this week toward pursuing your purpose or getting a better understanding of your purpose? This month? This year?
- Share about a challenge you are currently facing.
What questions does this challenge raise about your fundamental assumptions about life? How could you engage those questions?
How could you actively seek to grow through this challenge?

Preparing for Next Week

Week 4:

Practices

Check-In

Watch Video “Practices” & Discuss

In advance of your meeting, choose one to three questions to discuss.

- “Practices help us to remember that we are incarnate beings - both spirit and flesh - and to keep us healthy in our embodiment.” Do you tend to think of yourself as more of spirit or flesh?
 - What helps you to connect to your body?
 - What helps you to connect to your spirit?
- What’s one practice that is already a part of your routine? It can be physical, mental, spiritual, or emotional.
 - How does that practice impact you?
 - How does your practice impact those around you?
- Together, brainstorm a list of behaviors that could be used for comfort or care. For each:
 - What is the difference between using it for comfort or for care?
 - When does its use to comfort become a concern?
- What’s a behavior you do that you wish you didn’t?
 - Why do you wish you didn’t do this?
 - Do you have any ideas of why that behavior gets repeated? Remember to approach this question with self-compassion and curiosity.
- What’s one practice you would like to modify, replace, remove, or add?

Preparing for Next Week

Week 5:

People

Check-In

Watch Video “People” & Discuss

In advance of your meeting, choose one to three questions to discuss.

- Tell us about someone who has loved you. What were they like? How did you know they cared about you? How did their love contribute to your wellbeing?
- Take a few minutes and complete the Community Map worksheet (available for download in the course). Then discuss:
 - What was it like creating your map?
 - What do you feel when you see your map?
 - What are your strongest areas of support?
 - In what areas/roles do you want to seek more support?
- What, in moments, keeps you from reaching out to people for support?
- It's helpful to your resilience to cultivate supportive relationships before you are in a crisis (though it is certainly never too late to ask for help). What is one thing you could do now to intentionally develop the relationships you will need in the future?
- Dr. Vivek Murthy invites us to “build a people-centered life and a people-centered world.” What would a people-centered world look like? What would have to change in your organization, neighborhood, city, or community to make it more people-centered, to foster relationships?

Preparing for Next Week

Week 6:

Ending This Series

Check-In

Watch Video & Discussion

In advance of your meeting, choose one to three questions to discuss.

- As you wrap up this series on resilience, what has been most impactful to you?
- What do you see as your next steps to grow your resilience?
- What has this group meant to you?
- What do you hope for the other members of this group?

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