

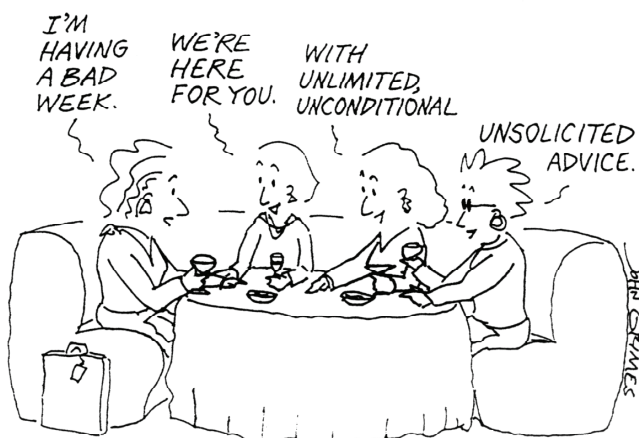
# The Kitchen Table Friends Kit Guide:

## Six Steps For Forming Your Own Kitchen Table Group

*A friend walks in when the rest of the world walks out.*  
- ANONYMOUS

### Convene a gathering of kitchen table friends.

*If I had to characterize one quality as the genius of female thought, culture, and action, it would be the connectivity.* - ROBIN MORGAN, WRITER (1941-)



### Find One Safe Place to Tell Your Story

For over ten years, the four of us gathered round a kitchen table and told our stories. Our meetings were the 21st century take on the good old-fashioned coffee klatches of the past. We looked forward to our gatherings because we knew that it was the one place in our lives where we would be heard. It was a place where other women would listen intently without judgment. We can state without one ounce of doubt that being able to tell our story to another woman saved our sanity and, in some cases, saved our lives.

We believe that every woman needs to create for herself a safe place where her story can be heard. A place and time convened with women friends who care about her well-being. We know from our own experience that staying connected with each other has made all the difference in our ability to cope with the challenges we've faced over the years. Our first and most important way to keep your head above water when life threatens to drag you down is to convene a gathering of kitchen table friends. Form this group so you have an ongoing source of support.

Following these steps can help you create a wonderful network of women friends today, not someday.

## Six Steps for Forming a Kitchen Table Group

**1** No matter how bad your life might be right now, plan a get together with women you admire. They do not need to be famous, rich, or fabulously accomplished. You do not need to know them well; although they do need to be women you respect and who share similar values and priorities—women with integrity who will be willing to listen, encourage others, and be honest.

Many women feel as isolated as you do. Now is the perfect time to ask that mom who shares car pool duties with you. What about the woman at work with whom you have only a nodding acquaintance but have always felt a spark of connection? Perhaps there's someone on a fundraising committee you've admired in action, someone who always can be counted on to do what she says she's going to do.

*You are the storyteller of your own life and you can create the legend or not.*

- ISABEL ALLENDE,

CHILEAN-AMERICAN WRITER (1942-)

**2** Pick a meeting place that has comfortable surroundings and that gives you privacy. It could be the corner of a local coffee shop, the back table at a favorite restaurant, or the living room of your home. The kitchen tables in our different homes have worked well for us all these years.

**3** You don't have to do anything fancy. Just pick up the phone, send an e-mail, or ask the women in person. Tell them up front that you know they're busy, that the purpose of this meeting is to create a support network that meets regularly where women can talk out what's going on in their lives in a confidential setting. Participants are welcome to talk about their jobs (or lack of a job), their families, their health, and their finances—whatever is on their minds and in their hearts. Give your group a name and commit to meetings (every other week, or at least monthly).

In our own group we met monthly but often convened our kitchen table group more often when one of our members was in the midst of a crisis.

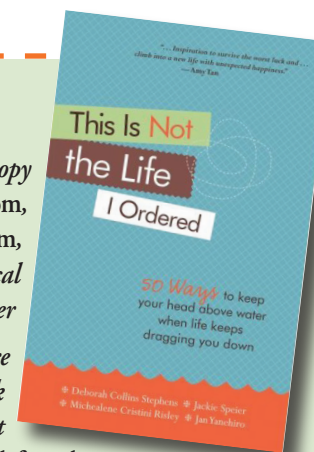
**4** The first few meetings of your kitchen table group can probably benefit from some sort of structure. In our group meetings, we always begin with some illuminating questions:

- So, how's your life?
- How can we help?
- Who do we know who can help?
- What are you happy about right now in your life?
- What is there to laugh about?
- When we leave here today, what three things are we committing to each other that we will do for ourselves?

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about the book  
and the authors at

[www.kitchentablefriends.com](http://www.kitchentablefriends.com)



**5** Do not allow your kitchen table groups to turn into a "pity party." Pity parties rob you of your spirit and do nothing to empower you. The purpose of this gathering is not simply to complain... and stop there. Go ahead and get what's bothering you, worrying you, or hurting you off your chest, and then ask for advice. Brainstorm possible solutions and strategies for the issues you're facing. Have fun, cry, and laugh out loud.

**6** Use the WIT Kit found at the end of each part in our book as a focus for your meetings. We purposely created the WIT Kit with exercises that you can work through as a group in your own kitchen table meetings. Discuss the topics and questions among your group.

Once you've formed your own group, please log into our website and tell us about your group, what you are discussing and share your stories. Our best wishes to you in turning lives you may not have ordered into ones you love dearly.

*Deborah C. Stephens, Michealene Cristini Risley, Jackie Speier & Jan Yanehiro*