

Immanuel Approach Facilitator Guide For Helping A Person Maintain an Interactive Connection With God

(Andy Ross LCPC)

So Much Is Possible In Prayer

For those who facilitate Immanuel Approach sessions or other approaches that involve sustaining a direct interactive connection with God we begin to realize that way more is possible with prayer than most of us have ever realized. Most western prayer models involve talking to God but very few teach us how to get ourselves in a position to receive what God wants to share back in the moment. Immanuel Approach is one model that seems to do this quite well. The combination of connecting with another person as we pray, preparing for connection through establishing safety and beginning with a positive memory and appreciation, inviting what God wants to share, focusing on God, noticing what comes and sharing what comes out loud to another person and then maintaining the interactive connection over a sustained period of time while noticing everything from thoughts to feelings to physical sensations can allow for a depth of interactive connection with God that surprises most people.

Opening Up Possibilities

As I've facilitated going on 2,000 Immanuel Approach sessions it has become clear that God is into opening up possibilities and removing burdens. The following diagrams are designed to help Immanuel Approach facilitators to help the person they are praying with to open up more possibilities in their prayer session for deeper and more sustained interactions with God that lead to growth, healing, unburdening, and joy. If you find them helpful for opening up deeper interactive connections for a longer period of time please use them. At whatever point they become limiting to opening up more connection between God and the receiver then set them aside and responsibly/responsively follow what the Holy Spirit is leading you to do as a facilitator.

Dancing With God

These diagrams are designed to help provide a map of some of the common ways an Immanuel Approach session may flow to help facilitators stay oriented. I see these flow charts as being much like learning the basic steps of salsa or waltz where there are a handful of basic patterns which everything else builds upon. As you get comfortable with the basic patterns it gets easier to know when and what can be added into the process/pattern.

Facilitators Guide The Process Not The Content

As facilitators we do not want to direct the content of a session, but to simply help a person get into position to interact directly with God and let God inform the content of the session. Within the simple patterns and open ended questions below all kinds of content can emerge. Facilitators are not attempting to direct the content of a session but simply to help the person they are praying with establish and maintain an interactive connection with God. Since most people are not used to having this kind of interactive connection with God, it really helps them to have someone to help them pay attention and notice and as much as they feel safe, share out loud what God may be showing them. In some ways facilitators are like a field guide leading people through untouched wilderness who knows that there is incredible beauty and complexity but that most average people will miss most of it unless they have someone along to help them pay attention and notice the intricacy and complexity in often subtle and small details.

Where Do These Diagrams Fit In The Context of a Full Immanuel Approach Session

These flow charts zoom in on what the specific steps in the Immanuel Approach which help a person maintain an interactive connection with God. I have highlighted how this might be conceptualized in the larger context of an Immanuel Approach session. Below I have broken down the flow of an Immanuel Approach session into 4 phases. Note various models describe the steps of the process in different ways but they all generally fit into these same basic phases. (Note that my [Andy Ross's] way of formulating the process is still a work in progress and may continue to undergo changes as this training develops.) These diagrams are primarily designed to help people with phase 3 Maintaining an Interactive Connection but they also can be used for phase 2 Establishing Awareness of God's Presence unless additional troubleshooting is needed.

Phase 1 Preparing for Interactive Connection With God

- Ensuring the person wants to pray and is adequately stable/ready to pray
- Adequately Orienting orienting person to the process.
- Ensuring person feels safety, control, and freedom to continue or stop at any point.
- Connecting personally with recipient
- Opening prayer
- Helping person share and connect to a positive memory/experience
- Attunement to person
- Reflecting directly or in prayer that you hear them and care about them.
- Helping person express and feel appreciation

Phase 2 Establishing/Deepening Explicit Awareness of God's Presence

- Explicitly welcoming/inviting God's presence
- Focusing attention on God's presence (some models identify this as "locating Jesus")
- Noticing and describing what comes.
- Troubleshoot as needed

Phase 3 Maintaining the Interactive Connection With God

- Continuing to welcome God's presence and guidance
- Continuing to notice and describe what comes to awareness
- Continuing to notice ones internal response to what has come.
- Continuing to connect with God in and about everything that comes.
- Troubleshooting as needed

Phase 4 Closure and Consolidation

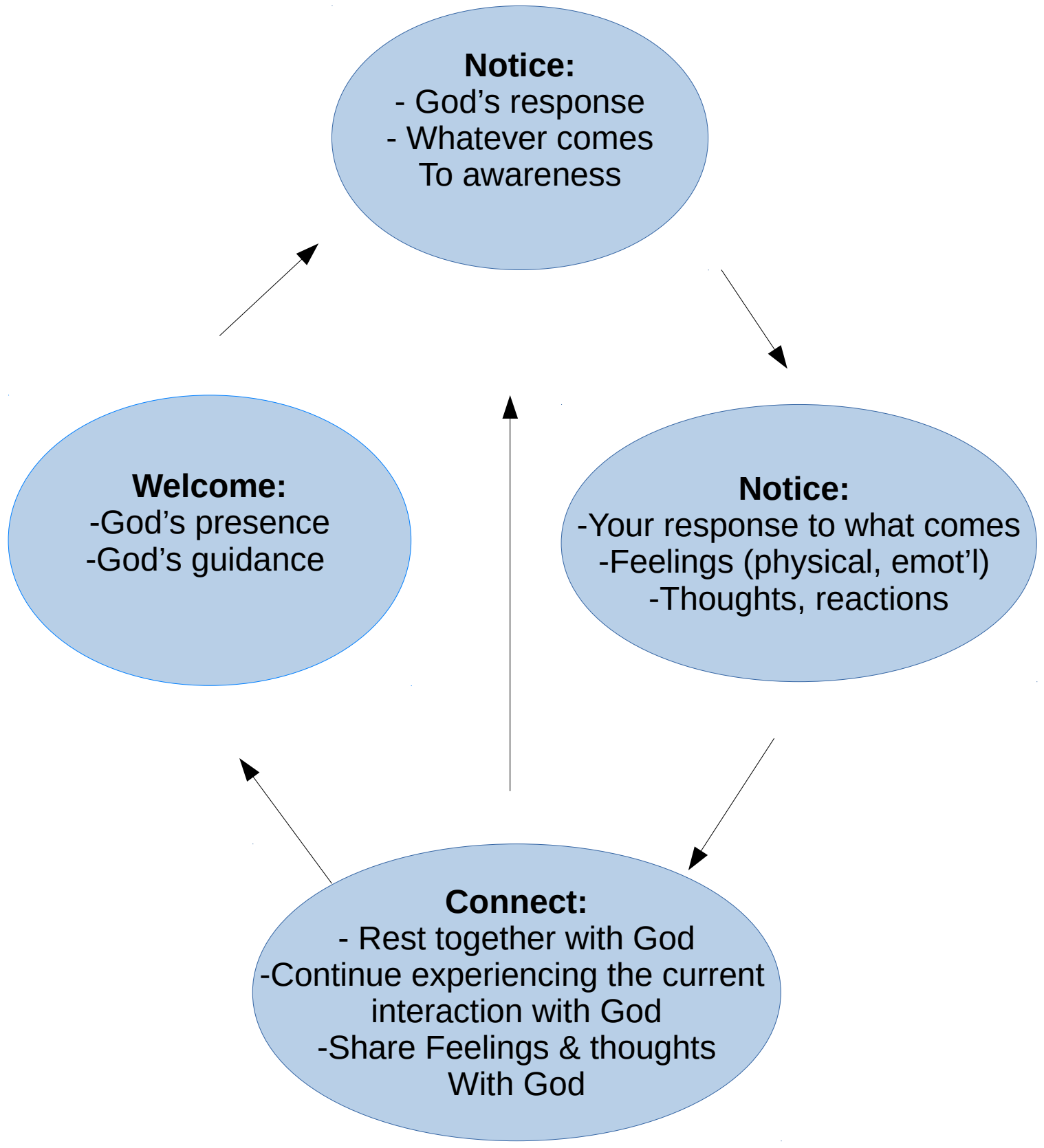
- Closing prayer
- Debrief about person's experience both positive and difficulties
- Formulate and share the Immanuel story
- Follow up on any after-care if needed

Note On Processing Unresolved Memories:

In past I have followed the common model of teaching Immanuel Approach and taught that identifying and proceeding to a negative memory to process it as a specific additional step. While processing memories is very important because they often contribute to triggers that hinder our connection with God and others when activated I have been finding that simply helping a person maintain an interactive connection with God/Jesus is preferable in my opinion. I do this by circling between 1) Welcoming help, 2) Noticing What Comes 3) Noticing One's Response to what comes, and 4) Connecting With God. God naturally seems to guide people to memories that need processed if that is what is needed in the moment but God also seems to mix in all kinds of other important things like building up the friendship, enjoying time together, strengthening a person's knowledge about their identity, giving gifts and blessings, and other ways of connecting that are often more relevant, meaningful and timely to the person than processing memories. Helping the person to stay connected and engaged with God in a way such as this flow chart encourages seems to allow God/Jesus additional freedom to take the session where he wants it to go.

How To Use This Flow Chart:

The default place to start is the zone titled Welcoming God's Presence/Guidance and then to move all the way around the circle asking one question from each zone and allowing appropriate time for the receiver to reflect and respond. Once one or two full circuits have been made you may mix up the order as feels appropriate. The solid lines indicate what I see as the most common default pattern of flow between the zones. Dotted lines indicate common additional patterns of movement from one zone to another. As a facilitator, we are ultimately seeking to follow where God wants to lead the session and where the receiver is able to go/ already going in their own spirit. This often naturally flows according to one of these patterns but by all means feel free to break out of this flow chart if God seems to be inspiring alternative patterns or directions for the session. Having this as a baseline map can help us all and particularly new facilitators feel comfortable with the process and with what our default options are which helps us relax and have more bandwidth for tuning into the receiver and to God's inspiration in our own spirit.



Common Flow of Immanuel Approach Session

Common Flow & Prompts For Maintaining Interactive Connection In Immanuel Sessions

F: Spoken by facilitator
R: Spoken by receiver

Common Direction Session Flows —————▶
Additional Ways Session May Flow - - - - -▶

Notice What Comes to Awareness

F: "Just be still and notice what comes into your awareness."
F: "What are you noticing now?"

Notice God's Presence/ Response

F: "See if you get a sense of God's response to you."
F: "Do you get any sense of Jesus/God's presence with you?"
F: "What do you notice about God/Jesus?"
F: "How does God/Jesus seem to be feeling towards you?"

Typical Start Point:

Once receiver has connected to positive memory and appreciation

Welcome God's Presence

R: "Jesus/God, I invite you to be with me, Help me to perceive your presence more clearly."

Welcome God's Help/ Guidance

R: "God, what do you want me to show me about ____"
F: "God, we welcome all that you have for ____"
F: "We bless what you are doing God."

* When fitting (F) can pray briefly summarizing what just happened and welcoming more of God's presence/help.

Notice Your Response

F: "How does that feel?"
F: "When you notice ____ (name what came) what do you feel inside?"
F: "How does your body respond to ____ (God's presence or whatever came)?"

Connecting With God

(Give receiver all the time they need to connect to God below are some options)

Share With God

(Negative or Positive feelings)

F: "Would you be willing to share that (feelings/thoughts/appreciation) with God?"
F: "Would you like to talk to God about that/what you are feeling/thinking?"

Engage With God

F: "Take as long as you want to just to be with God and keep interacting with God/Jesus."

Rest With God

F: "Take as long as you need to rest with that and take that in. As you do that just notice whatever you notice."

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