

Barb Novak  
Facilitator

It is with pleasure that I am speaking to you on this fabulous event as we come to the close of another year of the Companions on a Journey program.

This program has significantly impacted my life in so many ways. I find that people are surprised when they learn I am part of my own journey group. But this is, in fact, how my involvement began with this program. I have been involved with Companions since its inception with a journey group for staff and faculty. There are five of us who are all employees here, and I am extremely grateful for this group of women. As our group benefited of such a group wanted to become more Mary who is always come forward! ☺ And with a group of students.



evolved and I saw/felt the and process, I knew that I involved. I contacted S. willing to have facilitators thus it began my journey

I am happy to say that remained their entire they are being journey members this

this student group has four years at CSB. In fact, recognized as senior evening. It is with honor

that I have been a part of these young women's lives for four years. I can still remember the first time we met in the Sitarz Room of the Main Building. There was apprehension and fears by all of us. We were embarking upon a new adventure as facilitators and participants, not to mention that they were starting their first year of college coming from different cities, different backgrounds, and different beliefs and so on. And yet everyone was looking for some sort of solitude, some sort of sanctuary, and some sort of place where they could just be with a yearning for some type of soul searching.

At this time, we did not visit while eating. Many of you in the room may remember this. The silence felt awkward and you were sure that everyone wondered how one could possibly chew that carrot so loud. It was done with intention behind it although I am glad that we can now share while we eat as this gives us the time to catch up with each other. We have grown together as a group sharing some of the most private aspects of our lives. We have laughed, cried, been frustrated, joked, and had some deep healthy laughs sharing our souls together. We had one semester where three out of the five participants were abroad. We missed them immensely while they were gone but they remained with us in spirit each time we met. I have reflected many times about the quality of this group of young women. My co-facilitator Geri, and I are so grateful for the opportunity to have shared with all of them, to have been a part of each of their lives, in the development of each and every one of us. And it is without a doubt that these young women will go out in to the world as successful and beautiful women from the inside out and that they will impact each and every life they come into contact with. I will miss them all and thank all of them for what they have given to me.

I am also involved with two other remarkable journey groups. We began our process one and two years ago respectively and have grown in our time thus far and I look forward to our future years together. I am humbled at the beauty within all of my group members and the sharing they do. It is amazing how people are willing to prepare when they are so busy with life and other expectations but yet they come with an open heart willing to give and willing to receive with all group members. And just when I think wow, how can this session be topped, I am surprised by the next session. The depth within all of the participants is sincere and respectful.

I do believe that this program allows students and facilitators so many life-long, valuable benefits and I will mention just a couple. The first is the ability to listen. When I say listen, I truly mean this process allows us to learn how to listen to someone, to let them tell their story, to give someone our full attention without interrupting, without turning their story into our story, and being respectful of their thoughts. This program also benefits all of us through our responses to another who has shared with us. As women, we are so inclined to want to nurture, help and fix something for someone else. But I do believe it is significant to challenge others in a way that is in fact nurturing through this process and allows someone else to go deeper within themselves, finding their own answers and inner peace. We let them continue their story, finding their truth and feelings. This allows an individual significant growth internally and ultimately externally in everyone we interact with. This can be rewarding for anyone, and I am sure all of you in this room who have experienced the process can relate to what I am saying. Finally, it allows us to be present, to be comfortable within ourselves, in the presence of others, in silence, and to just be present.

I think this is testament to one of the reasons why this program has grown tremendously since it began. People want a sacred place to share, to cleanse their soul, to heal, to laugh, to love, to be heard and the list goes on and on. I know I have grown significantly from all of my experiences. This process and program has had favorable impact in many of my relationships both personally and professionally. Some of you know me from my work in the Registrar's Office at CSB/SJU, through the women's self defense program on campus; some of you are my friends, colleagues and journey group members. Regardless, those of you know I love this program and I recommend it to anyone! 😊

In my role as a self-defense instructor, I have given presentations at the national RAD conference. I have spoken about the Companions journey group program, done some role playing with men and women showing the difference in sharing with interruptions compared to one with listening with empathy and respect and people are amazed. They are impressed we have something like this at our school. So, we are lucky indeed. I thank the founders of the grant and those that work so very hard every day to make this program happen, so we all can experience the benefits and grow as individuals, as groups and as an institution as a whole. Throughout all of our experiences, we are giving and receiving with everyone we interact with.

I am happy and proud to be a facilitator and participant with this program. I encourage all of you to continue your journeys as participants throughout your time at CSB and beyond, as facilitators in your time with your groups and in your daily lives, to continually find that inner voice and guidance as you walk gracefully through each day of your lives.