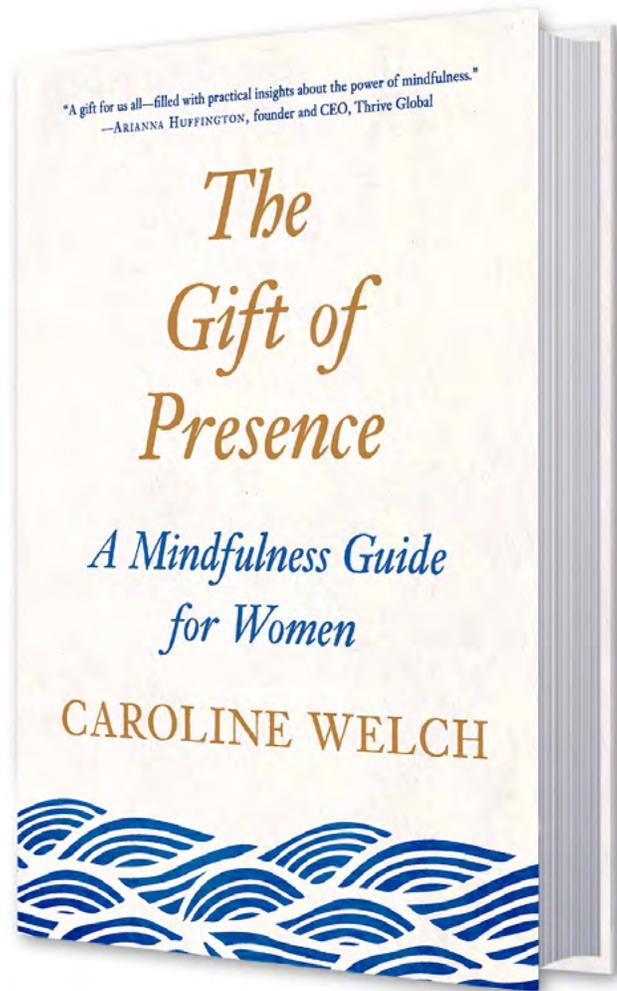


Caroline Welch

The Gift of Presence

***Guide to Starting and Leading
Your Own Presence Group***



Caroline Welch

The Gift of Presence

Welcome!

Thanks so much for your interest in starting and leading a Presence Group (“PG”). Many find that being part of a group is more effective and fun than doing it on their own. By sharing ideas and experiences, PG members can support each other. Also, since we have social brains, learning together can be not only more fun, but we may retain more.

For those of you founding or leading a group, you will likely find that organizing a group is rewarding, but it does take some planning. This Guide is meant to take the load off of you. Remember, there’s no right way to do it. Do what works best for your group.

Please keep me posted! I always enjoy hearing how our PGs across the globe are doing. Contact me through social media or at info@carolinewelch.com.

Be well,

Caroline

Facebook: [@carolinewelchauthor](#)
Instagram: [@carolinewelchauthor](#)
Twitter: [@carolinewauthor](#)



Caroline Welch

The Gift of Presence

Guide to Starting and Leading Your Own Presence Group

Presence Groups (PGs) bring small groups of women together to share experiences, support one another and learn from each other. We recommend between ten and twelve members in a PG. The idea is to give everyone a chance to share. PGs can meet anywhere— at your favorite café or home, in a shared work space or online.

While many groups meet in person, others have found that it works best to have virtual meetings, for example, in Facebook groups, WhatsApp, group chats, or zoom. You can figure out as time goes on what works best for your group – and it may turn out to be a combination of both in person and online.

The topics are up to you and your members, but as you'll see in this Guide, PGs typically start with members sharing a relevant update with the group and end with each member committing to a single action item. As with meditation itself, there is no right nor wrong way.

Remember, if you're meeting and sharing, you're doing it right!

Suggestions for the Founder or Leader

Here are some suggestions for organizing your PG and running rewarding meetings. If your group is meeting in person, in a home or other space, it can be helpful to arrange seating in a circle, whether on chairs or cushions. This makes it easier to see each other and talk to one another.

Consider whether or not to have food and drink. This is a very personal decision. If you're meeting at someone's house, consider taking turns providing all the food in order to reduce logistical challenges of who's bringing what.

EVERYONE IS WELCOME

It's great if you as the leader, can be the first to arrive. Newer members tend to show up promptly or even early. If the leader is also there ahead of time, it provides an opportunity to make them feel welcome and comfortable. Greet people as soon as they enter.

Allow time for people to introduce themselves to the group. Once the day's topic begins, try to keep the discussion flowing, encourage everyone to contribute and be open about what each person has to offer.

GETTING PEOPLE TALKING AND COMFORTABLE

During group discussions, give everyone an opportunity to speak, especially quieter people. Some people aren't comfortable speaking in larger groups. So consider forming smaller groups of two or three, with one member summarizing the small group's discussion for the larger group.

RESPECT EVERYONE'S TIME

We're all busy so please make every effort to start and end on time.

CONNECT WITH OTHER PG FOUNDERS AND LEADERS

As you start your PG experience, we encourage you to also join our private Facebook group for PG founders and leaders at [Facebook.com/groups/PresenceGroups](https://www.facebook.com/groups/PresenceGroups), where you can ask questions and get input from the PG community.

Caroline Welch

The Gift of Presence

PG Ground Rules—the 5 Cs

One of the most important features of the PGs is that they provide a supportive place, a respite, where members can be open and honest about their thoughts, skills, experiences, fears, and challenges ... let's just say, honest about life in general and whatever may be going on at this present time.

CONFIDENTIALITY

What comes up in the PG, stays in the PG. Trust is essential.

CURIOSITY

Start from the premise that every person has something special to offer. As one of my co-leaders at a mindfulness workshop once said, "If I meet someone, and didn't learn anything, I assume I missed something."

CONTRIBUTION

Be engaged. Share your ideas, comments and suggestions. Also be a deep listener.

COMMITMENT

Show up. Make the PG a priority.

COMPASSION

Trying to understand the challenges of another and supporting one another are very powerful features of the PGs. The power of presence can come to life in your group through the members' compassion for one another.

Who Runs the PGs?

We highly recommend that the PG founder run the first meeting. After that, you can either run the meetings or see if other members want to do so. Taking turns also works.

Proposed PG Meeting Schedule: 75 minutes

Below is a suggested meeting schedule for your PG. Over time, you may find that your PG responds better to a slightly amended schedule. You're welcome to see what fits your group best. We always love to hear of new strategies and discoveries in the PGs. Let us know on social media!

ARRIVAL AND UPDATES (APPROX. 15 MINUTES)

Introductions and reviewing the PG Ground Rules—the 5Cs, allowing about 1 minute per person (that's actually a long time!) as you go around the circle. Avoid the tendency to slip into conversation. Try to keep it to four statements:

- My name is _____.
- I spend most of my time _____.
- I joined this PG because _____, or this group is important to me because _____.
- Quick life update

DISCUSSION (APPROX. 45 MINUTES)

Your topics may be guided by the following resources: (A) downloading one of the [Presence Group Discussion Guides](#), or (B) using [The Gift of Presence Card Deck](#), or (C) listening to a TED Talk in advance of the meeting (Recommended TED Talks list can be found under Presence Group Resources).

Caroline Welch

The Gift of Presence

THE 3 W'S – WHAT WENT WELL? (5 MINUTES)

Be sure to incorporate the features that went well at your next meeting. Remember, when you get into what went well, you inevitably cover what could have gone better– and can make modifications for the next meeting.

ACTION ITEM AND SO LONG FOR NOW (APPROX. 10 MINUTES)

Figure out what it is you wish to begin, or do, prior to the next meeting. Share this with one person in the group and hold each other accountable.

Also, it's important to leave knowing when the group will next meet. Date, time, location, food and drinks, if any – handling the logistics ahead not only saves time later, but also allows everyone to plan ahead. If you are rotating leaders, then determine who the next leader will be.

LEAVE FORTIFIED, INSPIRED AND ENERGIZED

Share just three words with the group as you head out.

How Often Should We Meet?

That's completely up to you and your group members. Of course, the more often you meet, the quicker you will become comfortable with each other. That being said, everyone is busy and realistically speaking, you will most likely meet once every six weeks. Just see what works best for your group. Your PG may want to take breaks during the holiday season or in the summertime.

Presence Group Resources

PRESENCE GROUP AND READING GUIDES

See the [Presence Groups](#) and [Downloads](#) sections for Discussion Guides and other useful resources for your meetings. Use of the first four Discussion Guides is highly recommended to lay a foundation, but of course for future meetings you may tailor your topics in whatever way works best for your PG. Many groups find that they may want to spend more than one meeting on a given guide!

- Guide # 1 - Presence
- Guide # 2 - Purpose
- Guide # 3 - Pivoting
- Guide # 4 - Pacing

GIFT OF PRESENCE CARD DECK

There's a [The Gift of Presence Card Deck](#) to facilitate your discussions in the PGs. The deck of 50 cards is divided into four sections: Presence, Purpose, Pivoting, and Pacing. Each card is an invitation which introduces a topic or practice.

TED TALKS

TED Talks offer a great source of inspiration for PGs. Below are just four suggestions. Please add your own!

[Brené Brown, Research Professor at the University of Houston, The Power of Vulnerability](#)

[Susan Cain, Author, The Power of Introverts](#)

[Kimberle Crenshaw, Civil Rights Advocate and Columbia Law Professor, The Urgency of Intersectionality](#)

[Kelly McGonigal, Stanford Psychologist, How to Make Stress Your Friend](#)