

Suppers Facilitator Theme Card

Group Autonomy

How to use this card:

Pass this card around. Each person please state your name and read a small section of the content on Group Autonomy:

Boundary 10: Group Autonomy

Each group is autonomous, co-created by its members, and has its own personality. Details such as type of meeting, time, format options, food budget, and food preferences are up to its members. At general Suppers meetings, there is broad tolerance of dietary preferences. The only bias is in favor of whole food.

[Petra's Story: Group Autonomy](#)

“Seeker” is probably the word that best describes my image of myself in recent years. Casting about for ways to explain and tame my raging mood swings has been a humbling experience. Most of the time, I’m a pretty nice, rational person. But when I snap, I’m a lunatic. Being in seeking mode has helped because it makes me feel like I’m solution oriented. As soon as I feel like I have it all figured out, I’m more likely to slip, sugar binge, and get hostile.

Suppers helps me stay curious. It doesn’t tell me what or how to eat. It encourages anyone who wants to facilitate a meeting to get creative about the goals of their particular meeting. As long as we keep the focus on using whole food, use the table experience to help people form healthy habits, and avoid commercial messages, we can get pretty creative about the details. So when I started searching for my answers, there were lots of different kinds of meetings to try. I went to general meetings, a blood sugar meeting, a farm to table meeting, and Living Suppers for raw vegans.

It was not an easy journey. I did lots of lying at early meetings because I was too ashamed to say I’d eaten a foot-long hotdog or a big slice of chocolate cake. What was I worried about! Nobody knew what I ate when I was at home and nobody cared. Why did I want them to think better of me? Somebody told me it didn’t matter if I lied about what I ate; the program would still work.

In the end, I found I needed a hybrid of eating styles. I do absolutely the best when I eat mostly vegetables, lots of raw food, and meat only very occasionally when my body sends me a signal that it’s time to have some. My sugar cravings and hostile behavior resolved together! And my sinus issues cleared up too.

Having autonomous groups makes for passionate facilitators who love teaching what they know. It means seekers like me have an array of possible eating styles to experiment with. Having options has given me a measure of control over my life and my moods that I would not have believed possible. My family has benefited as much as I have. Instead of yelling “Mom’s coming, run for cover!” my kids are saying things like “What the heck is edamame?” and “Here comes the three-veg mother, pushing her vegetable obsession on everyone again.” Eventually I

will relax and let the kids have more say in the menu. For now I think they are just relieved to have a relatively sane person preparing their food, something I could not have accomplished without the opportunity to try different ways of eating and create the one that works for me.

Continue around the table by briefly sharing how you relate to the Suppers boundary about Group Autonomy.

If you were to facilitate the ideal Suppers meeting for yourself, what would it be like (the menu, the population served, the handling of “housework” and details)?

Discussion Prompts (Each person select a prompt that works for you.)

- Describe the Suppers meeting format(s) that works best for you.
- How do the timing and pricing work for you?
- Comment on how well your needs for whole food are met.
- In general, how do you relate to the concept of “autonomy”?
- In general, how do you feel in terms of your sense of autonomy and self-determination?

Ideas for Next Steps:

Experiments and Observations:

- Do a thought experiment: Imagine the meeting that would fully meet your needs. Describe the format, timing, price, etc.
- Do a thought experiment: Imagine facilitating your own Suppers meeting. What would it take to make it happen?
- Do the experiment: Host one event for Suppers friends and share the experience.