

Discussion Guide

“If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.” James 1:5 (NIV)

Issue processing provides a safe and confidential environment where you can seek Godly counsel and wisdom to address your most challenging problems (professional and personal). Through group processing, we will question assumptions that are driving behaviors, challenge each other through “care-frontation,” and identify emotional blind-spots. Begin by opening in prayer, asking God to provide wisdom and understanding in this process so that all participants speak truth in love.

- Time perimeters are suggestions; work at your own pace. Within an hour and a half lesson, the group should be able to process approximately two issues.

ISSUE IDENTIFICATION

Brainstorm potential issues to address (5 minutes)

Facilitator opens up discussion for participants to brainstorm issues to address. Participants should describe their issue in no more than one minute following the below guidelines:

- Describe and then identify the issue in the form of a question – “How do I _____?”
- Explain if the issue is a problem to be solved, a decision to be made or an action plan to be developed.
- Rank the issue as an “A”, “B” or “C:”

<i>“A” stands for Alligator</i>	Alligator issues have you by the throat; they are urgent AND important. They are critical to your health, family or business.
<i>“B” stands for Bear</i>	Bear issues are usually large, looming problems, which are on the horizon. They are not yet urgent, but they are important; if they are not addressed, they could turn into alligators.
<i>“C” stands for Crow</i>	Crow issues are loud, annoying problems that continually “peck” at you. These are not overly important or urgent, but they can often drain energy, focus and attention.

Facilitator writes all the issues identified by the participants on a white board or large paper for everyone to see.

Select an issue (5 minutes)

Facilitator leads the group to reach a consensus on selecting an issue to process. The facilitator may ask questions such as, “How many others have experienced, or are experiencing, this same issue?” The rankings are intended to help the group prioritize issues, but the group should ultimately determine priority based on the prevalence and importance of the issues at hand. The focus at this point is on selecting, not discussing, the issue; recommendations and conclusions should not be talked about during this time.

ISSUE PROCESSING (30-40 minutes)

Step 1: Participant explains the issue more fully (5 minutes)

Once an issue is selected by the group for processing, the volunteering participant provides additional information to the group. It is highly recommended that the presenting participant complete the below statements:

1. The issue/opportunity is _____.
2. It is important because _____.
3. My goal is _____.
4. Relevant background information is _____.
5. The options I have considered are _____.

Issue Processing

6. What I have done to date is _____.
7. I am afraid that _____.
8. My ideal outcome is _____.

Step 2: Ask clarifying questions (10-15 minutes)

Members now have the opportunity to ask questions and dig deeper into the issue through clarifying questions. Frequently, the issues are the symptoms and not the root cause of the problem; clarifying questions help identify the root cause. Do not propose or embed solutions in your questions. The goal here is to learn about the issue before proposing a solution.

Clarifying questions often begin with what, why, when, who and how. Examples include:

- *Why* do you believe _____?
- *What* are your quarterly, short-term goals?
- *What* percentage of time do you spend on _____?
- *What* did you mean when you said _____?
- *Can you explain more* about your _____? *How* is it designed?
- *Tell us about* your _____?
- *Explain* the incentives in place for employees to _____?

Step 3: Participant restates or further refines the issue (2 minutes)

Clarifying questions often reveal to the participant that the “core” issue is not what he/she thought it was. The presenting participant is thus asked if he/she would like to restate or further refine the issue. The goal is to have the person consider: Am I still talking about the same issue that I originally identified, or is there a different underlying issue/sub-issue? Give them a minute to restate the issue.

Step 4: Group makes suggestions/solutions (5-8 minutes)

As members propose solutions, actively pray for God and the Holy Spirit to give them wisdom and understanding (James 1:5) and to share truth in love. Before giving solutions, ask yourself: “How would Christ deliver this suggestion to this person?” Give honest feedback that is respectful, loving and caring.

Comments should not focus on prior behavior, failures or actions by the presenter; instead, suggestions should be succinct statements or recommendations that focus on (1) the core issue and (2) proposed action(s). This feedback can take the form of suggestions, such as:

- I heard you say _____, and in my opinion, this is what I think you should do _____.
- I think you’re missing _____ and should consider _____.
- I think you should _____.

Step 5: Presenter provides a personal action summary from the feedback (5 minutes)

Presenters should pray and ask for humility to accept constructive feedback without defensiveness. The presenter should state (1) what he/she heard and (2) what actions he/she is going to take in response.

Actions should include a specific task, responsible individual and deadline. Some examples are:

- Place a help wanted ad by DATE on ZipRecruiter.com. NAME to draft the ad by DATE.
- NAME to complete a cost analysis to hire an employee by DATE.

CONCLUSION

Now that the issue is fully processed, select another issue to process (if time allows). Close in prayer once your session is complete. There should be follow up between the facilitator and the participant to see how the issue is being addressed.