

Small Group Discussion Questions

From *Four Patterns of Healthy People* by Matt Norman

Congratulations for having the courage and willingness be open with others and discuss these topics. To make the most of your discussions, review the following guidelines as a group prior to every discussion:

- **Practice contemplative listening.** No matter how tempting it may be, do not attempt to respond to someone's sharing with fixing, saving, advice-giving, or any sort of commentary including "I know exactly how you feel" or "when that happens to me, I do this." When we give advice, try to fix, or save we rarely, if ever, succeed. Instead, practice contemplative listening. When you listen to the person who is sharing, listen with open ears. Listen with curiosity to the stories, the passion, and the facial expressions of the person who is sharing.
- **Ask honest and open questions.** After listening, let your contemplative listening flow into questions that seek out where the person is growing. Asking someone: "have you thought about seeing a therapist?" is not an honest and open question. It's a piece of advice in disguise. Honest and open questions similarly are not questions that we already have an answer for. If you have a preconceived notion for how this person "ought to" answer your question, it isn't an honest and open question. Honest and open questions help the person explore places of truth in their soul and life experiences.
- **Share honestly.** When it's your turn to share, share honestly. Share from a place of authenticity, from the core of who you are. The goal of your sharing is to discover what is true about you and discern where you are growing.
- **Practice confidentiality.** Everything that is shared in discussions is confidential. This is essential if the group is going to maintain safety. Only in the context of confidentiality is a group safe enough for honest sharing -- the kind of sharing that allows people to grow.

Intro & Chapter 1:

1. Where do you feel stuck right now?

2. In what areas of your life do you have a fixed mindset? Why?

3. What might be an example of a “symptom” in your life of a deeper issue?

4. Describe a vision for yourself as a healthier person in one year from now.

Chapter 2 & 3:

1. What trends do you see in your assessment responses on pages 12 and 13?

2. How has unhealthy thinking drawn you inward and made you more self-focused?

3. What draining or constraining thought patterns might need to change for you?

4. What did you realize about yourself when working through the cognitive behavior therapy questions and thought exercises on pages 19 and 20?

Chapter 4 & 5:

1. When considering your resentments, fears and harm of others, what do you realize about yourself?



2. What do you ruminate on, recycling over and over in your mind... or what would you struggle to give up?

3. When have you been emotionally triggered lately? How might that reaction have been an affront to something you hold dear in life?

4. Which idea on pages 24 and 25 would help you shift from "needing" to "appreciating"?

Chapter 6 & 7:

1. Complete the Accomodation/Avoidance worksheet on page 36. What do you realize about yourself?

2. When do you find yourself getting defensive or rationalizing your behavior?

3. Consider the curiosity exercise on page 42 and 43. What are examples where you frustrate others, how could you become more curious, and what outcome might you get?



Chapter 8:

1. How would you characterize your family of origin patterns of relating to one another?
2. How do your personality style or organizational affiliations influence how you relate to others?
3. What specific relationships do you have that tend to have less healthy patterns?
4. Which dysfunctional relationship patterns on pages 50-51 have shown up in your relationships? Why?

Chapter 9 & 10:

1. What roles are you playing that you could document on page 56 that may contribute to unnecessary anxiety, missed opportunity, or relationship tension?
2. How well are you able to be your authentic self in any social environment



3. What patterns on the true self assessment (page 59) would you like to do less often? What would need to change in your thinking to make that happen?

4. How would people at work and home rate your patterns of humility?

Chapter 11:

1. What are recent examples where you've treated your most important relationships as a utility?

2. What influential examples have you had in your life (parents/managers/etc) of I-It and I-Thou relationships?

3. What career or personal sacrifice could you make to set a pattern that truly prioritizes your most important relationships?

4. What obstacles would you have to overcome to sacrifice your own ambitions and desires for a life of greater service to others?



Chapter 12 & 13

1. What schedule or energy patterns listed on pages 73 and 74 would you like to make more consistent in your life and why?

2. Where might you set limits in screen time, social time, work time, or chemicals in order to have more sustainable energy and focus?

3. Which questions on page 79 do you wish you could score higher and why?

4. What groups/relationships could help you live a more transparent life?

Chapter 14 & 15

1. What's your mindset about growth?

2. How could you develop more accountability for yourself to live a life of continuous pattern growth?



3. Who has been a pattern developer for you and how could you be a pattern developer for others?

Conclusion

1. On page 87, Matt writes: "What you believe about the world and why you exist will invariably form your patterns. It will whisper verdicts about your identity and the point of suffering. It will be the filter through which you evaluate mistakes, challenges, and tensions."

How has this statement been true in your life?

2. What commitment(s) will you make to grow into healthier patterns in how you think, relate to others, prioritize your ego, and operate?

3. Why is this important to you and those you live and work with?

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DYSFUNCTIONAL THOUGHT PATTERNS ASSESSMENT

From pg. 12 of *Four Patterns of Healthy People* by Matt Norman

Consider taking the following thought pattern self-assessment that I've developed to reveal specific ways that dysfunctional thought patterns surface for you.

1. Almost never 2. Rarely 3. Sometimes 4. Often 5. Regularly

#	Question	Item Score
1.	I struggle to relax.	
2.	I tend to focus on upsetting situations or events happening in my life.	
3.	I feel fear for no reason.	
4.	I am less happy than the people around me.	
5.	When someone snaps at me, I spend a lot of time thinking about it.	
6.	No matter what I do, I can't get my mind off my problems.	
7.	I am easily alarmed, triggered, or surprised.	
8.	I experience shortness of breath or choking feelings	
9.	I spend time wondering why I feel the way I do.	
10.	I think a lot about why I do the things I do.	
11.	I am easily irritated.	
12.	I don't express my true feelings or needs.	
13.	I think about all the things I have not yet accomplished.	
14.	I have trouble falling or staying asleep.	
15.	I am indecisive.	
16.	I am afraid of what awaits me in the future.	
17.	I worry what others think of me.	

18.	I can think about a problem for hours and still not feel that the issue is resolved.	
19.	I think about how unsatisfied I am with my life.	
20.	I worry a lot.	
21.	I feel tense or on edge.	
22.	I worry about my health or dying.	
23.	I have nightmares.	
24.	I self monitor when I communicate, wondering how I'm coming across to others.	
25.	I feel I am losing control.	
26.	I never feel like I've done enough.	
27.	It pains me to disappoint people.	
28.	I worry that I'll be "found out" as being less capable than people think I am.	
29.	I think about how I compare or measure up to others.	
30.	I think about "releases" that will soothe the restless feeling inside (alcohol, tobacco, chocolate, websites).	

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IDENTIFYING UNPRODUCTIVE THOUGHT PATTERNS

From pg. 29 of *Four Patterns of Healthy People* by Matt Norman

Unproductive thought pattern:	What triggers this thought pattern?	How could you "face" those patterns?	What benefits would you expect?

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REPLACING FRUSTRATION WITH CURIOSITY

From pg. 42 of *Four Patterns of Healthy People* by Matt Norman

Where do I frustrate others...	What curiosity question could I ask when they show frustration...	What outcome would I hope for by being curious rather than defensive...
Ex. <i>Showing up late.</i>	<i>How do you wish I would have communicated with you?</i> And even deeper... <i>What message does it send you when I arrive late like this?</i>	<i>The other person feels heard and understood.</i>

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RELATIONSHIP INTERACTION INSIGHTS

From pg. 47 of *Four Patterns of Healthy People* by Matt Norman

Category	Name/ Relationship	How Do You Interact? (consider family, personality, and organizational affiliation influencers)	Pattern Health (1 to 10 with 10 being highly mutually healthy)
Family			
<i>Ex. Mike/Brother-in-law</i>	<i>I tend to talk more and he tends to listen more. He's very accommodating (third child growing up) and I can be strong-willed (first child in my family). There's very little conflict as we are both very quick to back off if we sense the other is getting frustrated or upset. We work together so we often reflect the open communication style of our team.</i>	<i>9 – we have deep trust and productivity though we also need to work on having the courage to speak truth to each other and engage in productive discourse.</i>	
Work			

Personal Life		

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GETTING TO THE ROOT OF DYSFUNCTIONAL PATTERNS

From pg. 50 of *Four Patterns of Healthy People* by Matt Norman

Dysfunctional Pattern	Description	Relationships/Where?
Triangles	One person rescuing two others from conflict that they can or should resolve themselves, or one person rescuing another from a challenge that they can or should resolve themselves. This can also be considered over-functioning (doing something for someone that they can or should do for themselves)	
Fusion/Enmeshment	High dependence on another for acceptance, approval, and healthy functioning	
Projection	The passing of an emotional problem from one person to another—typically from parent to child—like a heightened need for attention, tendency to blame, feeling responsible for the happiness of others, lack of accountability, and impulsiveness to relieve anxiety	
Tension	Unhealthy tensions typically include: ongoing relationship conflict, dysfunction in one person that drags others down, impairment or neediness of one person, and emotional distance (usually to deal with the tension)	
Perpetuating Low Self-Definition	People associate with others that have a similar level of self-definition (clarity on preferences, values, and opinions); this perpetuates low self-definition people as they pair or hang around with people at a similar level of emotional maturity	
Emotional Cutoff	Reducing or ending emotional (not necessarily physical) contact with the group as a way of dealing with unresolved emotional issues; in some cases this may be the most appropriate response to an unhealthy system	

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PATTERNS IN ROLES YOU PLAY

From pg. 56 of *Four Patterns of Healthy People* by Matt Norman

Role	Who Expects This of You?	How "Healthy" Is This Role?
<i>Ex. Company leader who finds work, delivers work, and helps set direction and culture</i>	<i>Employees, clients, colleagues, creditors</i>	<i>I really enjoy and thrive in this role. At the same time, too often I carry the emotional burden of responsibility for the success of others and want to ensure everyone is happy. This can wear on me and can cause me to over-function.</i>

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LIVING OUT YOUR TRUE SELF ASSESSMENT

From pg. 59 of *Four Patterns of Healthy People* by Matt Norman

Consider the following assessment to determine where, and how much, you are living out your true self despite expectations of others.

1. Almost never 2. Rarely 3. Sometimes 4. Often 5. Regularly

#	Question	Item Score
1.	I intellectually rationalize decisions that I once wouldn't have made (e.g., we need money, it's setting a good example...).	
2.	I go along to get along.	
3.	I engage in superficial politeness.	
4.	I act "as if" I have feelings in a relationship.	
5.	I carefully consider other people's expectations.	
6.	My behavior reflects societal norms.	
7.	My choices reflect expectations from parents or other authority figures.	
8.	It's difficult to be spontaneous in my words and actions.	
9.	My life is an imitation of others.	
10.	My choices don't reflect my genuine preferences.	
11.	I get defensive when criticized.	
12.	I sense that I'm compensating for some insecurity or weakness.	
13.	It's difficult for me to take genuine initiative.	
14.	I'm self-conscious about what I'm doing.	
15.	I compromise what I value.	
16.	I deny or hide my feelings.	
17.	I harbor anger or resentments.	

18.	I care deeply about my mom or dad's opinion.	
19.	I'm not the source of my own action.	
20.	I crave feeling important based on the performance of my team, company, or kids.	
21.	I lack a sense of vitality.	
22.	I have a fear or being liberated to do what I really want to do.	
23.	I'm rigid or inflexible about how I think people should act.	
24.	I engage in bravado or boasting.	
25.	I'm a control freak.	
26.	I'm preoccupied by what others think.	
27.	I don't like criticism.	
28.	My choices tend to reflect those of my peers.	
29.	I act like my life is better than it is.	
30.	I don't speak up when something isn't right.	

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TRANSPARENCY PATTERNS ASSESSMENT

From pg. 79 of *Four Patterns of Healthy People* by Matt Norman

Consider taking the assessment to better understand your transparency patterns in various areas.

1. Almost never 2. Rarely 3. Sometimes 4. Often 5. Regularly

#	Question	Item Score
Awareness		
1.	I put myself in situations where others can give me honest feedback.	
2.	I regularly think about the factors that are impacting trust in my relationships with others.	
3.	I set aside time every day to think about how I'm feeling.	
4.	I recognize symptoms (fatigue, anger, impatience, hunger, loneliness, etc.) of emotional depletion inside myself.	
Section Total		
Environment		
5.	I proactively talk about my feelings with my closest relationships.	
6.	I can name three people with whom I can share anything about myself.	
7.	I regularly meet with people where I talk about my feelings.	
8.	I have a safe place to discuss my problems.	
Section Total		
Mindset		
9.	I see it as personal victory when I'm able to authentically share my feelings.	
10.	I'm comfortable showing less socially normative emotions like sadness in front of people I trust.	
11.	I view my ideal self as someone that can talk openly about my feelings.	
12.	I value time spent talking about hard things with other people.	
Section Total		

Communication		
13.	I can clearly explain how I'm feeling to others.	
14.	I know when to stop talking so that others can remain engaged in listening.	
15.	I tell others about my emotions (how I'm feeling) beyond just telling them about circumstances (what's happening).	
16.	I listen and ask questions when someone is sharing with me.	
Section Total		
Response		
17.	I honor the confidentiality expectations of others.	
18.	I can listen to someone share their struggles with me without feeling compelled to give advice or solve their problems.	
19.	I am careful not to make judging comments or jokes at the expense of others.	
20.	I resist the temptation to minimize what people say to me by talking about my own similar experiences.	

Total up your score for each section and consider which area(s) score lowest. Pick one of the items in that section to work on, ideally with the help of other people who can model, encourage, and support your transparency.

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