



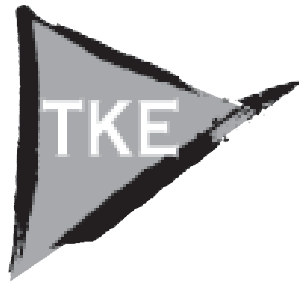
# **The Retreat Guide**

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***2005***

# The Retreat Guide

Tau Kappa Epsilon Fraternity



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# Introduction

Chapter retreats are a necessity for every chapter. They're ideal for getting away from daily distractions to allow members to focus on the Fraternity rather than school, athletics, or social events. In fact, retreats have become one of the most effective methods for renewing members' commitment to and enthusiasm for the Fraternity. What exactly is a chapter retreat? A chapter retreat is nothing more than a weekend away from the chapter house. Some retreats require all members to attend; whereas, others may only require a specific group of people with a very sharp focus. The retreat's subject matter, therefore, will determine who attends. Whatever the reason is for having a retreat, make sure it is well planned and interesting for all members. You want members to return to school feeling refreshed and enlightened.

## What is a Chapter Retreat?

Every chapter Prytanis starts off his term with ideas and goals on which he campaigned during elections. However, all too often many of these goals are never realized and the chapter is more or less in the same shape one year later. The Prytanis usually does not accomplish these goals because he simply does not know the correct way. In order to improve the chapter and the officers, he must know where they want to be in one year, six months, or one week and then work to get there. The chapter must have goals for itself, and the Prytanis and chapter officers must know the chapter's goals in order to lead the rest of the chapter toward obtaining them.

Goals must be obtainable. When a chapter only has 25 members on a campus with 50 fraternities, instead of shooting for a Top TKE Chapter award or Number 1 on campus, a more realistic goal would be to increase membership by 25 percent. By having a retreat, the chapter can step back, take a look at the present situation, and set realistic objectives for itself.

Often a chapter will work to be Number 1 on its campus, obtain its goals, and then sit back and coast. Once a chapter is good, it must fight to remain good. It must work to be great. Complacency and stagnation creep into outstanding chapters, and before they know it, they are fighting to get back to where they once were. A retreat helps the chapter keep up with the times and constantly work to improve itself. This constant evaluation marks the difference between an average chapter and an outstanding one.

To motivate your members, each Frater must feel like their voice has been heard. Get them involved in planning the chapter's goals. The more people who help plan the chapter's objectives, the more people the officers will have to help obtain the goals. A retreat can change the concept of goals being dictated by the officers or Prytanis to the goals of the chapter membership.

A chapter retreat sets goals for the chapter and helps the chapter retain its present status by avoiding stagnation and complacency. It also allows the officers to gain support from a broader base of the chapter membership and helps motivate the brothers toward obtaining the goals.

## **Who Should Attend**

The attendance at a retreat will depend on the size of the chapter and the cost factor. Retreats can range in attendance from the entire chapter, to just the officers and committee chairmen, to just the candidate class. Generally, the more input into the retreat, the more brothers will support it and more varied opinions will be presented.

When the entire chapter attends a retreat, everyone is involved with the goal setting and, therefore, everyone will theoretically work toward accomplishing those goals. The challenge is large chapters. It is difficult to coordinate; keeping everyone busy all the time takes much planning and forethought.

Candidates or candidate class officers attending a retreat can add fresh insight to problems the chapter faces and can help involve the candidates in the chapter. The chapter will be able to note those candidates who contribute ideas to improving the chapter and who may be potential leaders. Take advantage of their unbiased viewpoint before they get into standard chapter thinking.

Each chapter will need to make a determination on who will contribute the most to the respective retreat.

## **Using Alumni and Outsiders for Retreats**

Alumni can offer insight and expertise to any retreat, and a retreat offers a chapter an opportunity to build relations with some alumni by asking them to participate. The Prytanis should look for ways to involve alumni as participants or discussion leaders at any type of retreat the chapter might have. The Prytanis should always plan a session for the Alumni advisor to run at a retreat. The Alumni advisor or another outsider should be used to hold discussions on divisive issues inside the chapter. Alumni and outside facilitators are also effective at leading discussions on goal setting for the future.

The Prytanis might want to consider inviting involved alumni, such as members of the House Corporation or Board of Advisors to participate in a retreat. If alumni are asked to participate, the Prytanis should "lock in" that portion of the schedule, so that participating alumni could just attend certain parts. The Prytanis needs to plan the retreat with an understanding that some alumni might want to be involved, but won't have the time to attend more than a fraction of the retreat's events.

The chapter might also consider contacting some outsiders such as a professor or the Greek Advisor to lead a discussion or workshop at a retreat. If the chapter is tackling any particular subjects where an expert would be welcome, look for outsiders with experience on that topic.

## **When to Hold the Retreat**

Since a retreat or goal-setting session is the beginning of improvement, it should coincide with another beginning, (i.e., the start of school in the fall or the beginning of a new officer's administration.)

Retreats held at the beginning of the school year capitalize on the enthusiasm brothers bring back to school with them. This enthusiastic attitude gets everyone involved early and sets the chapter off on the right foot for the whole year. Chapter officers in the middle of their term understand the problems facing their chapter, and working with a larger group can

help them tackle those problems. Keeping these goals in mind throughout the year provides continuity for new officers elected toward the middle of the year.

Many officers, when elected, feel there are certain things which should be changed. A retreat within a couple weeks after elections gives the new administration a chance to lead the chapter in the direction it feels it should take, and builds support for the new administration.

The beginning of the school year, or shortly after officer elections, offers the most convenient time for the chapter to meet and retreat.

## **Where to Hold a Retreat**

To be successful, you will want to hold your retreat well away from the distractions of the campus and the chapter house. You will want an atmosphere that stimulates new thinking and creativity. On campus or in the chapter house, you have to contend with telephones, television, girlfriends, and other problems interrupting your program. To avoid these problems, select your site carefully, while looking for the proper size and facilities to provide comfortable surroundings.

A good rule of thumb is to pick a site away from the chapter house and campus. This gives you a complete change of scenery and, hopefully, gets you out of town and into the suburbs or the country. It is perfectly alright to go farther away as long as travel doesn't become expensive or time-consuming.

You can pick the home of an alumnus or the home of one of the brothers. A cabin near a lake, a state park or resort is also preferable. You want to look for a balance between recreational opportunities and a quiet, serious atmosphere where work can get done. Getting the work done is the first priority. Wherever the retreat is held, you should remember these factors: (1) cost, (2) accessibility to main roads, (3) distance from the campus, and (4) the setting for the planning part of the retreat.

With a little bit of imagination and a quick survey of possible sites nearby, you can easily come up with a place that will fit your needs and help make your retreat a success.

## **Planning a Retreat**

Planning a retreat requires innovative ideas and a strong commitment. Besides deciding on the agenda for the weekend, you need to determine who should attend and where and when to hold the event. Deciding who to invite should be fairly simple. It depends on the focus of the retreat and financial costs. Although many retreats may only involve certain members, you should have at least one retreat for the entire chapter.

The best time to have a retreat is at the beginning of the new school year or at the beginning of a new officer's administration. Having retreats during these periods can capitalize on the enthusiasm the brothers bring back to school or from being elected to office. Select your site carefully. A bad site can ruin a well-planned retreat. You should choose a location for the retreat that stimulates creative thinking. The place should be far enough away from campus to avoid distractions and large enough to accommodate everyone. A

focused agenda, comfort, an affordable location and no distractions, all contribute to the success of your retreat.

## **How to Plan a Retreat**

Before determining how the chapter should organize the retreat, know the **when, why, who, and where**. Then, organize the retreat to take advantage of the environmental and recreational facilities available. Careful planning in advance will save time and increase the productivity of the retreat.

An agenda, planned a week in advance, will insure adequate preparation before the retreat. Pass the agenda out to brothers involved so they can familiarize themselves with the mechanics of the retreat and start thinking about the material to be covered. This will cut down on questions and confusion when they arrive at the retreat and allow them to get right to business. Also, an agenda passed out in advance will allow brothers to add items they feel are important and maybe delete unnecessary items.

When preparing the agenda and planning for the retreat, the organizer will want to point out some problems he perceives and some possible alternative solutions to help stimulate thought. He will also want to remind everyone to bring pencils and paper. A chalkboard

or easel with blank white paper should be brought to visualize conclusions to the group.

## **Sample Retreat Agenda No. 1: *Addressing Specific Problem Areas***

The retreat should begin with a short introduction by the Prytanis or organizer, pointing to areas he perceives as challenges. Any last minute questions should be answered at this time. The group will want to break into committees of four to five brothers, and discuss each area. The makeup of each committee should be carefully planned to facilitate discussion; committee chairmen should not discuss their particular area.

Often a committee chairman will stifle discussion in his area because he either has strong views as to what should be done, or he feels he has the most expertise. Keep in mind that the retreat should come up with new ideas and approaches to problems; do not be content to do things the way they have always been done.

Several committees will be working at the same time. The chapter may decide to have several of these discussions, perhaps lasting an hour per area. Each session will cover a different area with different people on the committee. Note the example in this sample itinerary:

- 12:00 noon    Introductory remarks by Prytanis
  
- 12:30 p.m.    **First Session**
  - 1. Rush
  - 2. Scholarship
  - 3. Alumni Relations
  
- 1:30 p.m.    Break
  
- 1:45 p.m.    **Second Session**
  - 1. Candidate Education
  - 2. Committee Structure
  - 3. Public Relations
  
- 2:45 p.m.    Break
  
- 3:00 p.m.    **Third Session**
  - 1. Social
  - 2. Morale
  - 3. Finances
  
- 4:00 p.m.    Break
  
- 4:15 p.m.    **Final Session**
  - 1. Discuss each area; report by Committee Chairmen
  - 2. Approval of final action program report.

Each committee should discuss the following:

- 1. What it perceives to be the problems in its area.
- 2. What goals should be accomplished in a specified time span.



### 3. How the chapter can accomplish the goals.

Minutes should be kept at each committee meeting. Instead of keeping the same people on each committee, switching personnel will stimulate new thought.

Once all the committees have met, a final meeting should be held at the end to briefly discuss each report. At that time, all reports should be finalized and prepared for typing when the group returns to the chapter. The reports should then be presented at the next chapter meeting and kept for future reference.

After the work is done, some sort of recreation at the end such as a campfire, cookout, movies, swimming, etc., should follow to let the brothers enjoy each other's company.

Depending on the size of the chapter, the retreat may want to concentrate on only a few areas of chapter operation which are presently the weakest. If you are part of a smaller group, rather than break into "committees," you may want to meet as a group to discuss each agenda item. The length of the retreat will depend on its location and the amount of time brothers can be away from school. There are many other versions of the above basic theme for a retreat, but most of these essential items are included in all successful ones: an agenda, committee-type discussion, goal-setting, solutions, a timetable to implement the solutions, and a typed report.

## **Sample Retreat Agenda No. 2: *Goal Setting and Morale Building***

Another option for retreats is to focus on broad goals as a chapter and then to spend some time building morale as a group. There are several activities enclosed in this guide to help you reach this goal.

This retreat need not take all weekend to be effective. Saturday or Sunday afternoon is an ideal time to get away for awhile and discuss chapter goals. The best time of the year is the beginning of the fall semester, when the officers are new and want some direction on what to accomplish during their terms. A recommended agenda would be as follows:

- |            |  |
|------------|--|
| 11:45 p.m. | Arrive   |
| 12:00 noon | Guest Speaker: (Get your campus Greek Advisor to say a few words to the chapter) |
| 12:30 p.m. | Goal Setting Activity or SWOT Analysis ( <i>described in appendix</i> )          |
| 2:30 p.m.  | Brother Building Activity ( <i>described in appendix</i> )                       |
| 4:30 p.m.  | Pizza and brotherhood activities: softball, football, etc.                       |

## **Sample Retreat Agenda No. 3: *Officer Transition Workshop***

Can you name another organization in which the leadership turns over each year and the entire membership turns over every four to five years? There are not too many other organizations out there like a fraternity. One of the most difficult items for a chapter is the transfer of knowledge from one group of officers to the next.

The objective of an officer transition workshop is to provide a smooth transition from outgoing to incoming officers by assembling both officer groups for a training retreat. It is important that the outgoing president cooperates with the incoming president in arranging a smooth transition. During this retreat, the past and present executive committee officers should work together to provide continuity and experience as the chapter experiences a change in leadership.

### **I. WELCOME**

- A. Prytanis makes opening statement/introduction/welcome
- B. Chapter Advisor opens with encouragement

### **II. EXCHANGE OF OFFICER NOTEBOOKS**

- A. Officer Exchange List (Follow Format)
  - 1. Define Duties and Responsibilities
  - 2. Discuss Goals and Special Concerns
  - 3. Review and explain materials
- B. Question/Answer
  - 1. Each present officer: What did they like most about the office? Least?
  - 2. New officers: What are their expectations? Concerns/Apprehensions?

### **III. BRAINSTORMING**

Discuss "problems, suggestions, and creative approaches" concerning the chapter and in being an officer.

### **IV. GOALSETTING**

- A. Chapter Goals
  - 1. Review goals of past year
    - a. Which goals were accomplished?
    - b. Which goals were not accomplished? Why?
  - 2. Goal-setting workshop
    - a. As a group, work together to set new goals for the chapter.
    - b. Individual officers should set goals and share them with the group.

### **V. GOVERNING POLICIES**

- A. Review Risk Management Guidelines.
- B. Review and discuss local constitution & by-laws.

### **VI. WRAP-UP**



**APPENDIX**

- A. Questions/Comments
- B. Each officer and advisor share their thoughts on the retreat.

## **RETREAT ACTIVITY: GOAL SETTING**

This activity is fundamental and can be done at the beginning of each term. It follows the rule that “people support what they help create” because it gives chapter members the opportunity to be involved in the goal-setting process. They will then be much more supportive of these goals when they are put into action by the committee chairmen and officers.

### **The Goal:**

To set the goals of the chapter for the upcoming term and to build support for these goals.

### **Time Required:**

Between one and a half to two hours.

### **The Process:**

1. Have the chapter (both members and candidates) complete a SWOT Analysis as a large group. Encourage them to take ample time to think about the chapter and what direction they would like it to take.
2. Break the chapter into small groups and have each group break down the analysis. Have them discuss each component of the analysis and prepare a summary of the discussion.
3. Get the chapter back together in a large group and have the groups share their insight on the analysis.
4. In the large group, have the chapter create a list of goals that they want to achieve in the upcoming semester. Write them down on a chalkboard or a large piece of butcher paper so that the group can see them easily. There should be some good discussion on these. Don't write a goal down until it is agreed upon by a consensus of the chapter. **Keep in mind the three rules a good goal must meet:**
  - a. It must be specific.
  - b. It must be quantifiable.
  - c. It must be attainable with a degree of difficulty.

This is the end of this process at the retreat. From the retreat, take this list of goals to the next executive committee meeting and have them approved. Then have the Grammateus, or another member, type these, insure that each member has a copy, and post copies around the house so that they are constantly in view of the chapter.

This list of goals should be referred to constantly throughout the year. They should be reviewed by the executive committee weekly, and they should be taken to an administrative

committee retreat in order to discuss their implementation.

**An Additional Idea:**

Once these goals have been identified, break the chapter down again into small groups to examine each goal and brainstorm an action plan for how to achieve it. If the goal is related to a specific committee chairman or officer, insure that he is in that group in order to listen to the suggestions.

Each group should formulate a checklist of things to be done in order to insure that the

goal is accomplished. This may be done at the chapter retreat or at the administrative committee retreat.

## **SWOT Analysis**

### **Understanding Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats**

#### **Why use the tool?**

SWOT analysis is an effective way of identifying your Strengths and Weaknesses, and of examining the Opportunities and Threats you face.

#### **How to use the tool:**

To carry out a SWOT analysis write down answers to the following questions. Where appropriate, use similar questions:

##### ***Strengths:***

- What advantages do you have?
- What do you do well?
- What relevant resources do you have access to?
- What do other people see as your strengths?

Consider this from your own point of view and from the point of view of the people you deal with. Don't be modest. Be realistic. If you are having any difficulty with this, try writing down a list of your characteristics. Some of these will hopefully be strengths!

In looking at your strengths, think about them in relation to your competitors – for example, if all your competitors provide high quality products, then a high quality production process is not a strength in the market, it is a necessity.

##### ***Weaknesses:***

- What could you improve?
- What do you do badly?
- What should you avoid?
- Again, consider this from an internal and external basis: Do other people seem to perceive weaknesses that you do not see? Are your competitors doing any better than you? It is best to be realistic now and face any unpleasant truths as soon as possible.

##### ***Opportunities:***

- Where are the good opportunities facing you?
- What are the interesting trends you are aware of?
- Useful opportunities can come from such things as:
  - Changes in technology
  - Changes in campus policies
  - Local Events

A useful approach to looking at opportunities is to look at your strengths and ask yourself whether these open up any opportunities. Alternatively, look at your weaknesses and

ask yourself whether you could open up opportunities by eliminating them.

**Threats:**

- What obstacles do you face?
- What is your competition doing?
- Are the campus policies changing?
- Is changing technology threatening your position?
- Are your members not paying their bills?

Could any of your weaknesses seriously threaten your chapter?

Carrying out this analysis will often be illuminating – both in terms of pointing out what needs to be done and in putting problems into perspective.

You can also apply SWOT analysis to your competitors. This may produce some interesting insights!

**Key points:**

SWOT analysis is a framework for analyzing your strengths and weaknesses, and the opportunities and threats you face.

This will help you to focus on your strengths, minimize weaknesses, and take the greatest possible advantage of opportunities available.



## **RETREAT ACTIVITY: *THROW ME A LINE***

This activity will build the bonds of brotherhood by focusing on the values of honesty and trust in the chapter. Also, it develops self-knowledge about how one is perceived by the other members of the chapter.

### **Materials Needed:**

A ball of yarn (or, any object you can throw, i.e. tennis ball, softball, baseball)

### **Time Required:**

Anywhere from 45 minutes to an hour and a half, depending on the size of the group.

### **The Process:**

1. Have the chapter break into groups of equal number (all of different ages and candidate classes). Select a leader from each group to facilitate the activity. Give that leader a copy of this sheet, and then have them break off into areas where the groups will not disturb each other.
2. Have the groups sit comfortably in a full circle, and explain that they will be doing an activity designed to build trust and brotherhood, and to gain self-knowledge. If they take it seriously, it can have a positive impact on chapter unity.
3. Instruct them that only one person may speak at a time, and that person must have the ball. The activity begins by the first person who has the ball throwing it to another member of the group and giving him some positive feedback. A brief explanation of that person's positive quality is all it takes. Keep throwing the ball around the circle until everyone has received at least one bit of feedback. If you are using a ball of yarn, it will add to the activity if you unravel it as you throw it around, signifying the bonds of brotherhood.
4. The second round is the difficult part of the activity. Explain that they will be moving on to a different stage of the activity in which the group will still toss the ball, but give constructive criticism to each other. Remind them to focus on making positive suggestions for change, and to think of it as an opportunity to help each other. Allow it to go around until everyone has given and received some constructive criticism.
5. Wrap up with one more round of positive feedback, and then open it up for discussion.

This activity offers each brother the chance to learn about himself as well as the other members of the group. Not only will it make for a closer brotherhood, but the self-knowledge gained from it can contribute to the leadership development of each brother.

## **RETREAT ACTIVITY: *BROTHER BUILDING***

How well do you know every member of the chapter? This is an activity designed to promote interaction between all members and candidates in the chapter: freshmen and seniors, engineers and English majors, athletes and musicians. Sometimes it is easy to fall into a certain clique or circle of friends and forget about brothers with whom you may not have as much in common. Brother Building can overcome this. It will build a strong sense of chapter unity, promote self-knowledge, and allow each group member to know the other members very well and realize the common bond that you share.

### **Time Required:**

This activity can run anywhere from 90 minutes to three hours.

### **Set Up:**

Break the chapter into groups no larger than 12 to 14 members, and select one facilitator for each group. Choose group leaders who are well respected in the chapter. Try to even out the groups so that they are representative of various groups within the chapter.

Have the group sit in a circle, with everyone on the same level (i.e., either everyone in chairs or everyone on the floor). It is important that everyone can see everyone else. Have the facilitators explain that the groups will be having a structured conversation that will build unity and improve relations within the chapter.

### **How it Works:**

The group leader will ask a question, and whoever wants to start with an answer can start and say what he wants. The person to his left answers next and the pattern continues this way until everyone has had the chance to answer the question.

If a person needs time to think of an answer, they can simply say pass and the group leader will go on to the next person. After everyone has answered, have the group leader go back and ask each person who passed if they want to answer. They can simply say pass a second time. Do not pressure anyone to answer any question.

### **Suggestions for the Facilitator:**

1. Ask anyone who speaks softly or mumbles to speak up. It is important that the group hear each answer.
2. As you ask questions, maintain eye contact with whomever is answering.
3. Watch the clock. Ample time should be allowed for this activity, but it is easy to lose track of time. About 20 minutes before the activity is scheduled to end, be sure to skip to the wrap-up questions.
4. Make sure you understand this activity thoroughly. Ask questions if you are unsure.
5. Identify the questions you want to ask beforehand.
6. Don't stay in one category of questions for too long. In general, you will want to progress from lightweight to heavyweight, but if the mood is too serious, you may

want to lighten it up.

**Points to be Emphasized to the Group:**

1. Only one person may speak at a time.
2. No comments on others' answers. This is not a debate, and if the conversation becomes unstructured, it will not work.
3. The question will be asked, and if they don't care to answer, they may pass.
4. Questions are not to be explained. Each person should react to what they hear. *(If a person does not understand a question, repeat it with no further explanation.)*

**Questions:**

*Lightweight*

- What was your first impression of Tau Kappa Epsilon?
- – Describe your feelings about your hometown
- – What's your favorite food?
- – What leisure time activity pleases you the most?
- – What do you most often look forward to?
- – If a movie were made about you, who would play you?
- – What is your most embarrassing moment?
- – Who is the luckiest man alive?
- – What kind of car are you?
- – What is the best compliment you have ever received?
- – If you could not live in the United States or Canada, where would you live?
- – What's your favorite TV show/movie/musician?
- – What's the last book you read?
- – If you could be any animal other than man, what would you choose?
- – What is your favorite time of year?
- – If each day had six more hours, how would you spend them?
- – What would you like to receive on your next birthday?
- – What's your favorite holiday?
- – What do you most often dread?
- – In the future, what would you like to own?
- – Select a word that describes the chapter.

*Middleweight*

- What do you like/dislike the most about the Fraternity?
- – What is the greatest problem in the country right now?
- – Who's your role model?
- – What are you looking for in the perfect spouse?
- – Describe your feelings about your family.
- – What talent would you like to have that you do not currently have?
- – What event in the last three months stands out in your mind the most?
- – Select a word that describes your total life at this moment.
- – Name the most unreasonable thing you know.
- – If you could grow in only one area, in which of the four would it be: intellectually, emotionally, spiritually or physically?
- – If you could have a committee of three people (living or dead) help you make decisions, who would you choose?

- – What do you want to be doing 10 years from now?
- – What gives you the most security?
- – Who in the chapter would you like to be more like?
- – If you were shipwrecked on a desert island, what one item would you take (excluding a TV, radio, or a friend)?
- – Describe your feeling about your candidate class.
- – What is the greatest value that guides your life?
- – What embarrasses you the most?
- – What one person (not a relative or a chapter brother) could you truly call a brother?
- – Of what are you most certain?
- – From what do you derive the most hope?
- – When do you feel most productive?
- – How would your parents describe you?
- – When was the last time you lost your temper?
- – What is one thing you could do to improve your life?
- – What day are you looking forward to the most?
- – Describe your best phone call ever.

### *Heavyweight*

- What does the Fraternity mean to you?
- – What is your biggest worry?
- – When did your life last take a major shift?
- – How would your best friend describe you?
- – For what would you lay down your life?
- – What person would you follow the farthest?
- – What decisions are the hardest for you to make?
- – What is one day that you would like to live over?
- – What's one problem you have a hard time facing?
- – What are the top five priorities in your life?
- – What is your most significant moment in the Fraternity so far?
- – When do you feel most alive?
- – What is your greatest aspiration in life?
- – What is something that most people misunderstand about you?
- – When you think of a tragedy, what do you think of?
- – What is your greatest fear?
- – What is your greatest hope?
- – What do you think people like in you the most and least?
- – What person has most influenced your life?
- – What is the kindest/cruellest thing ever done to you?
- – What is the last thing you would give up?
- – What's the biggest mistake you've ever made?
- – Describe your life 20 years from now.

### *Wrap-up/Synthesis*

- Which person did you learn the most about?
- – Which person surprised you the most?
- – Which person had the deepest insight?
- – What is one gift you would like to give to the chapter?
- – I would just like to say ... (Leave the last question completely open-ended.)