



Talking Matters Directions

As families, schools, businesses, churches, and communities are desperately searching for ways to intervene to help hurting people, how do we become safe people and create safe places where we can connect, heal, and grow? *Talking Matters* is a three-round, process-oriented, reflective, communication tool designed to help develop and to deepen our relationships by engaging us in the process of being known and loved.

Game Overview

Objective

Equipping people to facilitate purposeful conversations in the everyday venues of life.

As groups come together to pursue holistic health by playing *Talking Matters*, participants are challenged to increase their:

- Personal, emotional, social, and spiritual awareness
- Communication and boundary setting skills
- Ability to give and receive care, help, and love in relationships
- Sense of value, significance, and purpose

Intended Audience

Talking Matters is designed for people who are at least in high school and are able to carry on mature conversations.

Group Size

Due to the typical relationship between group size and perceived trust, paired with the time limitations for having all participants of a group contribute equally in a discussion, it is encouraged that groups remain between two and twelve in

size. When recurring groups increase in number, it is time to equip another facilitator and birth a new group!

Venues

Talking Matters can be used in virtually any setting where there is space for meaningful conversation. To name a few...in homes, schools, workplaces, neighborhoods, restaurants and coffee shops, churches, residential or rehab facilities, waiting rooms, retreat centers, and senior centers, ...for counseling, coaching, mentoring, dating, marriage, family gatherings, and wellness groups, or...while traveling together with someone to your next destination.

Leading Talking Matters

Who to Invite

Leading *Talking Matters* groups requires preparation, intentionality, and courage. The people you invite to play *Talking Matters* must be willing to engage in an unfolding process of being known and loved. People who desire to develop connected, authentic relationships are good people to invite to play *Talking Matters*. People who are guarded, defensive, sarcastic, insincere, and who make fun of others would likely sabotage *Talking Matters*. People who would benefit from *Talking Matters*, but who haven't yet developed good communication boundaries or skills, will likely need the leader to do some one-on-one training with *Talking Matters* until they're ready to be a positive group participant. The history of your relationships will impact how much and what people share in your group.

Environment to Cultivate

Your job will be to create a well-protected, safe environment that opens the door for life-changing conversations to occur. Don't rush the process.

Help your group become comfortable with silence as you wait for group members to think and reflect before responding to the questions. Occasionally you will need to give players the permission to pass and choose another card saying, "I'm not ready to answer this question." Group trust and cohesion must grow in order to answer some of the more difficult questions. Establishing a consistent time, place, and length of time will help your group become more predictable.

Communicating expectations of consistent participation and confidentiality will help *Talking Matters* become a valued and safe group for its members. To facilitate people connecting, healing, and growing together, you will need to use discernment when to lean in and challenge and when to back off and just trust the process.

Closing the Conversation

Each time you conclude playing *Talking Matters*, take some time for people to give feedback including what they learned, what they liked, and what they disliked. Eventually you will get to the place where your group participants will be picking which decks of cards they use, and you will be nurturing the process of helping them begin to lead their own *Talking Matters* groups.

Setting Up Talking Matters

Based on the round, set-up simply involves laying the deck(s) out on the table, barstool, arm rest, or other available surface and committing full attention to the conversation.

Playing Talking Matters

Talking Matters is made up of three rounds:

Round #1 - Invitation Round

The *Invitation Round* is designed to help the group learn to interact openly within good boundaries to prepare them for deeper conversations in the next rounds. When new group participants are added, it's a good idea to go back to the Invitation Round until your group is ready to move on to deeper conversations.

Play

Take turns picking up and reading cards. Reflect on each question and honestly respond from your life experiences. Any of the cards may be used as springboards for group discussion.

A Safe Environment

Create a well-protected, safe environment that can lead to developing deep trust, openness, honest reflection, crucial feedback, deep connectedness, healing, and growth. Keep your comments positive, honest, sincere, and encouraging. Speak the truth in love to one another. Refrain from all forms of sarcasm, insincerity, coarse joking, laughing at the responses of others, making fun of one another, harassment, put-downs, going off on tangents, and name-calling.

Teachable Moments

Throw the flag if and when people start stepping over healthy communication boundaries. If these boundaries are ignored, people won't feel safe to be open, and your group will soon deteriorate. Jump in and coach one another. Build in some grace-based opportunities to re-do or try again when people's comments are inappropriate.

Round #2 - Investment Round

The *Investment Round* is designed to bring the group into meaningful conversations about the important areas of life.

Play

The group may choose to work through one topical deck at a time or choose specific topical decks which are noted as relevant or pressing. In some cases, a facilitator may purposefully add in a deck mid-conversation based on what they hear expressed. If multiple decks are in play, allow participants to choose from any of the decks on their turn. As with the Invitation Round, any of the cards may be used as springboards for group discussions.

A Safe Environment

Keep your comments positive, honest, sincere, and encouraging, and make sure you set and enforce good communication boundaries as your conversations deepen. Trust must grow for conversations and relationships to deepen. Take your time. Trust the process. Invest in developing some life-changing relationships as you play *Talking Matters* together.

Round #3 - Challenge Round

The *Challenge Round* is designed to encourage the group to apply the communication skills gained from the first two rounds. The group is challenged to initiate meaningful conversations when only supplied with one or two-word prompts.

Play

Play proceeds in the same manner as the previous round.

Action Plans

If you want a high-impact experience from *Talking Matters*, turn your *Challenge* conversations into action plans. When honest conversations lead to

intentional actions to make a difference in people's world, *Talking Matters* will turn you into a change agent in your community. Doing *Challenges* together as a group will turn your group into a community mission team. Soon you will be introduced to new people whom you can invite into your *Talking Matters* group. Before long, you will have a new group of friends, and you will need to start a new *Talking Matters* group.

Moving from Round to Round

It is left to the discretion of the facilitator to identify when it is appropriate to transition the group beyond the *Invitation Round* into the *Investment Round*. Similarly, some participants may be ready to take on the *Challenge Round* and others are not; in this case, the facilitator may choose to add a Challenge deck into the mix of the *Investment Round* before attempting a true *Challenge Round* with just the *Challenge* decks. When new participants are added to the group, it is encouraged to always return to the *Invitation Round* until trust is formed.

Closing the Conversation

Because people's schedules tend to be busy, you may want to decide ahead of time how much time you will be setting aside for *Talking Matters* so you can bring your conversations to an end. Once you get hooked on *Talking Matters*, you will be engaging in meaningful conversations that can last for hours! Linger as long as you like!

Talking Matters is a tool of Spirit-Driven.



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