



Supporting When it Matters Most



Goals of this seminar:

- Identify personal comfortability in supporting someone with different experiences.
- Explore supportive strategies to support those in a crisis while acknowledging personal reactions.
- Depending on options selected: Connect strategies discussed to allyship.

Fraternity Values:

- Honor and Respect
- Personal and Intellectual Growth
- Sincere Friendship

Suggested Facilitator:

- Director Diversity and Inclusion
- Vice President Member Experience
- Director Lifelong Membership

Room setup/materials needed:

- Depending on options selected, either an open space to move around, or a way to deploy a poll.
- Encourage participants to bring materials they can draw on for their own personal notes (scrap paper, iPad, phone, etc).

Getting started:

- The facilitator should walk through this seminar prior to presenting it to make sure they're comfortable with the material.
- Talking points are indicated with normal font. Please use these as speaking guidelines but be sure to make the presentation your own.
- Facilitation instructions are indicated with italicized font. These are hints you might find helpful when administering the material. Most importantly, have fun! The more excited and engaged you are, the more participants will be.

≡ Introduction: Supporting when it Matters Most

≡ Part 1: Supporting when it Matters Most

≡ Part 2: Supporting when it Matters Most

≡ Conclusion: Supporting when it Matters Most

≡ Participant Activities

Introduction: Supporting when it Matters Most

Supporting Others

“ We’re going to jump into this topic today by thinking about the following statement.

I believe a person can be supportive of others without personally experiencing the situation they are going through.

Think on that. We’re going to get your thoughts in just a moment, but before moving forward, I’d like us to set some ground rules for our time today. As with any of our seminars, we know we’ll get the most accomplished if we feel we can be open and honest while learning from each other. That said, please remember these three things:

- Stories stay and lessons leave. As the statement I just read indicates, we’re going to talk about different experiences, and how we feel we can support others who have different experiences and may even be experiencing crisis in their lives. We’re not going to share those stories with others, but we will learn things that we should implement in our daily lives and take those lessons with us.
- This is a brave space. While I can’t identify what a safe space is for everyone, I’m hopeful we can be brave in both sharing and understanding others’ opinions.
- Lastly, I invite you to choose others over your own comfortability. Let’s agree to hear each other out and seek to understand before being understood. With these goals, we will be able to learn

some impactful things together.

Are there any other ground rules you all would like to suggest for today? ”

Allow suggestions, or if facilitating virtually feel free to have them put their suggestions in the chat.

“ Now that we have some expectations set, let’s go into our first activity. ”

OPTION 1: CROSS THE LINE

OPTION 2: POLL

This option is better for a small- to medium-sized chapter with space to move around.

“ Let’s all come together in the center of the room, make a line in front of me. This doesn’t need to be a perfectly, single file line, rather just spread out so everyone has enough room, but stays towards the center. I’m going to read a series of statements—I’d like for you to step to your right if you agree with the statement, and step to the left if you disagree with the statement.

1. I can identify a friend who has helped me through a difficult experience.
 - a. *Allow time for people to move and look around at how the room is split after each statement.*
2. I can identify a time where I helped someone who was going through a difficult experience.
3. I find it uncomfortable when trying to help someone going through something I've never experienced.
4. I feel more comfortable supporting a friend of similar age to me than a family member who is older.
5. Practicing empathy is a strong skill of mine.
6. I am afraid of saying the wrong thing in supporting someone who is experiencing a crisis.
7. I believe that the best way to help someone who is in need is to offer advice and let them decide what to do with that.
8. I have a difficult time helping others through their difficult times when they're not willing to try to do something about it.
9. I find myself often listening to respond and not to understand.

10. Everyone moves at their own pace and may not be ready for help. It's important to respect that boundary.
11. And finally, I believe a person can be supportive of others without personally experiencing the situation they are going through. ”

OPTION 1: CROSS THE LINE

OPTION 2: POLL

This option is better for medium- to large-sized chapters with little to no space to move around or for those chapters facilitating virtually.

“ I'm going to launch a series of polls and would ask you to rank your agreeability with the statements. 1 is do not agree, and 10 is agree. You're able to choose anything in between as well!

1. I can identify a friend who has helped me through a difficult experience.

a. Allow time for people to select their option and share out the poll results after each question to see how the chapter responded overall.

2. I can identify a time where I helped someone who was going through a difficult experience.

3. I find it uncomfortable when trying to help someone going through something I've never experienced.

4. I feel more comfortable supporting a friend of similar age to me than a family member who is older.

5. Practicing empathy is a strong skill of mine.

6. I am afraid of saying the wrong thing in supporting someone who is experiencing a crisis.

7. I believe that the best way to help someone who is in need is to offer advice and let them decide what to do with that.

8. I have a difficult time helping others through their difficult times when they're not willing to try to do something about it.

9. I find myself often listening to respond and not to understand.

10. Everyone moves at their own pace and may not be ready for help. It's important to respect that boundary.

11. And finally, I believe a person can be supportive of others without personally experiencing the situation they are going through. ”

CONTINUE

Part 1: Supporting when it Matters Most

Debrief

“ Thank you for participating in that activity. Let’s debrief what that was like and identify some themes we noticed.

Share with a partner the statements you had an easy time with answering.”

After they share with a partner, call on some examples.

“ Share with a partner the statements you had the most difficulty with answering.”

After they share with a partner, call on some examples. It will be your job as a facilitator to lean in on these answers. You are not expected to have the right answer here, but start identifying where things are tricky for them and why.

“ Thank you all for sharing. Intervening or helping a friend in a situation that we’ve never experienced can be difficult for some and come naturally to others. Something we hear a lot (*and maybe the group alluded to*) is that we’re afraid to say the wrong thing. Do you think it’s possible to say the wrong thing to someone experiencing a crisis? ”

Again, let them talk this out and guide the conversation appropriately.

“ Consider **Intent versus Impact**. Even with the best of intentions, saying the "wrong" thing could have a lasting impact, which is why we want to share some insight today on how to effectively provide care and support. While there may not be a clear "right or wrong," we'll talk about how we can build our confidence in sharing helpful advice to friends, sisters, family members and even people we don't know. ”

CONTINUE

Part 2: Supporting when it Matters Most

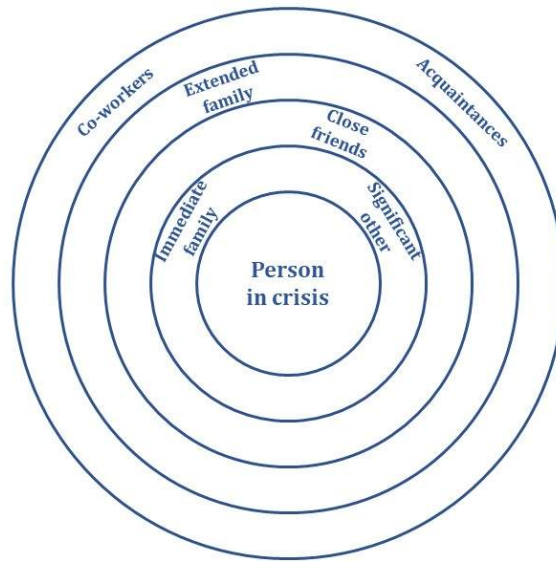
Silk Ring Theory

“ We have identified some barriers in supporting others with different experience than ours. We're going to talk about something called Silk Ring Theory that provides a framework to do so effectively.

Silk Ring Theory was developed by psychologist Susan Silk after she was diagnosed with breast cancer. She found people around her grieving the hardship she was going through in a way that was not helpful to her personally and made her feel even worse. A friend wanted to visit her at the hospital and Susan wasn't up for it. Her friend told her that it “wasn't just about her.”

Now, we can all acknowledge that when a major life event happens, it affects many people other than the one person it's actually happening to. However, this person's grief, support and healing are the most important things to focus on. Susan came up with Silk Ring Theory to help others understand how to support the people they love when in a crisis.

In applying this theory, imagine a bullseye. You'd first put the person experiencing the crisis in the center. In the next ring outside of that, you'd put their immediate family and significant other. The ring after that would include their close friends. The idea is that as you move outward with each ring, those people are less and less connected to the person in crisis. Additional rings could include extended family, friends, co-workers, acquaintances, etc.”



Example Silk Ring Theory Circle

“ Once the rings are filled out, it’s time to think about where you are and how to support those in rings closer to the person in crisis. Essentially, you’ll be **comforting in**. This means in times of hardship, you want to provide love and support to the people in the inner rings. Offering a listening ear, a shoulder to cry on, or even just sitting with them while they’re processing their emotions, can mean a lot.

As we acknowledged earlier, those in outer rings may be experiencing grief or struggling through this life event as well, just in a different way. What someone in one of these rings should do when they need support is to seek it from someone in a ring larger than their own, or **seek out**. This method is important because it allows everyone involved to grieve and feel the emotions they’re experiencing without putting additional weight on those who may be enduring it at a deeper level due to their proximity to the person. This means not complaining, or seeking help from those in the inner rings.

Let’s stop and see what questions you have. What do you think of this theory? Find a partner and share your initial thoughts and reactions. ”

“ Do you agree with the rings and method of comforting in and seeking out? Why or why not?

We’re going to use this theory in a scenario. Libbie is 18 and has just gone off to college to study psychology. She’s living about 2 hours away from home and visits home as much as she can, as she’s very close to her family. During a recent visit, Libbie found out her parents are getting a divorce after 30 years of marriage. She is devastated and doesn’t understand what went wrong. She is seeking the support of her friends that are also close with her family and are saddened by the news. What would Libbie’s rings of support look like? How can those around her support her?

Work as a large group to develop rings of support for Libbie, as well as three things people in those rings can do to support her and three things they should NOT do. ”

If members need time thinking through this scenario, give them a few minutes to pair and share and then ask for a few volunteers to share out loud.

“ Was this easy or hard? Does the theory make sense in application? ”

OPTION 1: ADVANCED DISCUSSION...

OPTION 2: BEGINNER’S DISCUSSI...

This option is better for chapters looking for more advanced discussion in allyship.

“ Now we’re going to look at Silk Ring Theory from a different viewpoint: allyship. This theory can be helpful in supporting those going through hardships you’ve never experienced yourself. For instance, depending on your race/ethnicity, racial injustice may be felt at a different level. A person of color may feel the experience of witnessing a hate crime, hearing a racial slur or encountering daily microaggressions differently than people of another race/ethnicity. Although people in their outer rings may not be able to relate, they can still provide support. We’re going to focus specifically on those experiencing sustained intolerance and/or oppression.

For our purposes today, let’s use Merriam-Webster’s definition of allyship, which is:

The state or condition of being an ally: supportive association with another person or group; specifically, such association with the members of a marginalized or mistreated group to which one does not belong.

What are your reactions to using this theory in practicing allyship? ”

Again, it will be your job as a facilitator to lean in on these answers. If participants feel certain ways, encourage them to share why. Consider generally asking for examples from people who have been in the most inner-ring before and share what has been helpful and hurtful in receiving support.

“ Pair and share with a partner what it would feel like to support someone going through something you’ve never experienced. Have you had to do that before? How did it feel? What went right? What went wrong?

We’re going to brainstorm ways to support those with different experiences than ours. ”

As a group, brainstorm five ways to support those with different life experiences who are in a crisis. Consider outlining a specific scenario to help your group in the brainstorming process.

OPTION 1: ADVANCED DISCUSSION...

OPTION 2: BEGINNER'S DISCUSSI...

This option is better for chapters looking for a beginner's discussion in overall crisis support.

“ Thank you for sharing your personal experiences and reactions to this theory. Something very interesting about this theory is that it identifies specific ways for someone to support another person with totally different experiences and that when we comfort in, we should be lead with care. If we are looking into the circle, we do not have the right to try to correct that person's feelings or tell them they are not being realistic. We must recognize and honor their experience.

On the other hand, this theory allows us to care for ourselves while caring for others. It’s important to understand and practice “seeking out” in the way it’s intended. It does **not** mean we can gossip to our other circles, or talk negatively about those in the inner circles. However, it gives the opportunity and the okay for those in the middle circles to process the situation. They may need to talk through what this means, or how they can best help, or even question what’s going on in the crisis. Processing is good and important. Silk Ring Theory tells us we have space to do this, but it must be directed away from those closest to the person at the center.

Now it’s your turn to practice individually. Think of a situation in your life, or one you’ve seen happen to a family member, friend or acquaintance, and draw out these rings. This could be on a piece of scrap paper, or maybe in the notes app on your phone (if you can’t draw rings, try making levels). Think of a time when a friend or family member was experiencing a crisis. Put them in the middle and fill out their rings of support. ”

Give participants a moment to do this, and then ask for some examples.

CONTINUE

Conclusion: Supporting when it Matters Most

OPTION 1: OVERALL CRISIS CONN...

OPTION 2: ADDITIONAL SUPPORTI...

This option is best for chapters that participated in Part 2, Option 1 (Advanced discussion in allyship).

“ Thank you for sharing your thoughts on the connections of allyship and Silk Ring Theory. As many of you mentioned, being an ally involves much more than just being comforting or listening. But for many, it's a great place to start.

Remember, all of us in this chapter represent different rings of the circle in any given situation. I'm going to read a few ways we can be supportive directly and indirectly in social justice, and am interested in hearing additional ideas you all have:

- Practice Silk Ring Theory by comforting inner rings, and processing with outer rings.
- Read books or listen to podcasts on the topic.
- Speak up when you hear something harmful being said or done.
- Donate money or time to organizations supportive of change and reform.
- Help someone who has been harmed or injured by injustices or has been impacted by the fallout the crisis has created.
- Participate in marches.
- Advocate for meaningful policy change.
- Vote, and encourage others to as well.

What are other ways to improve allyship practices? ”

Give participants a couple of minutes to share and compile a full list.

“ We have compiled a great list here, and I know many of you have recommendations on specific books or podcasts, or even information about marches and voting. I'm going to compile this into a Google doc and send it out to allow those with specifics to share. It would be great if everyone selected at least one new strategy to practice and learn more about the topic at hand.”

OPTION 1: OVERALL CRISIS CONN...

OPTION 2: ADDITIONAL SUPPORTI...

This option is best for chapters that participated in Part 2, Option 2 (Overall crisis support).

Put the following statements from earlier on the screen if you're able; if not, you can read through them or direct participants to the Participant Activities tab on the left side of this module after providing them the link to access this seminar. There they can read through the statements from the beginning.

- “ I find it uncomfortable when trying to help someone going through something I've never experienced.
- I feel more comfortable supporting a friend of similar age to me than a family member who is older.
- Practicing empathy is a strong skill of mine.
- I am afraid of saying the wrong thing in supporting someone who is experiencing a crisis.
- I believe that the best way to help someone who is in need is to offer advice and let them decide what to do with that.
- I have a difficult time helping others through their difficult times when they're not willing to try to do something about it.
- I find myself often listening to respond and not to understand.
- Everyone moves at their own pace and may not be ready for help. It's important to respect that boundary.
- And finally, I believe a person can be supportive of others without personally experiencing the situation they are going through.

Think back to the questions we went through at the beginning of our conversation. I've put them up on the screen. Share with a partner how your opinions or answers have changed after learning about Silk

Ring theory.”

- *Offer an example of your own that you learned through this theory. For example, you may have not thought practicing empathy is a skill of yours, but after learning about comforting in and seeking out, supporting someone seems more tangible. Or maybe you didn't think it was possible to support someone in crisis if you have not experienced it yourself, but now you can identify ways to do that.*
- *After some time to sharing with a partner, share out to the group.*

Before we leave, I'd like everyone to think of one or two situations where you can see yourself providing comfort within the next couple of weeks. If you're comfortable, share that situation with a partner – and spoiler alert – providing comfort to your partner after they share with you may be a great way to practice this!”

Give participants a couple of minutes to do this.

“ Today we learned from each other in ways that allow us to be better friends, family members, leaders and community members. I hope we can remember this theory and hold each other accountable to supporting others in this way.

Thank you for engaging and participating! ”

Survey

Provide the following link to four members of your chapter, one from each class. You and those four members will complete the Leading with Values seminar survey to provide feedback to Pi Beta Phi.

pibetaphi.org/lwvfeedback

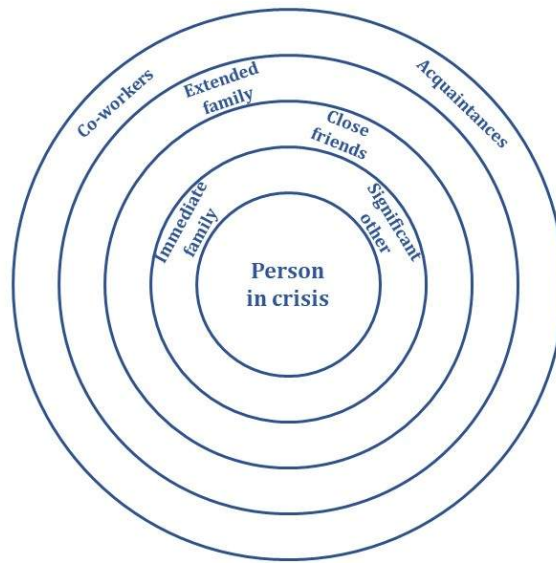
FINISH

Participant Activities

Introduction and Conclusion Statements

- I find it uncomfortable when trying to help someone going through something I've never experienced.
- I feel more comfortable supporting a friend of similar age to me than a family member who is older.
- Practicing empathy is a strong skill of mine.
- I am afraid of saying the wrong thing in supporting someone who is experiencing a crisis.
- I believe that the best way to help someone who is in need is to offer advice and let them decide what to do with that.
- I have a difficult time helping others through their difficult times when they're not willing to try to do something about it.
- I find myself often listening to respond and not to understand.
- Everyone moves at their own pace and may not be ready for help. It's important to respect that boundary.
- And finally, I believe a person can be supportive of others without personally experiencing the situation they are going through.

Part 2 Silk Ring Theory Example



Part 2 Silk Ring Theory Scenario

Libbie is 18 and has just gone off to college to study psychology. She's living about 2 hours away from home and visits home as much as she can, as she's very close to her family. During a recent visit, Libbie found out her parents are getting a divorce after 30 years of marriage. She is devastated and doesn't understand what went wrong. She is seeking the support of her friends that are also close with her family and are saddened by the news. What would Libbie's rings of support look like? How can those around her support her?

Work as a large group to develop rings of support for Libbie, as well as three things people in those rings can do to support her and three things they should NOT do.

Thank you for engaging in this seminar, today! Please fill out this survey to give feedback on this *Leading with Values* seminar:
Supporting when it Matters Most.

Complete the Leading with Values survey.

FINISH