

# **A New Republic of the Heart: A Guide To “Being the Change” For Real Understanding & Participating In Your Book Study Group**

1. **The Opportunity.** As a powerful adjunct to your involvement in this course, you are invited to co-organize and co-moderate a Book Study Group. We will assist you in connecting with other course participants in small groups, usually of 4 people, but sometimes 3 or 5. You are invited to arrange to meet with your partners between course sessions for 60 minutes **once each week**, usually shortly before the session in which we will discuss each chapter.
2. **The Purpose of Book Study Groups.** Terry’s teachings make nuanced philosophical distinctions and speak to the very depths of our being. Thus, they activate profound processes that must be considered to be fully understood, or which must be felt and metabolized via increasing intimacy with ourselves. Both these purposes are catalyzed by sharing about each week’s readings honestly and deeply. We recognize our nuanced understanding and our deep embodied experience more powerfully when we express them to others, and we’re often touched and inspired by others’ intelligence, curiosity, transparency, vulnerability, and courage.

Book Study Groups can also serve as container for developing our capacity for more evolved relating. In Part Two of *A New Republic of the Heart*, Terry explores integral “we-space”. Study Groups are a place where we can experiment with these practices, develop awareness, and deepen our presence and emotional connections. Respectful, authentic, and empathetic communication lays a foundation for transformative, transpersonal and evolutionary We-Space.

During the course we will keep orienting toward clearer understanding, and also toward deeper layers of our experience and of reality itself. This can create a potent field that will have transformational effects on our inner and outer lives. By committing to and engaging with each other in this way, we’ll have a space to respond to Terry’s invitations, so his teachings will be activated more fully in each of us and in all of us together as a ‘We’.

### 3. **Best Practices**

The following simple practices are recommended for your virtual meetings:

- **Setting the stage:** It can be useful for the facilitator to read a poem, sound a bell, speak an invocation, offer a brief guided meditation, or state an intention at the beginning of the meeting.
- **Checking in:** It creates intimacy if each person checks in briefly (1-2 minutes each) at the beginning of each call.
- **Using a timer:** It can be helpful to use a timer with a non-jarring alarm to keep on schedule, with each participant sharing for predetermined lengths of time.
- **Closing round:** It can also be useful to take turns completing at the end of your call.

#### 4. **Functional Roles:**

A smooth meeting requires establishing two or three essential functional roles:

**Facilitator:** Sets the agenda, which will be at least partially based on Terry's weekly guide. Facilitates (or designates someone else to do so) the initial process of Setting the Stage. Identifies useful readings if appropriate. Facilitates the meeting. Keeps track of timing. Closes the meeting, using a timer or perhaps a bell.

**Integrity Holder:** Schedules and roles need to be written down and communicated, including who will play what role at each meeting. The Integrity Holder emails everyone in advance, noting who has what roles, and keeps track of people fulfilling their agreements. This is especially important in the beginning. The integrity holder "hands off" responsibility to the facilitator of the subsequent meeting.

**Historian** (optional): The historian might set up an audio or video recording of your meeting, which can be useful for anyone who has to miss a session. He or she may also take brief notes which can be helpful for those absent. As your discussions deepen, insights, practices or shared experiences may emerge that might be of benefit to others. If this happens, please send notes or a brief written summary to Terry and his team.

5. **Participating in a Book Study Group is, in itself, a *practice*.** We can take responsibility for communicating clearly and showing up as agreed, and then for how we show up at each meeting. When we don't participate consciously and responsibly, we affect each other. This expresses itself through many particular commitments and intentions such as:

- **Communicating** with your book study group in a clear and timely fashion.

- **Showing up** on time for all meetings and if it's absolutely necessary to miss a meeting, communicating about that absence in advance and staying current with your Book Study Group.
- **Being fully present** and keeping our full attention in the process instead of multi-tasking and being distracted.
- **Returning again and again** to sincere openness, clarity, and openheartedness ("**beginner's mind**").
- **Enjoying your partners** sincerely and authentically. Often this serves others a lot more than anything else you might "try" to do in order to be of service!
- Treating as **Confidential** everything that happens in the Book Study Group container. What is said "stays in the practice container". Respect everyone's privacy and help create a sense of safety in which they can relax and feel confident enough to share private information without worrying that it will leak out to others.
- **Relaxing** into your natural curiosity, openness, and intuition, which means **playfully working together** with your partners to create a warm and inviting container.
- **Forgiving your partners' limitations.** Sometimes they will raise you up by creating an opportunity for you to give and serve. Sometimes, vice-versa, it is they who will inspire you and raise you up. Don't keep score. Relax your tendencies to judge others. Be willing to learn, and show up as an inquiry into how you can serve and give.
- **Intending to notice and recognize the goodness, beauty and divinity of your partners,** and of every situation. Thus, you won't be assuming or creating a "problem."
- Orienting always toward **what's most important.**
- Sharing from the **deepest parts of yourself, and taking risks by daring** to encounter and show yourself more fully.
- **Being authentic and transparent.** This means sharing your feelings, questions, observations, intuitive inklings, and taking the risk of speaking

to your partner's best self.

- **Accepting imperfection and discomfort.** This is a learning container, so it won't be perfect. Be open to what shows up in service to deepening your learning. Give space for trial and error. It's natural in the creative process. Your time together with your Book Study Group partners is about leaning into your edges.
- **Taking responsibility** for what is happening in your meetings. This includes speaking up when you feel things get off track or you sense the energy field of your We-Space drop.

6. Be mindful of the primary **ways you can serve and dis-serve your partners:**

- You can **serve** your partners by:
  - *Engaging deeply* with the ideas in the book and course. Sometimes this can be expressed through taking notes on the text and/or journaling in response to the discussion questions and bringing your thoughts forward to your Book Study Group.
  - “Speaking from” your experience instead of “speaking about” it. This enables you to drop beneath the surface of your story into real presence accessing the deeper energies and consciousness underneath it.
  - Listening deeply, in a way that moves from a superficial exchange to the authentic feelings, energies, and beliefs underneath.
  - Being open to the inner experience of your partner(s) so that you hear the deepest levels from which the words are emerging.
  - Supporting by affirming, holding and encouraging each other.
  - Challenging by asking powerful questions, frankly reflecting what's real and refusing to collude in denial.
  - Holding space by being present, open, aware, nonreactive, and nonjudgmental.
  - Offering feedback while being genuinely tuned in to the “we-space” and the field of relationship to each of your partners. This entails being in touch with the deep sphere of connection between you.
  - Viewing your partners in their wholeness, and seeing and feeling them with your head, heart and hara (gut) intelligence in an integrated way. This means learning about their inner world and attuning accurately, so what you say will naturally touch them in a deeper place.
- You might **dis-serve** your partners by:

- Breaches of integrity (e.g., not responding to your group’s emails or missing sessions without an explanation).
  - Breaches of responsibility (e.g., communicating excessively or inappropriately with your group via email or during group meetings).
  - Failures of receptivity (e.g., talking too much, not listening from the deepest level of your being, not taking enough time to listen, relating on a superficial social level, not attuning to and “getting” each of your partners’ experiences deeply or failing to ask the necessary questions that would enable you to really understand).
  - Failures of expression (e.g., not disclosing your deepest self, not speaking your intuitive awareness, colluding with your partners’ self-delusion, denial, or avoidance, or failing to offer your partners an opportunity for accountability).
  - Giving advice. It’s a strong and nearly universal tendency. Try to relax this strong impulse!
  - Thinking about what you are going to say when it’s your turn instead of really listening to your partner.
  - Jumping in too fast and not allowing enough space for you all to make felt contact with each other and the feelings and energies in what has been said.
  - Reacting. If you receive feedback that you cannot relate to at all, then just let it go. You do not have to accept everything you hear. If you find yourself reacting to something that has been offered as feedback, take responsibility for your reactivity, bring your reaction forward, and share it with your partners. Try to have genuine curiosity and openness about it. It can be rich material for mutual exploration.
- The two most powerful ways you can serve others is by **seeing them deeply and allowing them to really see you**. Give the gift of yourself by sharing your deepest intentions, and trust your partners to witness you in your aspiration to be true and good and trustable. Offer them the same in return. If all of you do this with sincerity together, a very deep field of higher friendship can open up. You can do this with anyone, even if on the surface you don’t seem to have a lot in common. This can unfold spontaneously and so needs no “method.” Sometimes structures can be helpful, but the magic is in the openhearted, conscious human feeling of “meeting and being met.”