

## Leader's Guide: Independence versus Loneliness

We celebrate independence in this country; we have a holiday dedicated to our nation's independence . . . our freedom. So what about our personal freedoms? How do we attain and maintain the freedom to be self-governing and sovereign (a nation of one), the freedom to grow, to express ourselves, and to find inner peace? Why does the idea of personal independence—which has a ring of such greatness!—often feel tainted with a sense that it will lead to sadness, isolation, and loneliness?

### *Chalice Lighting (2 min)*

Ask someone to read the chalice lighting reading found in the bulletin as you light the chalice.

A friend is one that knows you as you are, understands where you have been, accepts what you have become, and still, gently allows you to grow.

—William Shakespeare

### *Sharing of Joys and Sorrows (10 min)*

Ask group members to check in, telling in one or two sentences how they are doing this week. Share information about absent members.

### *Silence (3 min)*

Start with the following words: “Get comfortable in your seat. Close your eyes. Take a deep breath in, and then a deep breath out. And now just breathe gently.” Then give your group the gift of three minutes of silence. Time it if you would like.

### *Shared Readings (5 min)*

Have each person in turn read from the shared readings found in the bulletin until all the readings are finished.

### *Deep Sharing and Deep Listening (65 min)*

Do three rounds of deep sharing and deep listening. Pay close attention to the time allotted each person to ensure that everyone gets a turn to share.

**Round 1 (10 min):** What two or three words come to mind when you think of “independence”? What two or three words come to mind when you think of “loneliness”? How might they be related?

**Round 2 (40 min):** Where in your life do you most value your independence, and where do you find the most fulfillment in connection with others?

**Round 3 (15 min):** What did you learn from the homework or this session that surprised you? Is there anything, as a result, that you've decided to change in your life?

### *Closing Words (1 min)*

Read or ask someone to read the closing words.

Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of human freedoms—to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way.

—Viktor Frankl

### *Closing Song (1 min)*

“Thank You for Your Loving Hands”

### *Group Business (5 min)*

Pass out the homework for next time.