

REGENERATIVE MEN

the group guidebook



How to sense, start, run, and grow

a group of men over time.

Stand by what grows.

regenerativemen.com

A note before you begin.

This guidebook is for the man who is wondering whether to start a group, the man who has just started one, and the man who has been in one long enough to wonder what is supposed to happen next.

Read what you need. Skip what you do not. The book is built to be entered at any point. If you are sensing into whether a group wants to form, start at the first part. If you are running your third meeting, skip ahead to the part on how meetings work. If you have been at it a year and the group feels like it is changing, move to the part on how a group matures.

The work is real either way. The book is a companion to it, not a substitute.

A regenerative man increases life around him.

In his home, his work, his community, and the world.

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WHAT THIS BOOK IS

A working manual for men forming, joining, or running
a Regenerative Men group.

WHO IT IS FOR

The man who senses the gap between his effort and what it is producing.

The man who wants other men in his life at more depth than the schedule has allowed.

The man who has a project he keeps almost starting.

The man who is ready to be held to what he says he will do.

The man who knows there is more to life.

If any of those describe you,
the following pages are the place to begin.

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PART ONE • WHY THE GROUP

The case for six to eight men as the unit of regeneration.

A man can read a book on his own. A man can journal on his own. A man can sit in meditation, train in the gym, walk in the woods, and pray on his own. Many of the practices a regenerative man carries are practices he does by himself. So the question is fair: why a group? Why not just do the work alone, the way most serious men have always done it?

The answer is not that solitary work does not matter. It does. The answer is that the work this movement is built around cannot be done alone, because the obstacle is not what the man knows or what he is willing to do. The obstacle is the man himself, and the self cannot fully see, regulate, or hold itself accountable to its own development. Something outside it has to do that work, and the question is what shape that something takes.

A group of six to eight men, meeting in person on a regular cadence, is the smallest unit that can do all of the work the man cannot do alone. That is the claim this part of the guidebook is built to defend.

Why a group, rather than alone.

Three things happen in a group that do not happen in solitary practice, and each of them is doing structural work the man cannot do for himself.

The first is co-regulation. Human nervous systems are not closed systems. They are open ones, designed to settle and stabilize in proximity to other regulated nervous systems. The neuroscientist Stephen Porges named this the “social engagement system,” and the psychiatrist Thomas Lewis and his co-authors documented its effects in *A General Theory of Love*. Their argument, drawn from decades of research, is that a man sitting in a room with other men he trusts is doing biological work that he literally cannot do by himself, regardless of how disciplined his solo practice is. The group settles a man’s nervous system in ways no book or app can.

The second is reflected sight. A man cannot see his own face without a mirror, and he cannot see his own patterns without other people whose perception he trusts. Robert Kegan, the developmental psychologist, has spent forty years documenting that adult development stalls when a man’s “subject” remains his own without anything to reflect it back. Other men, holding a man’s project and his commitments over time, become the mirror that lets him see what he

has been carrying as if it were just the way the world is. No amount of journaling produces this. The mirror has to be alive.

The third is consequence. The behavioral economists call it accountability. The older traditions called it witness. The point is the same. A man who has committed to no one but himself can revise the commitment any time the cost of keeping it gets too high, and he will, because he is the only one who knows. A man who has committed in front of other men whose respect he wants is in a different situation. The cost of revising the commitment now includes the cost of facing them. This is not willpower. It is structure. Religions, fraternities, twelve-step programs, military units, and every lasting movement in human history have used this same structure for the same reason. It works.

A man working alone may have one of these three. He almost never has all three. The group gives him all three, every time it meets, by virtue of the form itself.

Why men, in this particular container.

This is the question most likely to make a thoughtful reader pause, and it deserves a direct answer.

A group of men, meeting as men, is not a statement about the superiority of male experience or the exclusion of anyone from the larger work. It is a recognition that the patterns this movement addresses, the gap between effort and meaning, the inheritance of a depleting model of masculinity, the tendency to substitute output for presence, the difficulty of asking other men for help, are patterns that show up specifically in men, and that a focused container produces more honest work than a mixed one.

There is a practical version of this argument and a deeper one. The practical version is that men in mixed company often perform a version of themselves designed to be useful or unthreatening to the other people in the room, and that performance gets in the way of the work. The deeper version is that the work of becoming a regenerative man requires undoing patterns that are specifically masculine in their texture, and that other men who are working on the same patterns can recognize them, name them, and push on them in ways no one else can.

What happens inside the group is men's work. What grows from the group, the marriages that stabilize, the children who carry different patterns forward, the communities that thicken, the institutions that bend, belongs to everyone.

Why this size, six to eight.

The size is not arbitrary. It comes from a body of research and a longer body of lived experience that converge on the same range.

A pair is too small. Two men can develop deep trust, but the relationship has nowhere to triangulate. When one man's pattern goes invisible to the other, there is no third perspective to surface it. Pairs also collapse when one man is going through a hard season, because the other has to carry the whole weight of the relationship.

A circle of three or four is better, but still fragile. The work depends on a small number of relationships that all have to stay healthy at once. One conflict, one dropout, and the container is in question.

A group of six to eight is the smallest size at which the loss or struggle of any single member does not threaten the survival of the form. It is also the largest size at which every man can hold every other man's project in working memory between meetings, and at which a two- to three-hour meeting can give every man real time. The anthropologist Robin Dunbar has documented that human social cognition has consistent thresholds at around five, fifteen, fifty, and one hundred and fifty members, and that the smallest of those, five to seven, corresponds to what he calls the "sympathy group," the people whose lives a person actually tracks with care. A Regenerative Men group sits at the upper edge of that range by design.

Beyond eight, the form changes. Speaking time fragments. Individual projects start to blur. The container becomes a forum rather than a working group. Communities of twenty or fifty or a hundred men have their own value, and the movement will eventually need them, but they cannot do the work the smaller group does. Different size, different function.

Why the group becomes the unit of regeneration.

This is the largest claim, and the one least often made.

Most men's work treats the group as a vehicle for individual development. The man enters depleted and leaves more whole. The group is the means. The man is the end. That framing is true as far as it goes, and it is not enough.

The Regenerative Men frame is different. The group is not just a vehicle for the man. It is itself a small, durable social structure operating inside larger systems that have lost the ability to produce coherent local action. As the group matures, the men in it stop being only individual practitioners of a regenerative life. They become a working node, a place in the larger system where regenerative practice is no longer rare, where projects get done, where commitments get kept, and where the standard for what a man's presence in the world looks like gets quietly raised. The work the group does inside its members flows outward, into homes, workplaces, neighborhoods, and institutions, because the men carrying it back are not isolated practitioners. They are members of a node that holds them to it.

Network science, developed by Barabási and others, has documented that durable change in complex systems propagates not through broadcast but through dense local clusters connected by weak ties. The group is the dense local cluster. The connections between groups are the weak ties. As more groups form and connect, the regenerative pattern stops being a personal commitment held by a handful of men and starts being a visible structure in the system. Visibility changes what is possible. Possibility changes what other men attempt. The pattern compounds.

This is why the group, and not the individual man, is the basic unit of the movement. Individual practice is necessary and not sufficient. The group is the smallest form in which the work becomes durable for the man and visible in the world at the same time.

What this asks of you.

If the case lands, the practical implication is direct. The work of becoming a regenerative man is not a project a man can complete on his own. He needs other men in a structured form, on a regular cadence, working on real projects, holding each other to what was said. This is not a preference. It is the mechanism.

The rest of this guidebook is built to help you find or form that group, run it well, and grow it over time. Everything that follows rests on this part.

PART TWO • SENSING

Reading the conditions before you plant anything.

Before any project, the work is to read the conditions. A regenerative farmer does not plant first and ask questions later. He reads the soil. He notices what is already alive in it, what is depleted, what season it actually is, and whether the conditions support the seed he is holding.

Starting a Regenerative Men group is the same kind of work. The soil that matters is in you, in the men around you, and in the situations you are already part of. It is knowable. It is usually quieter than the loud signals of modern life. And it is usually missed because most men are not trained to read it.

You are not deciding anything yet. You are paying attention, possibly for the first time in a while, to ground you have been moving through too fast to notice.

Is this right for me?

Sit with each question for a moment before moving on. You are sensing, not deciding.

- 1. In the last six months, have you had the feeling that you are working hard and somehow producing less life than that work should be producing?** Not failure. Not burnout exactly. The quieter feeling that the output and the meaning are drifting apart.
- 2. Is there a man, or a few men, you wish you knew at more depth than you currently do?** Not more friends. Not more contacts. Men whose company you already value, where the conversation has more room in it than the schedule has allowed.
- 3. When you imagine the next ten years of your life continuing exactly as it is now, what is the quietest thing you notice?** Not what you would say out loud at dinner. The thing that surfaces when no one is asking.
- 4. Is there a project, a practice, or a piece of unfinished work in your life that you keep almost starting?** Something concrete. The relationship you have been meaning to repair. The skill you have been meaning to build. The change at work you know is yours to make. The land or community you have been meaning to learn.
- 5. Would the men closest to you say you have something real to give right now, even if you are tired?** Honest answer. Not the heroic version. Tired men with something to give are exactly who this is for. Empty men need rest first, and that is also a legitimate answer.

6. Do you have two to three hours, twice a month, that you could actually protect?

Not theoretically. Looking at your calendar. If the answer is no, the answer is no, and the question is whether something is going to change to make the answer yes.

7. If a small group of men you respected asked you to commit to showing up for them, and to be held to what you said you would do, does that land as a weight or as a relief? Both are useful information. Neither is wrong.

Who else might be ready?

Now turn outward. Think across your life: work, neighborhood, family, the men you have stayed in touch with from earlier chapters. You are not making a recruitment list. You are noticing who else is showing the same signs you just noticed in yourself.

For each man who comes to mind, sit with these questions before moving to the next one.

1. Has he said something to you in the last year that suggests he is asking the same questions you are asking? Not philosophical. Specific. A comment about his kids, his work, his marriage, what he is reading, what he is tired of. The throwaway line that stayed with you.

2. Have you watched him do something hard and do it well? Stay through a difficult conversation. Take responsibility for something he could have deflected. Finish what he started when it would have been easier to walk. You are looking for evidence, not reputation.

3. Does he keep his word? Small commitments and large ones. If he says he will be there, he is there. If he says he will do it, it gets done. This is the floor, not the ceiling, but it is the floor.

4. Is there something he has wanted to build, change, or finish that he keeps mentioning? A project he is already half-engaged with. The men this is for usually have one. Listen for it.

5. Would he tell you the truth if you asked him a direct question? And would you tell him the truth back? You are not testing closeness. You are testing whether the relationship has enough honest air in it to do real work.

6. Could you imagine him pushing you when you needed it, and taking it from you when he needed it? Not advice-giving. The kind of useful pressure that comes from another man who knows what you said you would do and is willing to ask why you have not done it.

7. If he committed to this, would the rest of the group be better for him being in it? This is the real test. Not whether you want to spend time with him. Whether his presence would raise the floor of the room.

Notice what is already gathering.

Most groups do not start with someone deciding to start one. They start with someone noticing that men around him are already doing fragments of the work, and giving those fragments a frame.

Look at your life with that lens for a moment. Some of the most durable Regenerative Men groups began in situations the men involved would not have called movement work at the time. They were already gathering. Someone saw it.

A few patterns worth knowing.

Men who stopped complaining and started working. A group forms during a hard season out of frustration with how often the men in it are complaining about work and life without doing anything about it. They make a decision to stop complaining and start helping each other actually move on the things they have been avoiding. The group grows through invitation. Years later it is still running.

The book club that became something else. A man starts a neighborhood book club at his wife's suggestion after she points out that he is bringing the weight of his work home and needs somewhere to put it. The club grows over several years. Some of those men become the seed of the first group. Others start doing real work on themselves and their relationships without ever joining a group directly, just by being in the room with men who are.

The direct ask from a man you respect. A man you know reaches out to a small handful of men he respects and asks if they would meet regularly to have real conversations. No agenda beyond that. This is one of the most common origin stories for serious male community. If someone has done this for you, that is a signal. If you have been considering doing it, that is a signal too.

The fireside or porch conversation that keeps going deeper. A small group of men, a fire or a porch, the right weather, and the conversation drifts toward what each of you is actually working on, how the families are, what you are seeing in your community and the wider culture. If this happens with the same men more than twice, it is not a coincidence. It is a group trying to form.

The shared crisis that opened something. A layoff, a death, a divorce, a health scare in someone's family. Men show up for each other in ways they normally would not, and the depth of what surfaces has nowhere to go once the crisis passes. Some of the strongest groups form because the men involved refuse to let that depth dissipate.

The fatherhood cohort. Men who became fathers around the same time and started gathering around that, then realized over time that what they were really gathering around was a question about what kind of men they wanted to be. The kids were the catalyst, not the topic.

The training or endurance group. Men who run, lift, climb, ride, or train together. The conversation between sets, on the trail, after the workout, has a particular quality. Some of these groups are already doing the work in fragmentary form. The frame is the only thing missing.

The professional peer group that drifted toward depth. A founders' dinner, an industry roundtable, a mentor circle that started as networking and became something else because the men in it were asking bigger questions than the format could hold.

If any of these are present in your life, the question is not whether to start a group. The question is whether one is already forming, and you are the one who sees it.

PART THREE • STARTING

From one conversation to a working group.

Start with one conversation.

You do not need a plan. You need one conversation with one man.

Pick the man whose name came up most clearly when you sat with the second set of questions. Not the easiest conversation. The one most worth having. Reach out the way you would normally reach out to him. Coffee, a walk, a beer, a phone call on a drive. Nothing about the framing should be unusual.

When you sit down, do not lead with the movement. Do not lead with documents. Lead with what you have been noticing in yourself. The gap between the work you are doing and the life it is producing. The questions that have been surfacing. The men around you who seem to be asking similar questions. Then ask him what he has been noticing.

Listen more than you talk. Most of what you need to know about whether this is the right man will surface in the first twenty minutes if you give him room. If the conversation goes somewhere real, you will both feel it. If it does not, that is also useful information, and the friendship is unchanged.

Toward the end, if it feels right, you can say something like: there is a way of doing this work with a small group of men, on a regular cadence, with real projects and real accountability. I am thinking about starting one. I wanted to talk to you first. Would you want to keep talking about it?

That is the entire ask. Not a commitment. Not a yes. A second conversation.

If he says yes, you have a co-founder for the group. If he says not now, you have honored the relationship. If he says no, you have learned something true about where he is, and the friendship is unchanged.

Then have the same conversation with the next man on your list.

Forming the group.

Once you have two or three men who are in, you have enough to start. You do not need all six to eight before you begin. The first meeting can be three men. The group can grow from there.

Before the first meeting, agree on a few basics. When you will meet. Where you will meet. How often. Two to three hours, twice a month, is the format that has worked. Pick something

concrete and put it on calendars. Fixed dates and visible momentum carry more weight than open invitations.

Send the orientation material to the men who are in. Ask each of them to come to the first meeting with one project. Use the prompt: what project are you already engaged with, or have wanted to start, that aligns with the tenets and works on one or more of the five fields? Tell them the project does not need to be large. It needs to be real.

If there are other men you want in the group who you have not yet had the first conversation with, ask the men who are in to introduce them or to come with you to those conversations. Movements grow through invitation from men who are already inside, not through outreach from someone outside.

The first three months.

The first meeting will feel a little awkward. That is normal. The structure will not flow yet. Men will not yet know how much to share or how to engage with each other's projects. The commitments at the end may be tentative.

Run it anyway. Use the format in Part Four. Each man takes ten to fifteen minutes for his project. The group engages with each man's work in turn. Every man names a commitment before the meeting ends. The next meeting opens by checking those commitments.

The first three months are the period in which the group either becomes real or does not. A few things to expect.

The first dropouts usually happen around meeting three or four. A man who is not actually ready will discover it around then. Let him go without making it a problem. The men who stay will be the men the group is for.

Commitments will be uneven at first. Some men will follow through. Others will not. The pattern that matters is not whether every man hits every commitment. It is whether the group is willing to ask, honestly, why a commitment was missed. That conversation is the engine. Avoid it and the group will drift toward discussion club. Have it and the group becomes what it is supposed to be.

By month three, the rhythm should start to feel natural. The men should know each other's projects well enough to ask sharper questions. The check-in on commitments should take less time and produce more useful pushback. The conversation between meetings, the texts and calls and check-ins that happen outside the room, should be starting on its own.

If those things are happening, the group is working. If they are not, the group is forming more slowly, which is also normal. Give it another three months before assessing.

PART FOUR • WHAT THE GROUP IS BUILT ON

The ethic, the fields, the project, and what this is not.

The four tenets.

These are the binding ethic. Four short imperatives a man can carry in his pocket and apply anywhere. They are meant to be sat with, argued over, and tested in real situations.

Increase life. The throughline. A regenerative man increases the quality and quantity of life within himself and in others. If your action is increasing life, you are on the path.

Start Here. Wherever you currently stand, including overwhelm, doubt, or burnout, is a legitimate starting point. You do not need more capacity, certainty, or readiness before you begin.

Deep Time. Take the long view. Think of what you are leaving behind. Build with decisions that compound across decades and generations

Be Connected. Do not optimize from outside the system you are acting on. Stay in relationship with the people, the place, and the consequences of your work over time. This is what makes regeneration different from extraction.

The five fields of action.

The tenets are the ethic. The fields are where the ethic gets applied. Every man's life touches all five, though most men have one or two where they have the most leverage. The order matters: the fields nest outward, and the inner ones are the foundation for the outer ones.

Self. Your inner life. Body, mind, spirit, nervous system. The condition from which everything else proceeds.

Others. Your closest relationships. Spouse, children, parents, the men you call when something is wrong.

Community. The wider group of people you count on where you live, work, and play.

Place. The community and landscape you actually live in. The watershed, the neighborhood, the local institutions.

Wider Systems. The larger structures you participate in. Your industry, your capital, your influence, your work. Where the patterns get set.

A regenerative man is not equally active in all five at all times. He is honest about which fields he is currently engaged with and which he is avoiding.

The project.

Every man in a group is working on a project. The project is the engine. It is the thing that gets discussed, supported, and held to commitments. Without a project, the group becomes a discussion club. Men can partner or collaborate on projects, but the bias is for contribution and action.

Before each meeting, sit with this question:

What project are you already engaged with, or have wanted to start, that aligns with the tenets and works on one or more of the five fields?

The project does not need to be large. It needs to be real and intentional. It might be repairing your relationship with your father. It might be learning about the natural environment you live in well enough to teach your kids. It might be moving capital out of an industry you cannot defend. It might be a daily practice you have started and stopped six times. It might be something at work that you have been avoiding because you know it will cost you. This section of the guidebook is kept intentionally light so that a man and his Regenerative Men group can sense what wants to take place and the project that wants to get done. Over prescribing or instructing defeats the point: what is showing up now that aligns to the tenets and field of action? Use that as your guide for selecting a project.

Like a healthy ecosystem, a healthy group has biodiversity in its projects. Inner work, relational work, place-based work, and systems work all belong. The first field is self, because everything else rests on it. After that, follow your energy and your capacity to act.

Bring one project. Start where you are with the capacity you have to get real work done. Taking on more than you can feasibly handle is a sign of an extractive mindset and behavior pattern. If you are between projects, bring the question of what your next one should be.

What this is not.

Not a political project. Not a religious or spiritual community. Not a self-improvement program. Not a place to process grievances about modern life. Not a network for advancing careers. It is a serious, apolitical commitment among ordinary men to leave things better than they found them.

PART FIVE • THE MEETING

How a session runs and how to be useful in the room.

How a meeting works.

A group is six to eight men. Meetings run two to three hours, once or twice a month, on a regular cadence. Time and location are flexible. The structure is consistent.

Start and end with Fellowship

It's important to spend time with one another in fellowship, having conversation, and letting things flow as they may. This is wisdom at play.

Invest 20-30 minutes before and after a meeting organically coming together and enriching relationships.

This is also time to share highlights, wins, challenges, or general questions for the group. Frame within the tenants and fields to reenforce the alignment.

One person should bring the group together to engage with the next steps and project walk throughs.

Another person should maintain time for the group and encourage passing to the next member.

If needed, nominate a facilitator to engage the group in generative dialogue around the persons project walkthrough, confidently redirecting advice giving, criticism or fixing back to what the person themselves is seeking and asking.

Each man takes ten to fifteen minutes.

During his time, he covers:

- What he has done since the last meeting.
- What is in motion right now.
- Where he is stuck or what is unclear.
- What he needs from the group.
- What he is considering next.

The group listens, asks questions, offers perspective, and pushes where pushing serves him. This is not therapy. It is not advice-giving. It is men engaging seriously with another man's work.

Before the meeting ends, every man names a commitment.

One specific thing he will do before the next meeting. Something concrete enough that he can be held to it. Something honest enough that he is willing to be held to it. The next meeting opens by checking those commitments.

What to bring.

- Your project. Where it stands. What is working. What is not.
- Honesty about what you have done and not done since last time.
- Attention. Phones away. Other men's time matters as much as yours.
- A question, an obstacle, or a decision you want the group's help with.
- A willingness to engage with the other men's work as seriously as your own.

How to engage well with another man's work.

When another man is in his time, a few things matter.

Listen for what he is actually saying, not what you would say in his place.

Ask before advising. “What would help you most right now?” is almost always the right opening.

Push when pushing serves him. The men who matter most in your life are the ones who told you the truth when it was hard.

Do not rescue. A man's discomfort is often where the work is happening.

Hold what is shared. What happens in the group stays in the group.

Alternative meeting formats.

Variety is at the core of regenerative principles. The default meeting format is built for getting things done, strengthening relationships, and supporting each man's growth. That is the engine. A healthy group also varies its rhythm. The formats below have worked for groups before. Try them.

Tour something. Visit a local farm, service organization, or working space whose results show what regenerative looks like in practice.

Bring in a guest. A speaker, a teacher, or someone whose work touches what the group is wrestling with.

Do the project together. Spend the meeting working on one man's project, or a shared one, with hands and bodies in it.

Take a walking meeting. Six to eight men, two hours, outdoors. A man can say things on a trail he cannot say in a chair.

Give the meeting to one man. When one man is facing a major decision, transition, or stuck point, the entire meeting can go to him. Used sparingly.

Check in on the group itself. Once or twice a year, the meeting is about the group's health. What is working? What are we avoiding? Are we letting each other off the hook?

PART SIX • BETWEEN MEETINGS

The practice is your life. The meeting is where it gets witnessed.

The minimum is your project.

The commitment you named at the last meeting is the floor, not the ceiling. Between meetings, a regenerative man is also building the capacity to act regeneratively over time.

Working on your project. The thing you said you would do.

Tending your inner life. Whatever practice keeps you sourced.

Reaching out to one man in the group between meetings, especially if something has come up.

Sitting with the tenets and noticing where they apply in your week.

Reading, walking, paying attention. Building the inputs that feed the work.

Bringing what you are learning back to the group.

None of this is busywork. The point is that the group meeting is not the practice. The practice is your life. The meeting is where the practice gets witnessed, refined, and held.

How accountability actually works.

Men do not change because someone hands them better information. They change in three conditions that the research and the lived experience both confirm.

They commit publicly to other people whose respect they care about. They take on challenges large enough to be worth the effort. And they refuse to let down the men who are counting on them.

Religions and lasting movements have used these same mechanics for centuries: a small group, a regular cadence, a shared standard, and consequences that come from showing up or not

showing up in front of people who know you. The group is built on that pattern, not on willpower.

PART SEVEN • THE GROUP MATURES

Five stages, three layers, no ladder.

Maturity is something a group earns and re-earns. A new man, a lost member, or a fresh project can return parts of the group to an earlier stage. That is not failure. That is how living things move.

The five stages below name a quality the group has earned, not a process step it has completed. Read them as a way to locate yourself, not a ladder to climb.

The stages also touch three layers at once: what is happening inside the group, what the men closest to each member start to notice, and what the wider world begins to register. Mature groups produce visible change in all three.

STAGE 1 GATHERING

INSIDE THE GROUP

Men are in the room but not yet in the work. Conversations are partly real, partly performance. Some men over-share to prove they belong. Others stay careful and watch. Projects get named but stay vague. A man can miss a meeting and nothing happens. The agenda holds the group together more than the men do. There is a quiet question in the room that no one has said out loud yet: is this going to be real?

THE MEN CLOSEST TO HIM

His spouse notices he is gone for a few hours, twice a month. Curious, mildly skeptical, willing to give it time. Kids notice nothing. A close friend may ask what it is and he gives an answer that does not quite land.

THE WIDER WORLD

Invisible. He has not mentioned it at work. No one outside his closest circle knows this exists in his life.

STAGE 2 SETTLING

INSIDE THE GROUP

The group meets reliably and the men remember each other's projects between sessions. Trust has started to exchange hands in small ways. One man has said something he had not planned to say and the group received it without flinching. Commitments are tracked and the missed ones get named, gently at first. The performance layer is thinning. Men are starting to speak in their own voices instead of the voice they thought the group wanted.

THE MEN CLOSEST TO HIM

His spouse can point to specific changes: more present at dinner, less reactive in a recurring argument, calmer the day after a meeting. Kids notice he is around differently but cannot articulate it. A close friend has asked if there is room for him in something like this.

THE WIDER WORLD

Still mostly invisible. Possibly one trusted colleague knows. He is starting to make different small decisions at work but has not connected them to the group out loud.

STAGE 3 WORKING

INSIDE THE GROUP

The work is happening. Each man's project is moving and the group is pushing it forward, not just witnessing it. Hard feedback lands without rupture and a man can hear something difficult and stay in the room. The tenets are showing up in real situations, not as slogans on a page. Silence is comfortable. Difficult silence is more comfortable than easy chatter. New men can be added without the container breaking, and old men have started to step into roles inside the group without being assigned. The format flexes and the engine still runs.

THE MEN CLOSEST TO HIM

His spouse can name the change without prompting. The phrase used at home is some version of "something is different about him." Kids have stories about him that did not exist two years ago. A close friend has joined a group of his own or is actively forming one. He is the man people in his closer circle call when something is wrong.

THE WIDER WORLD

First visible institutional movement. He has changed something material at work, on a board, in his portfolio, or in how he uses his professional standing. He can trace the change back to a specific conversation in the group. At least one peer in his industry or community has asked what is going on with him.

STAGE 4 BEARING FRUIT

INSIDE THE GROUP

The group is producing things in the world that would not exist without it. Restored land. A mentorship line that runs to younger men. Capital that has moved. A relationship that had been written off and is now repaired. The men hold each other to a higher standard than any of them hold themselves to alone. The group has weathered at least one serious test, a man's crisis, a member's exit, a project's failure, a rupture between two men, and has metabolized it without breaking. The format is now a vessel the group shapes, not a script that shapes the group.

THE MEN CLOSEST TO HIM

His spouse describes him to others as a man different from who he was. Kids carry behaviors they learned from watching him: how he handles a hard conversation, how he sits with a difficult feeling, how he treats the place they live. The men's families know each other. A wider relational network has thickened around all of them.

THE WIDER WORLD

Visible to institutions. He is being asked to bring this approach into other contexts, and sometimes saying yes. Capital is moving, organizational cultures are bending, civic bodies are noticing. The work is no longer something he does on Tuesday nights. It is something his colleagues, employees, or community can feel in how he operates.

STAGE 5 SEEDING

INSIDE THE GROUP

The group is no longer the point. The men are, and the work they are doing in the world is. The group has begun to spawn other groups, mentor forming groups, and refine the practice for men who will come after. At least one man has stepped into a wider role for the movement: storytelling, organizing, connecting, operating. The group can pause, restructure, lose a member, or change cadence without the men losing each other or the work. The original men have become reference points for newer men they have never met. What they built is now something other men can find.

THE MEN CLOSEST TO HIM

Spouse and kids are inside a wider community of regenerative families. Other men's marriages and other men's children have been touched by his presence. A network of men and their families has formed that did not exist before this group did. The work has become intergenerational: his sons and daughters know other men in the group as elders, not as strangers.

THE WIDER WORLD

He is shifting institutions, not just operating inside them. His work is being referenced by people doing parallel work in adjacent fields. The pattern is visible enough to be named, taught, and joined by men he will never meet. The group is one of the early ones in a longer story that has begun to tell itself.

HOW THIS BECOMES A LARGER PATTERN

The honest answer to "and then what" is that no one fully knows. A man changes. The men around him change. The group does work in the world. Some of that work compounds. Some of it does not. The systems this movement exists to influence are larger and older than any single group, and the rules that govern how they actually shift are not the rules that govern a project plan.

What can be said with some confidence is the shape of the bet.

Most lasting change in complex systems does not come from the top. It comes from a small number of well-formed local nodes, doing real work in real places, that begin to connect with each other and with parallel work happening in nearby fields. Each node is small enough to act and rooted enough to last. As more nodes form, the pattern becomes visible to people who were not looking for it. As the pattern becomes visible, more nodes form. Over time, the systems the

nodes are inside of begin to bend, not because anyone forced them to, but because the conditions around them changed.

The Regenerative Men bet is that a group of six to eight men, doing real work over years, becomes one of those nodes. A network hub. A point in a system where regenerative practice is no longer theoretical and no longer rare. A man inside a hub like this does not just change his own life. He changes what is possible for the people around him at work, in his neighborhood, in his industry, in the places his capital flows. As more groups form and connect, the hubs begin to influence each other, and the work of one group becomes harder for the next group to ignore.

This is not a strategy in the conventional sense. It is closer to how forests recover after damage. The recovery is not directed. It is the slow, patient work of many small living things doing what living things do, in relationship with each other and with the place. The pattern is real even though no one can predict exactly where it will surface.

The movement is not the only one doing this kind of work. Across the regenerative agriculture movement, the men's mental health field, the long-horizon investing world, the local food economy, indigenous land stewardship, civic renewal efforts, and many others, similar nodes are forming for similar reasons. The hope is that these efforts are not in competition. The hope is that they are early instances of the same larger pattern, and that as more nodes form across more domains, they begin to amplify each other in ways that none of them could produce alone.

This work cannot be measured the way a quarterly initiative can be measured. The results will show up across decades, not quarters. They will show up in the lives of children whose fathers are different than they would have been, in landscapes that recovered because someone stayed, in institutions that bent toward the long horizon because the men inside them stopped accepting that they could not. They will also show up in places no one was looking, because that is how complex systems actually change.

The work is to form the hub. To do the work the hub is built to do. And to trust that the larger pattern is not the responsibility of any single man or any single group, but is what becomes possible when enough of them stand by what grows.

PART EIGHT • REFERENCES WORTH READING

A short shelf, organized by the question it answers.

A note on this list.

The Regenerative Men framework draws on a wide field of sources, from systems thinking to indigenous reciprocity, from Stoic practice to fatherhood research. The full influence map is laid out in a separate document for men who want to trace the architecture back to its roots.

What follows is shorter and more practical. These are the books most likely to repay a reading hour for a man who is starting or sitting in a group. They are organized by the question they help you answer. Pick the one that meets you where you actually are. None of them are required. All of them have moved someone.

If you read one and it changes how you sit in your next meeting, the list is doing its job.

On increasing life.

Braiding Sweetgrass, *Robin Wall Kimmerer*. The book that gives the word regenerative its weight. Kimmerer writes from Potawatomi tradition and as a trained botanist, and the result is the clearest argument available for why the living world is kin rather than resource. Read it slowly. It changes how you walk through your own neighborhood.

Designing Regenerative Cultures, *Daniel Christian Wahl*. A working translation of regenerative principles into the design of human systems. Useful for the man whose project lives in the Wider Systems field.

The Invention of Nature, *Andrea Wulf*; **Entangled Life**, *Merlin Sheldrake*; **The Light Eaters**, *Zoë Schlanger*. Three recent books that work well together for a man whose project is to learn the living world he is actually part of. Wulf recovers Alexander von Humboldt, the nineteenth-century naturalist who first described nature as a single interconnected web and shaped most of the ecological thinking that followed. Sheldrake takes the reader underground into the world of fungi, where the boundaries between organisms turn out to be far more porous than the categories of modern biology assumed. Schlanger does the same for plants, working through the recent science suggesting that plants sense, communicate, and act on their environment in ways that strain the language we have for what intelligence is. Read in sequence, they rebuild the assumption that the living world is a backdrop for human action and replace it with the older and more accurate picture: a vast, communicative, intelligent system the man is inside of, not separate from.

On the inner life.

Man's Search for Meaning, *Viktor Frankl*. Short, direct, and unforgettable. Frankl's argument that meaning is not optional sits underneath the prompt that every man arrives at the meeting with a project. If you read one book on this list, this might be it.

The Daily Stoic, *Ryan Holiday*. A page a day for a year. The Stoic discipline of regulating the inner condition before acting in the outer world is one of the practical foundations of Tend before you give. The format makes it usable.

Falling Upward, *Richard Rohr*. Aimed at men in the second half of life, the years from 35 to 65 in which most men first start asking the questions a group is built to hold. Rohr names the territory.

The Body Keeps the Score, *Bessel van der Kolk*. The standard reference on how trauma lives in the body long after the mind has moved on, written by a psychiatrist who has spent forty years treating it. Van der Kolk's argument, that the body remembers what the analytic mind cannot reach, is particularly relevant for men who were taught to manage difficulty by overriding it and who are now noticing that the strategy has a cost. Useful for the man whose project is in the Self field and who suspects the work ahead is not just thinking differently but living in his body differently.

Why We Sleep, *Matthew Walker*. A neuroscientist's account of what sleep actually does, drawn from his own lab and the wider field. Walker is unsparing on what chronic sleep loss costs men specifically: hormonal disruption, cardiovascular damage, cognitive decline, and the slow erosion of the patience and presence a man needs to be useful to the people around him. Useful for the man who has been treating sleep as the variable to sacrifice when something has to give, and is starting to suspect that the sacrifice is not free.

The First and Last Freedom, *J. Krishnamurti*. Krishnamurti spent sixty years refusing to be anyone's guru while teaching that the work of seeing yourself clearly is the only work that actually changes anything. The book trains a particular kind of attention: watching your own mind without trying to fix it, without the running commentary, without the conclusion. Useful for the man whose project is in the Self field and who suspects the obstacle is not what he is doing but how he is seeing.

On relationships and fatherhood.

A General Theory of Love, *Lewis, Amini, and Lannon*. The book that explains why six men in a room every two weeks works at a level beneath conversation. Human nervous systems

regulate each other. The group is doing biological work whether or not the men in it know that. This book makes that visible.

The Available Father, *John Badalament*. Practical and unsentimental. For the man whose project is becoming more present to his children than his own father was to him.

On place and the long horizon.

The Overstory, *Richard Powers*. A novel rather than a treatise. It rearranges how a man sees the trees in his own neighborhood, and through them, the time horizon his decisions actually live in.

The Songlines, *Bruce Chatwin*. A traveler's account of indigenous Australian relationship to land. Useful for a man whose project involves rooting in a place he has not yet learned.

Clock of the Long Now, *Stewart Brand*. The most concentrated argument available for thinking in centuries instead of quarters, written as part of the project to build a clock that ticks once a year and is meant to keep time for ten thousand years. Brand makes the case that civilizations decay when their time horizons collapse, and that lengthening the horizon is itself a regenerative act. Useful for the man whose project lives in the Deep Time field, and for any man trying to make a decision today that he wants to stand by in fifty years.

On how minds and movements actually change.

How Minds Change, *David McRaney*. Required reading for any man who wants to invite another man into something. McRaney's central claim, that minds change through feeling understood and articulating one's own position rather than through information delivery, is the basis for every recruitment conversation worth having.

Influence, *Robert Cialdini*. The classic on the six principles of persuasion. Read it to recognize when these principles are being used on you, and to use them honestly when you are inviting men into something real.

This Is an Uprising, *Mark and Paul Engler*. For the man whose project lives at the scale of a movement. The Englers are clear about what makes social change durable across decades. Useful when you start to see the group as part of something larger.

On systems and the long view.

Thinking in Systems, *Donella Meadows*. Slim and powerful. The framework that lets you see why fixing symptoms never works, and where in a system the leverage actually lives. The diagnosis at the heart of Regenerative Men, that we are operating inside a paradigm that produces depletion at every scale, is downstream of Meadows.

Theory U, *Otto Scharmer*. Denser than the others on this list, but worth the climb for the man drawn to leading change inside institutions. Scharmer's discipline of sensing the future as it emerges, rather than projecting the past forward, is the posture this whole framework rests on.

On running the group itself.

On Dialogue, *David Bohm*. A short book by a quantum physicist who spent the last decades of his life working on what happens when people actually think together rather than defending their positions at each other. Bohm's claim is that most conversation is exchange of pre-formed conclusions, and that real dialogue, a slower and more attentive thing, produces understanding that none of the participants brought into the room. Bohm and Krishnamurti carried on a long dialogue with each other across the 1970s and 1980s, and the recorded exchanges are worth finding for any man who wants to watch two serious minds think in public.

The mastermind format the group borrows from has a long literature. Any reasonable book on it will give you the mechanics. The discipline is older than the literature, going back to a small group of men around Benjamin Franklin in eighteenth-century Philadelphia.

The most useful book on running a group, though, is the one written by the men in it. Take notes after each meeting. Notice what worked. Notice what drifted. Bring it back. The group teaches you how to run the group.

A final word on reading.

A man who reads everything on this list and never starts a group has missed the point. A man who starts a group and never opens any of these books will still benefit from the work. The books are servants of the practice, not substitutes for it.

Read what serves you. Skip what does not. The work is real either way.

A note on practice.

Reading is one input among others. Most men this work is for need practices that are not reading: a body practice, a contemplative practice, a relational practice. Some men need real therapeutic work with a trained professional, and there is no shame in that. The self cannot fully help the self, which is part of why the group exists, and part of why a man's life outside the group has to include other forms of support that the group is not built to provide. Regenerative Men does not prescribe what those should be. Each man finds the practices that source him and brings the man he becomes back into the room. If you do not yet have a practice you trust, finding one is itself a worthy project to bring to the group.



PART NINE • FURTHER RESOURCES FOR RUNNING THE GROUP

Practical guidance for the questions every group eventually faces.

The earlier parts of this guidebook explain what a group is, why it matters, how to start one, and how to run a meeting. What follows is everything else. The patterns, decisions, and small operational choices that surface as a group runs over months and years. None of it is required reading for a forming group. Most of it becomes useful at the moment it is needed, which is why this section sits at the back.

Use it the way you would use any reference. When the question shows up, read the section. When it does not, leave the section alone.

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Ready, willing, and able.

Earlier in this guidebook, the questions on who else might be ready pointed at the men around you whose lives suggest they are doing similar work. This section goes deeper. There are three distinct conditions a man needs in order to enter a group well, and a man can have one or two of them without having all three. Recognizing which is missing tells you what to do.

Ready is about the season of his life. A man is ready when there is genuine room in him for this work. Not extra time, exactly, but inner room. He is not in active crisis. He is not at the bottom of a depression. He is not so newly into a major transition, a divorce, a job loss, a move, a death in the family, that his bandwidth is consumed by survival. Ready men have something settled enough underneath to make the work of a group possible. A man can be deeply admirable and still not be ready, because his life is currently too loud for the kind of attention the group asks for.

Willing is about consent and disposition. A man is willing when he has chosen this work freely, not because his wife told him to, not because his therapist suggested it, not because a friend shamed him into it, and not because he thinks he should want it. He has heard the actual ask, taken time with it, and arrived at a yes from his own volition. Willingness without freedom is fragile. It tends to evaporate the first time the group asks something hard, because the man was never really committed in the first place.

Able is about capacity. A man is able when his current circumstances allow him to keep the commitments the group requires. Two to three hours, twice a month, plus the project, plus the

between-meetings work. A man can be ready and willing and still not be able, because he is caregiving for a parent, working two jobs, raising young children with a partner who needs him present, or recovering from something that takes more out of him than he is letting on. Capacity changes over time. A man who is not able now may be able in six months.

A man needs all three. Pay attention to which one is the question.

The most common failure mode is missing readiness. A man who has just had a major rupture in his life often arrives looking for a container, and a group is the wrong container for someone in active crisis. He needs a therapist, a friend, time. The group is for men whose floor is stable enough to do the work on the walls.

The second most common failure mode is missing willingness. A man whose wife sent him, or whose friend pressured him, will often show up the first few times and then quietly disappear. The work was never his. It was someone else's hope for him. If you suspect this, ask him directly: are you here because you want to be, or because someone wanted you to be? An honest answer either way is useful.

The third failure mode is missing capacity. This one is the easiest to misread, because men in this category often want to be in the group very much and will overcommit to make it work. A man who routinely cancels, arrives late, or shows up exhausted is usually a man whose life does not currently have room for what he said yes to. The group is not failing him. His capacity is. The kind move is to name it, give him an honorable way to step back, and tell him the door is open when his circumstances change.

When you are looking for new members, scan for all three. When a current member is struggling, ask which of the three has changed.

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Facilitation: who holds the room.

A meeting needs someone holding the room. Not a leader, exactly. Someone whose attention is on the shape of the meeting itself: who has spoken, who has not, what time it is, whether the group has drifted, when to bring it back. The man holding the room is not in charge of what gets discussed. He is in charge of the meeting working.

For the first three to six months of a group's life, designate one man to hold the room. This is the simplest version of facilitation: he opens the meeting, he keeps an eye on the time for each man's share, he closes the commitments at the end. He is not the leader of the group. He is the man whose job at this meeting is to make the form work. Pick him because he is steady, because

he is paying attention, and because the other men in the group trust him to be fair. He may also be the man who started the group. He does not need to be.

After the group has settled, rotate the role. Each meeting, a different man holds the room. The rotation can be sequential, alphabetical, or chosen at the end of each meeting for the next one. The mechanism does not matter. What matters is that every man in the group eventually holds the room, because holding the room is itself part of the work, and because a group that always organizes around one man is more fragile than one in which every man can do it.

There are stretches when a group should return to a designated facilitator for a season. A group that has lost cadence, a group that has just added two new members at once, a group going through a rough patch with one man in crisis. Steadier hands help in those windows. The default is rotation. The exception is intentional and time-bounded.

A few practical notes on holding the room well.

The man holding the room does not get less time for his own share. He is a full member of the group on his own meeting, with his own project and his own commitments. The role is not a sacrifice. It is a posture.

The role does not include making interpretive decisions on behalf of the group. If something is going off track, the man holding the room names what he is noticing and asks the group what to do. The group decides. He does not.

The man holding the room is the one who notices when someone is being let off the hook, and asks the question that puts the man back on it. This is the most important and the most uncomfortable part of the role. It is also the part most likely to atrophy if the group becomes too polite. Hold it.

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In-person is the form. Virtual is a bridge.

The group meets in person. This is not a preference or a default. It is the form.

The reason is biological. Part Three of this guidebook makes the case that one of the three things a group does that solitary practice cannot is co-regulation: the settling of one man's nervous system in proximity to other regulated nervous systems. That settling is happening at a level beneath conversation, through breath rate, posture, micro-expressions, the subtle attunement that two bodies in the same room produce automatically and that two bodies on a screen do not. Co-regulation through video is materially weaker than co-regulation in a room. The science on this is unambiguous.

A meeting that is fully virtual loses much of what the form is built to do. Men can still share. Projects can still be discussed. Commitments can still be made. But the deeper work of the group, the work that produces the kind of trust and steadiness men do not find anywhere else, requires bodies in the same room. A group that meets only on video may produce something useful. It will not produce what this guidebook is describing.

Virtual is a bridge for specific situations. A man is traveling for work and would otherwise miss a meeting. A member has temporarily moved for a season and is keeping his connection to the group while plans settle. The whole group is unable to gather for one meeting due to weather, illness, or scheduling, and the choice is between a virtual meeting and skipping. In each of those cases, a virtual meeting is better than no meeting.

The most useful pattern is hybrid: most of the men together in a room, one or two joining by video on a screen the room can see and hear. This is materially better than fully virtual, because the men in the room are still co-regulating with each other, and the man on the screen is at least adjacent to that field. It is still not as good as everyone present. It is the right compromise when the alternative is exclusion.

If your group is geographically distributed by design, with members in different cities who cannot meet weekly in person, build the rhythm around quarterly in-person gatherings of two or three days. Those gatherings carry the load that a regular cadence of in-person meetings would carry in a local group. The virtual meetings between them are maintenance. The in-person gatherings are the work.

A group that finds itself drifting toward virtual as a convenience should treat that as a signal. Convenience is not a reason to weaken the form.

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Chat tools between meetings.

The group needs a place to talk between meetings. Not for the deep work, which happens in the room, but for everything that surrounds it: commitment check-ins, project updates, a hard moment that surfaced on a Tuesday, a link worth reading, a photo from a son's first hike. The chat tool is the connective tissue.

What you choose matters less than which features it has. Pick a tool that supports three things.

Threads. A thread is a conversation that branches off from a single message and stays organized inside it. Without threads, every conversation in the group's chat happens in one continuous stream, and the conversation about one man's project gets interleaved with the conversation about another man's commitment and the conversation about whether anyone has

read the new book. With threads, each man's project, each meeting's commitments, and each ongoing topic can have its own space. The group can have several conversations at once without any of them getting lost.

Channels or rooms. The whole group needs a main space. Subgroups working on a shared project need their own space. Two men collaborating on something specific need a way to talk without the rest of the group. A tool that supports this kind of structure scales as the group's work deepens.

Durability and search. Commitments made in chat, project notes, links shared months ago, the photo of the field a man finally cleared. These accumulate into the group's record over time, and being able to find something from six months back matters more than you would expect.

Tools that support all three include several common workplace and community platforms. Tools that do not include the basic group text and most consumer messaging apps. The basic group text in particular is fine for logistics, when are we meeting, who is bringing what, and not enough for the actual between-meetings work. If your group is currently using one, this is the one place where switching tools is worth the friction.

A few notes on disciplined use.

Threads work because the group uses them. If men reply to a project update in the main channel instead of in the project's thread, the thread structure does nothing. The first few weeks of using a new tool, the group will need to remind each other gently. After that it becomes habit.

The chat is not a replacement for the meeting. It is a supplement to it. A man who is doing all his sharing in chat and showing up empty to meetings is using the tool wrong. The chat carries the small things between meetings. The meeting carries the work itself.

The chat is also not where conflict gets resolved. If two men in the group have something to work out, that conversation belongs in person, on the phone, or at the next meeting. Conflict in writing, in a group channel, almost always escalates and almost never resolves.

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Welcoming a new man into the group.

When a new man joins, the first meeting he attends should mark the moment without making it into a ceremony.

The simplest version is this. At the start of his first meeting, before any of the regular shares, the group pauses. Each existing member, in turn, says one true sentence about why this group

matters to him. Not a speech. Not an introduction of himself. One sentence. Why he keeps showing up. The new man listens.

Then the new man speaks. He says why he is here, what he is bringing, and what he hopes the group can hold him to. As long or as short as he wants. He does not have to perform. He does not have to be polished. He just has to be honest about what brought him to the room.

That is the entire welcome. The meeting then proceeds normally, with the new man taking his share like everyone else. No object exchanged. No oath. No reading aloud of a charter. The group has marked the threshold by saying out loud what is usually left unsaid, and the new man has marked his entry by speaking his own reason for being there. That is enough.

The reason to keep it this restrained is that anything more starts to feel like ritual for its own sake, and most of the men this work is for are allergic to that, correctly. The simplest version honors the moment without theater. Men who later remember their first meeting in this group will remember what was said, not what was performed.

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Adding a new man.

The decision to add a new man to an established group is more consequential than it looks.

A group that has been running for a year or more has built something that the new man did not build with you. He arrives into a field of trust, shorthand, history, and patterns of engagement that he has to learn. The existing group, in turn, loses some of the ease that comes from a stable container. For the first few meetings after a new man joins, the group will be subtly different than it was. This is not a problem. It is the cost of growth, and it is worth paying when the right man is the one being added.

A few principles for getting this right.

Add one man at a time, not two. Two new men at once changes the group too much, too fast. The existing members will spend the first few meetings adjusting to two new presences instead of one, and the work will slow more than it has to.

Add a man only when the existing group agrees on him. The decision is unanimous or it does not happen. A group that adds a man over the quiet objection of one member will discover that the objection was right. Trust your skeptics.

Have the conversation about adding a new man at a meeting, not in chat. The decision is consequential enough that it deserves the full attention of the group, in person, with each man's voice in the room.

Have the conversation about a specific man, with a specific name, not about adding members in the abstract. Abstract decisions are easy. Specific ones produce useful disagreement.

The man being considered does not attend any meetings before the decision. He is invited to join after the group has decided. Visiting first sounds inclusive but creates pressure, both on the visitor and on the group, that distorts the decision.

The right cadence for adding men is rare. A healthy group of seven men should not add a new member every six months. Once or twice in the first few years, when the right man surfaces, is the natural rhythm. If you find yourselves adding men frequently, the group is probably looking for something the existing members are not yet finding in each other.

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When a man needs to leave.

Most groups will need to navigate a member's departure at some point. There are several reasons it happens. A man's life changes and the capacity is no longer there. A man discovers, after some time, that this is not actually the work he wants to do. A man is consistently letting the group down and the group has decided it is no longer willing to carry him. A man and the group have grown in different directions and the fit is no longer right.

The shape of the conversation depends on which kind of departure it is, but a few principles hold across all of them.

The departure happens in person, in conversation. Not by text. Not by quietly disappearing. Not by ghosting the chat. Whether it is the man choosing to leave or the group asking him to, the conversation is held in person, with care, and with directness about what is happening and why.

The group acknowledges what was real. Whatever the reason for the departure, this man was a member. He shared things in this room. He kept some commitments and missed others. He carried weight for other men in moments that mattered. Acknowledge that. The departure does not erase the work that was done.

If the group is asking a man to leave, the reason is named clearly and without cruelty. He has missed too many meetings. He has not done the work he committed to. He has been here in body but not in attention. Whatever it is, say it. Do not dress it up. A man being asked to leave deserves the truth about why.

If the man is choosing to leave, the group does not over-pressure him to stay. A man who has decided he is done is usually right. The group can ask him to sit with it for one more meeting before deciding finally, but if his answer holds, the group lets him go.

The door stays open unless something serious happened. Most departures are about life and timing, not about rupture. A man who left because his capacity disappeared may be ready again in two years. A man who left because the group was the wrong fit may be the right fit for a different group later. The group's posture is generosity, not closure.

After a member leaves, give the group a meeting or two to feel the absence before deciding whether to add someone new. The instinct to refill the seat quickly is usually wrong. The seat needs to be empty for a while.



When the group drifts.

Every group eventually drifts. The question is whether the drift gets named or left to deepen.

There are two common patterns.

The slow drift.

The group is still meeting. Attendance is still mostly there. But the conversation has gone shallow. Commitments are made and missed without anyone really pushing on it. Men are sharing updates rather than working on anything. The meeting has become pleasant and useful in a small way, and it is no longer doing the work it was built to do.

The slow drift is the more dangerous of the two patterns, because it is comfortable. Nothing is wrong, exactly. The group still feels like a good thing in each man's life. It just is not doing what it was for. Groups can sit in slow drift for years before any member names it, and by then the muscle for honest pushback has often atrophied.

The fix is to name it. A meeting given over entirely to the question of how the group is doing. Not as a procedural review. As an honest conversation. Each man speaks to what he is actually getting from the group, what he is not getting, what he is avoiding bringing, and what he wishes the group would push him on. The conversation is uncomfortable in proportion to how long the drift has gone on. After it, the group either resets or has named that it has become something different than what it was, which is also useful information.

The long pause.

The group has stopped meeting. Sometimes for an obvious reason: a holiday season that extended longer than expected, a member's crisis, a logistical issue that took a few weeks to resolve. Sometimes for no clear reason at all. The cadence broke and no one rebuilt it.

A group that has been paused for two months is not finished. A group that has been paused for six months has to decide whether to re-form. The decision deserves a real conversation, not a default to either restart or dissolve.

To restart, do not try to pick up where you left off. Treat it as a re-forming. Have one in-person conversation, all members together, where the question on the table is whether this group is going to be a thing in your lives going forward. If the answer is yes, set the next three meeting dates on calendars before the conversation ends. The dates are the commitment.

If the answer is no, mark the ending. The group existed. It mattered. It is now over. There is no shame in a group that completed its arc and ended. Some groups are for a season. The work the men did with each other does not disappear because the group stopped meeting.

A group that pauses, restarts, pauses again, and restarts again is signaling something the members should pay attention to. Either the cadence is wrong, the form is wrong, or the men are not actually committed to this work in this group. Honest answers about which it is will produce a better outcome than a third restart.



Stand by what grows.

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