

Anonymity

How to use this card:

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

Boundary 3: Anonymity

Suppers embraces the time-honored tradition of anonymity, using first names only. Attendance at Suppers constitutes commitment to refrain from the mention of what is said and who is seen at meetings.

[Leah's Story: Anonymity](#)

I froze when I got to my first Suppers meeting and saw a co-worker standing at the counter squeezing lemons. Flashing through my mind were the things I would not be able to talk about now because someone who works for the same company would be listening: my depression, my enslavement to certain foods, and the job stress that makes it all worse. But she was smiling, so she obviously knew something I didn't know.

What she knew was that Suppers has torn a page out of the 12-step process, using first names only and requiring members to refrain from mentioning what is said and who is seen at meetings. My colleague volunteered to sit down with me and go over the newcomer's welcome. She disclosed a few vulnerabilities of her own, which made it possible for me to start sharing my concerns right at my first meeting. Funny enough, the two of us have been juggling a lot of the same issues with food. I would never have known this to look at her; she always seems so together. And she thought the same of me.

Without a boundary for relationships that protects anonymity, I would not be able to participate in Suppers. The shame is too deep and the pain is too raw. But with that boundary in place, not only do I eat once a week among people who really know me, I have a friend at work who meets me weekdays at the salad bar.

Continue around the table by briefly sharing how you relate to the Suppers boundary of Anonymity.

What does the third boundary – anonymity – give you?

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

- How do you feel, knowing that we have a cultural expectation that we not share what is said and who is seen at a meeting?
- What role has other people's betrayal of confidences played in your life or your relationship with food?
- When someone shares an intimate detail, how does it make you feel?

Ideas for Next Steps:

Experiments and Observations:

- Do a thought experiment: Imagine you are among your friends and family. How would it change your life if you could rely on them to not gossip or in any way share the content of your personal conversations?
- Notice how it feels when someone betrays a confidence. Make an observation in your journal.
- When you feel tempted to gossip, notice what is happening in the relationship you're having this moment and play a hunch about what may happen with the relationship with the person about whom you're talking. Write your observations in a journal.
- What circumstances increase or decrease the likelihood that you will engage in gossip?

Between Meetings:

- Become the holder of people's intimate details that you would wish others to be for you. Specifically, you can
 - Listen more.
 - When you're not sure, ask if a particular piece of information should be held in confidence.
 - Take a risk, share a personal detail, something that makes you feel a little vulnerable.
 - If you're an emotional eater, notice if there is a relationship between your sense of personal safety around people and your triggers for unwanted eating.