

We adhere strictly to the following guidelines for both maintaining safety and to hold the direction that the writing and responses to it are what is most important:

1. Everyone has a unique voice that deserves to be heard and nurtured. We will be hearing our unique voices through the act of writing.

2. Everything written in the workshop is confidential and voluntary

3. We respond to each other's writing with **positive comments**. We do not give criticism, make suggestions or ask questions.

- When you are listening, notice what stays with you, what resonates with you. That's what we will be reflecting back to each writer.

4. We treat all work as fiction: when we comment we refer to the writer as "the narrator."

5. We don't assume that someone wants to talk about the experience they have written about. Let them open the subject.

6. While writing within the safe confines of the group may feel therapeutic, this is not a therapy group. Our focus is on finding our voice and articulating our experience through our writing.

7. We treat each other with respect and compassion, bearing in mind that we each bring different experiences, emotions and challenges to this workshop.

*P.S. from Donna:*

I have found the act of reading my writing aloud to be the most effective way, however momentary, to diminish, muffle or sometimes even silence the voice of the critic in the back of my head that is chanting to me: "don't read what you wrote because \_\_\_\_\_ (fill in the blank)

- it's stupid
- it will bore people
- someone's feelings will be hurt
- it's not as good as what anyone else here wrote
- they're going to think you're weird
- it will upset someone, or
- it's just stupid

The act of reading out loud mostly drowns out the critic so, come on, read us what you wrote.