



## Integral Facilitator Program - Cohort Three

### Reflection Paper: Insights on Building Trust and Intimacy for a Supportive Group Practice Space

#### Pod Heart Members:

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- Caroline Bouchard
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Our Pod Heart Intention: *Our practice community inspires through radical compassion and unwavering presence to fullness.*

This paper serves to share our reflections and learnings from our POD project. In keeping with the Truth of our POD, we will not superimpose a structure that guides the reader toward a conceptualization of our experience and instead invite you, the reader, to get comfortable, breath into your body and let your present moment awareness grow as you read these words.

As a POD we explored being together and creating a space that allowed the focus to be on the emergent present moment. Interesting, you might be thinking, and just how did you do this as you came together from all parts of the world, with different backgrounds, under the auspices of a “project” and interact via videoconference? Here’s some of what we now understand helped us do this:

- We gave our Pod time: there was a sense that we couldn’t rush this, that we had allow for things to emerge organically, at their own time
- We were willing to take the risk of being with not knowing, sacrificing structure and goal orientation in favor of staying open to the emergent
- We prioritized looking within as a source for guidance and direction
- We dedicated time to crafting an intention that captured our shared sense of where we wanted to go (and by the way, this emerged out of a present moment experience that was not planned, which will be covered in more detail later in this paper): *Our*

*practice community inspires through radical compassion and unwavering presence to fullness.*

- We cultivated moments of being together in silence
- Although we have very different backgrounds, experiences and gifts, we found fundamental common ground in our humanness, in our open-heartedness, in our desire to connect, in our desire to see and be seen. As time passed, this common ground felt increasingly solid, a very reliable place to go
- We emphasized being over doing and the doing emerged effortlessly as if the being held a structure for the “doing” to creatively emerge
- We cultivate openness and a willingness to listen. To receive even if we didn’t agree. To be ok with not agreeing, with having different perspectives

As a result our POD started to take it’s own shape and each of us experienced the POD as something that was a function of us, but not us as individuals that our POD had intelligence of its own. In fact, our POD does have a specific shape and that is of the heart. We refer to our POD as POD Heart.

As our POD Heart grew and opened we were able to participate in a space that allowed us to speak straight with the intention of seeking truth, without having to worry about safety. We learned that we were being able to move effortlessly towards deeper truths and agreements, the strength and trust of our container further deepened. As a ‘side effect’, a space for development and growth emerged from a space of acceptance and compassion. Without any expectations of getting somewhere and accomplishing something, our POD saw that what had emerged was what we needed in our Integral Facilitator experience, and that was a place that encouraged and supported compassion for ourselves and others, right now, exactly as we are.

Here are some of our voices to express this need and experience:

*“For me, trust based on acceptance and compassion was at the beginning. It allowed me to extend compassion to myself in a deeper way and from there contribute in a more whole and authentic way.” (Alex Streubel)*

*“We created something precious and really organic. Through this I experienced being really present to the NOW. My little Ludo was also part of the group; I didn't feel the pressure of choosing between my POD meeting and being a mom. I found a profound respect and it allowed me to be fully present with what was happening, as Ludo was part of it.” (Caroline Bouchard)*

*“Our time together energizes, uplifts, inspires, expands, opens my heart, leaves me looking forward to our next call, motivated me to aspire to continued connection even*

*after the IF program ends; allows me to proceed together without expectations, tasks, deliverables. Our heart remains alive inside my embodiment and me. Never would I have predicted nor believed this possible.” (Lisa Ferraro)*

*“In sensing into this POD during our second intensive I attempted to transmit my desire to experience moving/working in a group in a different way (the typical way being task focused, outcome oriented and wanting to get somewhere). The POD Heart hugely supported my desire and my overall IF intention of Radical Compassion (which had to start with myself).” (Amy Pasquale)*

As this reflection paper unfolds, the presence of structure demands its due (and rightly so!). A key learning from our POD Heart is that in order to allow the emergent “full reign”, a strong container is needed. Our strong container included:

- Each call had a designated facilitator that was free to choose a topic (the general intention was to work with what was alive for us).
- We respected our time boundary; starting and ending promptly.
- We committed to one technological platform for the calls.
- We had a calendar invite that included everything we needed and one person who updated this if the meeting time/date changed.
- We had a liaison role performed by Alex consistently throughout.
- We agreed to the cadence of meetings (every two weeks).
- We had short follow-up emails that captured key ideas of next steps.
- We created a private Facebook group where we shared our spontaneous thoughts, pictures, triumphs and challenges – this provided a space whereby we could connect with each other easily

Our adherence to our structure in hindsight mainly focused on carving out time that was protected and specific. This helped four busy people come together with less stress and freely give of themselves and receive others, knowing and understanding the shape and strength of the container. The container was built once (almost like a room) and upon building it we could enter and exit together as a group with confidence and ease.

We’d like to conclude our reflection by bringing our POD Heart into sharper view, by briefly sharing two examples of how trusting the emergent now helped us create an outcome with more ease and less effort.

Our first example reflects on the earlier side of our POD formation. Our POD liaison, Alex, let our POD know that Pete would be joining us to help us move along and also get a sense of where we were as a group. A process of meditation at the beginning of our call had already been established. Caroline was the designated facilitator for this call (we

followed a patterned rotation of facilitator, again a process that just emerged). Caroline spontaneously asked Pete to lead our meditation. During those 5 minutes, Pete brought us to our personal intention. At the end of the call, we were so into it that we let emerge our group intention: *“Our practice community inspires through radical compassion and unwavering presence to fullness.”* This was a perfect time for this to emerge and it emerged out of an intertwining of our individual IF intentions, which are:

Member	IF Intention	POD Intention
Alex	I own my power and show up for it	For all of us to show up and participate and create the space that allows that
Amy	Radical compassion	Relax, Create, Let it Emerge
Caroline	Inspire and get inspired to make the difference	Collaborative sharing in order to be stronger
Lisa	Connected to infiniteness and comfortable with everyone’s full humanity	Explorative creativity with an energetic connection

Our second example of exploring the emergent now was toward the end of our POD Heart and thinking ahead to the last intensive in Salt Lake City. This was and is where the rubber meets the road for our POD, as a meaningful outcome is expected, a so-called “deliverable” is required. Can we trust this to emerge or will we revert to “forcing something?” We are pleased to report that we stayed committed as a group to our approach and our intention. We were able to talk directly about what we were all experiencing and feeling and quickly affirmed each other and ourselves that we were not interested in doing a “presentation” and as we continued our open discussion, our idea emerged to share our POD Heart with the group, to use our time with the group to have one of our POD meetings within the embrace of the group and have the group experience this with us.

We are excited to see what that moment holds.