

## Harnessing the Power of Talking Out Loud for Parents Workshop

Teddy Bear Talk Support is about getting to think better by thinking out loud. It's about creating opportunities for having a listener along for the ride who isn't "doing" much, while you talk out loud.

Teddy Bear Talk Support was inspired by this description of the Clearness Committee (which can be thought of as a Teddy Bear Talk Support setup where the teddy bears can only talk to ask open, honest questions) written by Parker Palmer:

Many of us face a dilemma when trying to deal with a personal problem, question, or decision. On the one hand, we know that the issue is ours alone to resolve and that we have the inner resources to resolve it, but access to our own resources is often blocked by layers of inner "stuff"—confusion, habitual thinking, fear, despair. On the other hand, we know that friends might help us uncover our inner resources and find our way, but by exposing our problem to others, we run the risk of being invaded and overwhelmed by their assumptions, judgments, and advice—a common and alienating experience.

...

Behind the Clearness Committee is a simple but crucial conviction: each of us has an inner teacher, a voice of truth, that offers the guidance and power we need to deal with our problems. But that inner voice is often garbled by various kinds of inward and outward interference. The function of the Clearness Committee is not to give advice or “fix” people from the outside in but rather to help people remove the interference so that they can discover their own wisdom from the inside out. Nothing is allowed except real questions, honest and open questions, questions that will help the focus person remove the blocks to his or her inner truth without becoming burdened by the personal agendas of committee members.

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When you are taking a turn being the talker, here are some suggestions for what to talk about:

- working on getting started with something
- a conversation you need to have
- establishing a new habit or pattern
- something that's bothering you
- a decision you need to make
- getting your head in the space for something
- a topic as if you were talking to \_\_\_\_\_
- something you are working on writing
- a major life issue
- short-term and long-term goals and dreams
- ideas for improving your living space
- upcoming events and perhaps plans and preparations
- jobs, career aspirations, and recent work experiences
- ideas from books
- things you want to learn
- fitness and wellness
- food and cooking

# Harnessing the Power of Talking Out Loud Workshop

## **Guidelines for asking open, honest questions**

A good description of an honest, open question is that the person asking the question could not possibly anticipate the answer to it. Open questions are broad in scope and require responses that are more than just one or two words. An example of an open question is: “What would you say to someone in your shoes?” Ask questions for the purpose of helping the talker rather than for satisfying your own curiosity. These questions are usually brief and have no preamble or explanation.

Such questioning may sound easy. But many people have trouble framing questions that do not impose what they think on the speaker. This includes questions that are suggestions, advice, or analysis in disguise. Perhaps the most important aspect of our sessions is that we provide a place where there is no danger of having someone else's agenda imposed on you. This rule is simple, but abiding by it is hard work because so much of this goes on all the time. That's what we're used to. But, here we're asking you to try not to do any reassuring, diagnosing, providing any logical arguments, or evaluating, be it positive or negative. It can be very difficult to keep these out of the questions that we ask the talker. But, by doing so, we can create space for the talker to work through his or her own agenda.

The talker always has the right to choose not to answer a question. If you are the talker, please do not hesitate to exercise this right. You do not need to provide any explanation for why you have chosen not to answer the question.

Note that learning to ask honest, open questions is a skill that these sessions can help us develop. So, we are also holding the space for being patient and compassionate with ourselves as we experiment with coming up with honest, open questions. Questions fall on a continuum, and we'll practice leaning as much as possible towards the open and honest end of the continuum with our questions. We'll be looking for ones that Parker Palmer describes as questions that allow us to “hear each other into speech, into deeper and deeper speech.”

## **Example for practicing asking open, honest questions**

Anna has been volunteering more now that her child is 12. One night during a Zoom meeting that went an hour past its planned end time, her child sent her a paper airplane. He was going to bed and he wanted to say goodnight without saying it out loud and interrupting the meeting. This caused Anna to reflect on the increase in the amount of time she was unavailable to her family. She wondered how her child was feeling about her being busy more often and out of the house more often. Anna wondered if she was still having about as many times of meaningful connection in a week with her child or not. It was clear she wanted to have more awareness about how the recent changes were making an impact.

In the space below, you can write down some open, honest questions that you could ask Anna. If you want, you can also write down examples of questions that aren't open and honest that someone might ask Anna.

This excerpt is from a compassionate listening training packet from:

[https://sherrymccreedy.weebly.com/uploads/1/3/8/9/13896697/compassionate\\_listening-training-packet-intro2.pdf](https://sherrymccreedy.weebly.com/uploads/1/3/8/9/13896697/compassionate_listening-training-packet-intro2.pdf)

11

### Some Examples:

- Can you say more?
- How has this situation affected your life?
- What was that like for you?
- What is the source of your courage?
- What life experiences have helped you in this situation?
- Could you say more about that?
- If this situation were fully resolved, how would things be better for you?
- How has your life been shaped by these events?
- Can you tell us about the situation that concerns you?
- Disputes often reach the levels they do because of deep, unmet needs. What deep, unmet needs do you see at work in this situation?
- What is in your heart right now? If you were a wise fly on the wall, what do you think might work?
- Can you tell us what life experiences led you to feel this way?
- What are you yearning for?
- What do you most cherish about this relationship?

### Characteristics of Deepening Questions:<sup>2</sup>

- **Create motion** – instead of “Why don’t you move to Seattle?” DQ: “What type of place would you like to move to” or “What is the meaning of this move in your life?”
- **Open up options** – instead of “Why don’t you move to Seattle”, DQ: “What are some places that you feel a connection to”
- **Evoke ultimate concerns, high points and deepest values** -
- **Avoid “why”** - why questions create defense and resistance. “How”, “What” and “Is” are good places to start instead. Why don’t you find a way to help the community on this issue?” vs. “What action might you take to help the community on this issue?”
- **Are empowering** - “What would you like to do to help your community?” (for example to high school kids) Assume that they want to help. Assume the goodness in people
- **Ask the unaskable** - “Are there any ways that you might be contributing to this conflict?” “What are you both prepared to do for the sake of your grandchildren?”
- **Are simple.** Asking more than one question at a time is confusing...keep your questions simple and one at a time.
- **Are respectful.** When we use inquiry we convey trust in the person that they are smart enough, courageous enough, to find their own solutions. This is change from the inside out.

<sup>2</sup> In part synthesized from Fran Peavey, **Strategic Questioning: An Experiment in Communication of the Second Kind.** Available from [crabgrass@igc.org](mailto:crabgrass@igc.org)

*Feelings when your needs are satisfied*

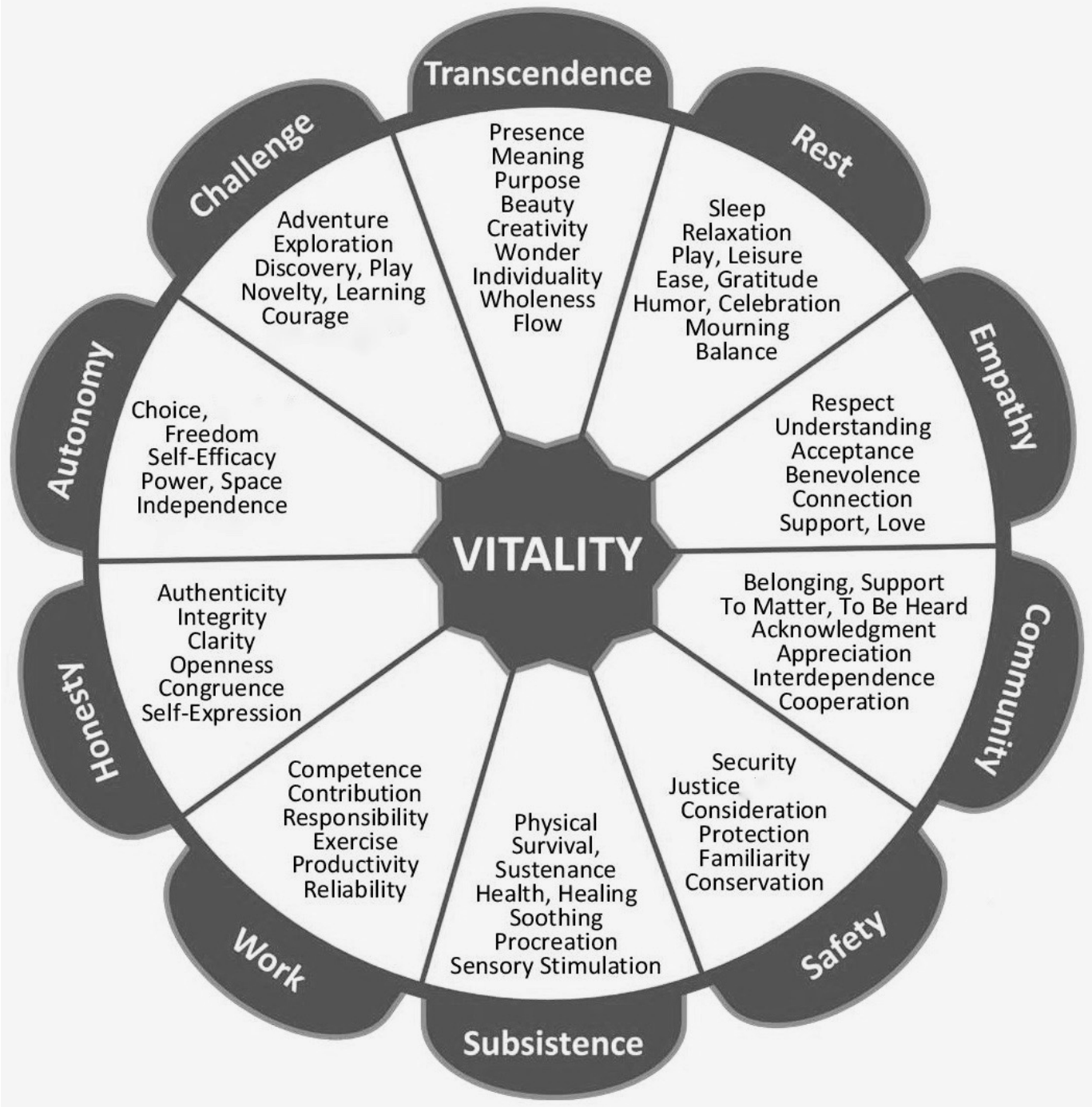
<b>AFFECTIONATE</b>	entranced	enthusiastic	touched	fulfilled
compassionate	fascinated	giddy	<b>HOPEFUL</b>	mellow
friendly	interested	invigorated	expectant	peace
loving	intrigued	lively	encouraged	quiet
open hearted	involved	passionate	optimistic	relaxed
sympathetic	spellbound	surprised	<b>JOYFUL</b>	relieved
tender	stimulated	vibrant	amused	satisfied
warm	<b>INSPIRED</b>	<b>EXHILARATED</b>	delighted	serene
<b>CONFIDENT</b>	amazed	blissful	glad	still
empowered	awed	ecstatic	happy	tranquil
open	wonder	elated	jubilant	trusting
proud	<b>EXCITED</b>	enthralled	pleased	<b>REFRESHED</b>
safe	amazed	exuberant	tickled	enlivened
secure	animated	radiant	<b>PEACEFUL</b>	reinvigorated
<b>ENGAGED</b>	ardent	rapturous	calm	rejuvenated
absorbed	aroused	thrilled	clear headed	renewed
alert	astonished	<b>GRATEFUL</b>	comfortable	rested
curious	dazzled	appreciative	centered	restored
engrossed	eager	moved	content	revived
enchanted	energetic	thankful	equanimity	

*Feelings when your needs are not satisfied*

<b>AFRAID</b>	<b>AVERSION</b>	numb	burnt out	hopeless
apprehensive	animosity	removed	depleted	melancholy
dread	appalled	uninterested	exhausted	mournful
foreboding	contempt	withdrawn	lethargic	unhappy
frightened	disgusted	<b>DISQUIET</b>	listless	wretched
mistrustful	dislike	agitated	sleepy	<b>TENSE</b>
panicked	hate	alarmed	tired	anxious
petrified	horrified	disconcerted	weary	cranky
scared	hostile	disturbed	worn out	distressed
suspicious	repulsed	perturbed	<b>PAIN</b>	distraught
terrified	<b>CONFUSED</b>	rattled	agony	edgy
wary	ambivalent	restless	anguished	fidgety
worried	baffled	shocked	bereaved	frazzled
<b>ANNOYED</b>	bewildered	startled	devastated	irritable
aggravated	dazed	surprised	grief	jittery
dismayed	flummoxed	troubled	heartbroken	nervous
disgruntled	hesitant	turbulent	hurt	overwhelmed
displeased	lost	turmoil	lonely	restless
exasperated	mystified	uncomfortable	miserable	stressed out
frustrated	perplexed	uneasy	regretful	<b>VULNERABLE</b>
impatient	puzzled	unnerved	remorseful	fragile
irritated	torn	unsettled	<b>SAD</b>	guarded
irked	<b>DISCONNECTED</b>	upset	depressed	helpless
<b>ANGRY</b>	alienated	<b>EMBARRASSED</b>	dejected	insecure
enraged	aloof	ashamed	despair	leery
furious	apathetic	chagrined	despondent	reserved
incensed	bored	flustered	disappointed	sensitive
indignant	cold	guilty	discouraged	shaky
irate	detached	mortified	disheartened	<b>YEARNING</b>
livid	distant	self-conscious	forlorn	envious
outraged	distracted	<b>FATIGUE</b>	gloomy	jealous
resentful	indifferent	beat	heavy hearted	longing

# The Wheel of Universal Human Needs

Vitality Blossoms When Needs Are Met

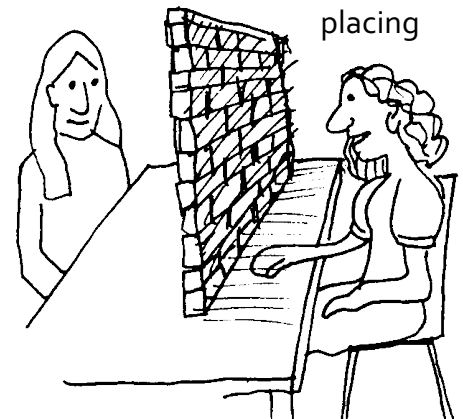


**Source:** Bob & Megan Tschannen-Moran. Inspired by the work of Jim and Jori Manske (NVC trainers), Marshall Rosenberg (founder of NVC) and Manfred Max-Neef (Chilean economist).

## Deflective Listening: Common Responses

Here are some common forms of communication that block empathy by taking the focus away from the person who is speaking:

1. **Giving Advice / Fixing:** Telling the other person what you think they should do.  
*"You should leave your job and find somewhere else to work where you'll be appreciated."*
2. **Analyzing / Diagnosing:** Interpreting or evaluating a person's behavior.  
*"I think you are taking this out on your wife when -- in reality -- you are angry with your mother about things that happened in your childhood."*
3. **Storytelling:** Grabbing the focus away from another person and it back to your own experience.  
*"I know just how you feel! This reminds me of a time that I..."*
4. **Pity / Sympathy:** Feeling sorry for someone, or sharing your own feelings about what they said.  
*"Oh, you poor thing... I feel so sad for you."*
5. **Reassuring / Consoling:** Trying to make someone feel better.  
*"You might be upset now, but I'm sure you'll feel better soon."*
6. **Shutting Down:** Discounting a person's feelings and trying to shift them in another direction.  
*"Quit feeling sorry for yourself!" or, "There is no reason to feel that way!"*
7. **Changing the Subject:** Avoiding an uncomfortable moment that you don't know how to deal with, and changing the course of the conversation.  
*"Uhh... yeah... Do you think Michigan's football team will make the Rose Bowl this season?"*
8. **Interrogating:** Using directed questions to expose a person's behavior or to provoke guilt.  
*"When did this begin?" or, "Why did you do that?" or, "What got into you?"*
9. **Commiserating:** Agreeing with the speaker's judgments of others.  
*"I know what you mean -- your boss is one of the biggest jerks I have ever met!"*
10. **One-upping:** Convincing the speaker that whatever they went through, you had it worse.  
*"You think that's bad? Let me tell you what happened to me when I was in that situation!"*



## Harnessing the Power of Talking Out Loud Workshop

### Talking to the talker afterward about what the talker shared

- At the end of their time, talkers can indicate if they don't want to have the teddy bear initiate any further discussion with the talker at any point in the future of what the talker talked about.
- If no such indication was made, teddy bears who want to initiate further discussion of a talker's topic are asked to check with talkers to see if they welcome further discussion or not.
- As we will also emphasize when we cover how to ask honest, open questions, perhaps the most important aspect of our sessions is that we provide a place where there is no danger of having someone else's agenda imposed on you. So, we ask you to steer clear of providing suggestions, advice, or analysis to the talker.

### Learning to Listen

Here is a piece by David Castro on Learning to Listen. It is called Empathy in 8 Minutes, and it is about how he experienced doing an exercise where you listen quietly for 8 minutes as someone tells you his or her life story.

When my partner started to tell his story, I wanted to ask a truckload of questions directing the conversation. I wanted to follow up on particular details, ask about things he hadn't mentioned, shortcut certain areas and learn more about others that interested me, like someone fast forwarding through a TV show.

After about three minutes, however, something remarkable happened. That incessant voice in my head began to quiet, and for the first time I began to listen at a deeper level. I observed my partner's body language, soaked in his selected words and stopped trying to control the conversation flow. In the remaining five minutes, I learned something profound about the person speaking. I began to see and understand him for the first time. I was actually listening to him instead of focusing on my bundle of projections about him.

Teddy Bear Talk Support makes it easier for the experience to be about only one person's agenda at a time. **Notice how natural it is to have the both surprising and not so surprising number of agendas that David Castro had as a listener in the first 3 minutes of this exercise.**

## **3CM (Conceptual Content Cognitive Map)**

### Instructions

This exercise is intended to capture your mental model of a given topic—to see how you think about a given issue. The process takes about 15 to 20 minutes, possibly longer. There are no right or wrong answers.

**I want you think for a moment about your own perspective on \_\_\_\_\_.** Now imagine that you're going to explain your perspective to someone who is unfamiliar with this topic. What are all the things you would want to be sure to mention?

STEP 1: Write each thing on a separate card. (place the cards in front of you)

STEP 2: Now, look through these cards and see if you can arrange them into groups based on how you feel they go together. You can use as many or as few cards as you want and you can add cards at any point.

STEP 3: After you have sorted the cards, please come up with labels for each groups. Write this label on the blank, colored cards.

STEP 4: Next, arrange the groups in a way that reflects how they relate to each other. (Prompt to explain arrangement if they don't offer one; e.g. are some groups more closely related to each other?)

Conclusion:

You may want to use a camera to take a picture of the results.

### **3CM uses and benefits (Leeann's notes from talking to a colleague)**

A colleague of mine really appreciated the utility of the 3CM to be able to show gaps and differences. I think this might be influenced by my explaining to her how I used it with my partner Peter, where I was using 3CM to see how well I understood and could explain one of his research topics. Explaining my 3CM to Peter prompted him to fill in some key pieces that I was missing such that I was then able (temporarily at least) to do a better job of explaining the topic. I was telling her about this in the context of how students could use 3CM to help instructors (or fellow students) see where they're at and to get help filling in the gaps and correcting misunderstandings.



## 3CM instructions + notes on different uses and benefits

She used 3CM for trying to figure out what a proposal was trying to say.

Usually, people can't even tell and might suspect that she didn't even read it.

With 3CM, they are also able to tell the difference between:

1. She didn't get it
2. She disagrees

So, they can tell whether or not she got what they were trying to say.

In this case, they were even going to rewrite the proposal based on how she organized her 3CM. The version she read had too much jargon and wasn't clear in other ways as well.

She used 3CM to find out how others are seeing things and how they're experiencing things.

A suggestion we had for her for this was to do the 3CMs in a way that got at how they would guess that other key people are seeing things or would respond to something. For example, how do they think her job and her concerns would cause her to look at the situation?

We pointed out that because with things written on cards it becomes "out there" then it becomes separated more from the person. So, it's just about "this" (i.e., the cards/what's written on the cards) and not about the person who wrote out the cards. It gives people distance from what's out on the table. There is the person and then there are the ideas on the table, and those are more clearly two different things. Helps people be less defensive or less in performance mode. So, you can not like the ideas or how they are arranged, but that's separate from not liking the person.

She says she can tell from people's body language, for example, how they lean in more, that they're feeling "I've been heard." They know that she has heard them when she's using 3CM.

Typically, when she understands and gets what someone is saying, she then tends to get really creative. Often people aren't ready for that. If they know that they've been heard and that what they've said has been acknowledged, then they're ready for that kind of thing. But, if they don't get that sense, then they're not ready. She's realized it's about acknowledging that they are smart rather than trying to show them how smart she is with her ideas.

If she is internally resistant, 3CM helps her reduce her own resistance to being open. So, if it's something she's reading, then she'll find herself arguing with it while she's reading. But, she can't be trying to figure out what's salient and arguing at the same time. So, she realized that when she's arguing with it while she's reading then she's not trying to understand it. 3CM helps her to be more open because she can't do both at once and 3CM causes her to try to understand rather than to argue.

She used 3CM to list out things that someone really needed to get done this year. She then went through the cards with the person and asked him if he agreed that these were the things that really had to get done this year. He said I only have one thing to add to that list.

She uses the back sides of her 3CM cards to keep track of thoughts or resolutions or potential solutions for the thing written on the front side of the card. (She doesn't do this systematically for every card. The back sides of the cards are just used as needed.)

## Handout for Harnessing the Power of Talking Out Loud Workshop

- Default is that the teddy bear will not speak unless you make requests of the teddy bear
- Default is that the teddy bear will keep what you say confidential

Things you can request of the the teddy bear include:

- Paraphrase or reflect back verbatim parts of what the talker said
- Offer some open, honest questions
- Make guesses at what's at the bottom of what the talker is speaking about, e.g., make guesses at what feelings and needs are underlying what the talker is saying
- Serve as a scribe who writes down parts when asked
- Ask repeated questions - a method of inquiry from the Diamond approach  
5 minute exercise of being asked the same question again and again, and being told "Thank you" before being asked again. Talk off the top of your head. It doesn't matter if what you have to say isn't really an answer to the question. Examples of questions: What's right about practicing self-care? Tell me how you want to be seen. How are you going to get yourself to do things? Where do you want to go?

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### Ways to engage in Teddy Bear Talk Support that the TBTS website has to offer

**From:** <https://teddybeartalksupport.com/times>

#### **Bookable times that allow multiple people to sign up to join a Zoom call**

- In pairs - Pair off and take turns being talkers
- Co-working - Pair off and do 20 minute work periods interspersed with taking turns for 3 minutes each with being a talker
- Holding the Space Session - A modified version of the Clearness Committee where people take turns being talkers and teddy bears, and teddy bears are limited to only asking open, honest questions.
- Clearness Committee - With the traditional Clearness Committee format, there is only one focus person for a 2-hour time period, and teddy bears are limited to only asking open, honest questions.