# **Guidelines for MAGPS Conference Participation**

The MAGPS Annual Conference offers a unique learning environment with didactic information, small process group sessions, and/or large group experiences interwoven over two or three days. The goal is to provide participants an opportunity to integrate a deeper theoretical understanding of the conference theme into their group leadership style and clinical practice.

**Whole Group Discussion:** The guest presenter(s) will lead all discussion sessions and/or plenaries. The format of each meeting will reflect the schedule of events listed in the conference brochure. Formats may include didactic or case presentation, Q&A, live demonstration groups, experiential exercises, or a whole group discussion. A final wrap up to discuss realizations and implications for practice and final MAGPS announcements will conclude the conference.

**Small Process Group Sessions:** Small group sessions alternate with plenaries throughout MAGPS Conference weekends. Attendees are pre-assigned to a group/group leader based on preferences stated in the conference registration process. *These sessions are treated as confidential. Although a member may use the opportunity to learn something personal about oneself, the contract is for education, not for psychotherapy.* ***Registrants are expected to attend all small group sessions.***

Objectives: The task of the small group sessions, or process group, is to study its own behavior in the interactive process of the here-and-now while integrating the conference topic(s). Small group leaders will emphasize bridging experiential learning with cognitive understanding of the group’s development and the conference theme. Participants may experience firsthand the challenge of joining, finding one’s voice and becoming known, remaining emotionally present and working in the moment, forming relationships, and reflecting on interpersonal interactions. Group dynamics, transference and countertransference reactions, projective identifications, sub-grouping, role selection, individual and group level defense mechanisms and resistances, and other dynamic processes may be observed while they are emerging.

Small Group Leaders: In each group segment, the small group leader’s task will be to help the group to study its own behavior and to protect the safety of its members and the boundaries of the group. They will support any process that leads to further understanding and will guide the group away from advice giving, judgments, and problem solving. The small group leaders are experienced group therapists who may be longtime members of MAGPS, a neighboring affiliate society, and/or AGPA, and meet qualifications for CGP.

What to Expect: An experiential process group provides the opportunity to sensitize oneself to the experience of our clients as they face the challenge of being in a group. It is natural to feel anxious starting a small group. The leader will welcome these and other feelings and reactions as they emerge and will help the group explore them in a constructive way. You may also can give and/or receive interpersonal feedback from the group.

Members: Group members are expected to take personal responsibility for the level of their participation and the extent of their self-disclosure in the group. While participants are encouraged to be open, self-reflective, and willing to engage in interaction, members are not expected to disclose personal materials they prefer to keep confidential or to work at a deeper level than they are comfortable. Personal boundaries will be respected.

Attendance: Attendance at all small process group meetings is required. Attendees are expected to arrive on time and stay for all group sessions and debriefings. Changing groups is not allowed once the small group starts. If there are exceptional circumstances with conflicts of roles, reach out to the Conference Registrar or one of the Conference Chairs to request a different group BEFORE the small groups begin.

Virtual Considerations: If you are attending a vitual (Zoom) conference, please consider the following. When participating in the process group experience portion of the conference, choose a space similar to how you participate in, or, conduct a therapy session. Before each meeting, please be sure you are in a stationary, secure environment, free from potential intrusions by friends/family members, who could accidently walk in on or overhear your conversation. We understand this could present some challenges for folx depending on their living arrangements, given this is a weekend conference. For your safety and the groups confidentiality, please do not drive or travel in a car while participating in a small process group experience.

Confidentiality: Confidentiality is extremely important. Confidentiality guidelines will be discussed and agreed upon among small group members, leaders, and consultants at the outset of the first small group. Small Group Faculty Consultants are bound to confidentiality guidelines as well and will not discuss individual content or reveal personal identities in the conference faculty meetings.

**Small Group Leader Meetings:** Meetings with the conference chairs, presenters, and small group leaders will occur during the weekend. The purpose of these parallel meetings is to provide support, debriefing, and group consultation to the small group leaders. Eachsmall group leaders will protect the confidentiality of their individual members during these meetings.

**Evaluation/CEUs:** A conference evaluation link will be sent to you after the conference. You are invited to be candid, as your feedback is extremely helpful to the small group consultants, presenters, and conference planning committee.Completion of the evaluation is required to receive CEUs; for those applicable, you can expect to receive your CE Certificate within a few weeks after you have completed these requirements.