

# Triangle Insight Meditation Community

[www.triangleinsight.org](http://www.triangleinsight.org)

## Kalyana Mitta Group Guidelines

(10-05-15)

These guidelines were adapted from Kalyana Mitta documents developed by Spirit Rock and the Insight Meditation Community of Washington (IMCW). We're grateful for their guidance, and we appreciate the information and experience James Baraz and Spirit Rock's Kalyana Mitta team have provided.

We expect our guidelines will evolve along with the Kalyana Mitta program. The experiences of those who participate in KM groups will be invaluable as we make this journey together, and we look forward to an ongoing dialogue.

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"Having admirable people as friends, companions, and colleagues is actually the whole of the holy life."

—The Buddha

### Purpose of KM Groups

Kalyana Mitta is a Pali word that means "spiritual friend." KM Groups are small peer groups of individuals who are committed to supporting one another in their practice and journey to spiritual awakening. Because these groups are small and meet regularly over an extended period of time, they allow the development of intimacy and trust. Members can begin sharing openly and deeply, and the heart of the dharma is enriched in their practice and their daily lives.

While KM groups can provide great support and inspiration for one's practice, they can also elicit uncomfortable thoughts and feelings during both meditation and group discussion. A commitment to regular meditation practice and an ability to manage one's own feelings, as well as one's reactions to others, will help foster a positive group experience.

### Forming a KM Group

An individual who is interested in forming a KM group is considered a group organizer. While this is a crucial role in the start-up of a group, it's a temporary role, functioning only until the group begins meeting.

1. Intentions or ideas for groups can be detailed or fairly general. The organizer might want a specific focus and level of experience, or might specify only the location (e.g., Raleigh) and the group members will decide together the other group details.
2. The organizer can let others know of his/her intention and see if there is interest.
3. The organizer should let the KM Coordinator know about the group:
  - a. An Advisor will be assigned to the group to consult with the organizer, as needed, and to work with the organizer and Coordinator to help recruit members.

- b. If the organizer has a preference for a particular Advisor, s/he can let the Coordinator know this, and if available, that Advisor will be assigned.
  - c. Information about the group will be posted on our website so potential members will be informed about the group.
4. Although the group organizer might specify details such as experience criteria for group membership, the organizer isn't the group leader and doesn't decide on his or her own who can join the group.
  5. While the group is being formed, if the organizer knows an individual who is interested in the group:
    - a. The individual should send a [KM-RA Questionnaire](#) to the KM Coordinator.
    - b. The individual and the organizer can decide together if the individual will join the group, letting the Advisor or Coordinator know of their intention.
  6. If the KM Coordinator or Advisor refers someone to a group that has openings, that person can attend a couple of meetings to determine if the group is a good fit. The Coordinator or Advisor will check in with the individual to find out how it went and whether s/he is joining the group or would prefer another referral.

### **Joining a KM Group**

1. If you are interested in being a group participant, you should submit a [KM-RA Questionnaire](#).
2. If you like, you can also talk to the organizer of a newly forming group or the contact person for an existing group.
3. After you submit the Questionnaire, the Coordinator and Advisors will work with you to try and find a good group fit.
4. Once you decide which group you'd like to join, you can attend a couple of meetings to determine if the group is a good fit. If you don't join the group, you can contact the Coordinator to discuss this and request another referral.

### **Group Advisor**

1. As noted above, when a group is being formed, an Advisor will be assigned for consultation, as needed, and to help recruit members
2. The group Advisor is available to meet with the group for one or two sessions for initial orientation and consultation.
3. If issues, difficulties, or questions arise at any point, the group can ask the Advisor for consultation.

### **Group Focus**

1. Each group will decide what it wants its focus to be.
2. When the focus is included in the organizer's group description, group members might still refine the focus or decide together how it will be implemented.
3. It is very helpful if group members are clear about the focus of the group and the intentions of the group members. Some groups might choose a particular topic, others might focus on how to keep practice alive and fresh, and others might also focus on the psycho-spiritual issues and development of its members.
4. While the amount of personal sharing will vary from group to group, personal sharing in KM Groups is in the context of the dharma, and group members are encouraged to be sensitive to maintaining this balance.

### **Group Administrator**

Each group needs a designated Administrator. This can be any member of the group, including the individual who organized the group. The Administrator will:

1. Help to coordinate group logistics and communication.
2. Keep the KM Coordinator informed of the group description, membership, status of any openings, and any changes to the group.

If the Administrator for a group changes, the KM Coordinator should be given the new Administrator's name and contact information.

### **Other Group Decisions**

Each KM Group will need to make a number of decisions about its structure and group expectations.

- Location
- Length and frequency of meetings
- Commitment to group attendance
- Confidentiality agreement
- Format of meetings
- Who the Group Administrator will be
- Whether to be a peer group or have one or more designated or rotating facilitators

For example, commitment to attend meetings can be a significant factor in a group's success, and each group will decide what is expected of its members regarding attendance. There are suggestions for many of these decisions on the [Spirit Rock](#) and [IMCW](#) websites, and we will be posting some suggestions on our website.

### **Mindful Sharing**

Each member's mindful listening and speaking are essential for maintaining the optimum space for rich dharma discussion to take place. Please refer to our [Mindful Sharing Guidelines](#).

### **Participation in Triangle Insight**

In order to stay connected to the larger sangha, KM members are encouraged to maintain some regular attendance at Triangle Insight on Wednesday evenings.