

Peer Consult

Purpose: To help leaders seek guidance from one another on personal leadership challenges

Timing: Allot at least 30 minute per peer consult.

Expertise: None. As long as the group has spent time establishing confidentiality and “community agreements,” this exercise is created for and by the group. One person in the group should be designated as the facilitator.

Use: At NLN, we teach peer consult to the leaders in the later stages of their work together as a way to reinforce their ability to support one another beyond the formal retreats. Typically, the leaders have been exposed to coaching techniques prior to this exercise.

Facilitation:

Pre-work: The leader seeking support should put time into getting to the right question to ask their peers.

Instructions:

1. Introduce the purpose of the exercise: to support the growth of one leader’s leadership by giving them the opportunity to ask for support around a particular issue. Reinforce to the focal person that the act of asking for support is a brave step, especially as our norm is to go it alone. (5 minutes)
2. The focal person speaks to the issue that they would like to address. The facilitator can provide these guiding questions: What do you want from this session? What are you trying to let go of and learn? Where do you need help? (5 minutes)
3. Peers have the opportunity to ask questions for better understanding. This may include clarification on the issue or what the leader really needs from

the group. This is a short, facilitated dialogue between the leader and their peers. The facilitator should steer the conversation away from solutions and advice. (5 minutes)

4. The full group then takes a moment for stillness to allow images and feelings to emerge about what was just said by the focal person. (1 minute)
5. The facilitator invites the group to provide the focal person, in two or three words, a snapshot of an image that emerged in their reflections. The purpose of this is to let the group relay their impressions and empathy — and take the time to access right-brain intelligence and intuition. (15 seconds per person)
6. The group is invited to talk together about the leader's challenge. This should include generative dialogue and brainstorming by all. The focal person is quiet during this conversation, taking in the conversation rather than participating and contributing further details. (15 minutes)
7. Finally, the focal person gives concluding remarks. The facilitator can provide these guiding questions: What new insight has been gained? What will be taken forward? What accountability to the group is possible?
8. As a final step, the group is invited to provide the focal person offers of support.