Template (feel free to use your own):

*Name:*

*Group details:*

*How we approach money:*

*How it feels, and notes:*

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*Name:* Ben Williams

*Group details:* Pioneer Valley Massachusetts 30s and Under/Ziji Group. Weekly at Shambhala center. 8-15 people.

*How we approach money:* We have a donation bowl by the door, with a sign that says “Suggested Donation $5-10, please only give what you are able” or something like that. It’s the same bowl and sign we use for a number of other things at the center. At the end of the night when making announcements about upcoming programs etc I say something light and maybe slightly funny like “The center runs on donations, the suggested donation for tonight is $5-10, but anything you offer is greatly appreciated, we take change! And if you’re not able to offer anything tonight, don’t worry about it.”

*How it feels, and notes:* When we first started the group I wasn’t asking for money, mostly out of my own discomfort, but the center made a more concrete policy about asking for money at programs we offer. When we started asking for money I think I gave a little 5-minute spiel about how giving something in exchange for the teachings is traditional and actually increases what we get out of our experience. We had a few topics come up in our discussion that revolved around generosity and giving in other contexts - people definitely gave more on those nights! Now that more people are giving more regularly, that encourages others and newer people to do so as well. People tend to give at the end, but I try to put a couple bucks in the bowl at the beginning of the night from my own pocket or the center to put the idea in people’s head. I’d say we now regularly get somewhere between $10 and $20, though it varies a lot, since people often aren’t carrying cash and will drop a $20 in every month or something rather than $5 every time. We have snacks and encourage people to bring them, so that’s another way they can contribute if they feel they can’t monetarily.

*Name:*

Fred Meyer

*Group details:*

New Orleans Ziji Group. Happens weekly in a yoga studio. Usually 4 to 12 people in attendance.

*How we approach money:*

Before meditation starts, we ask for a suggested donation of $5 to $15. We tell people if they can’t donate that’s okay too.

We put out a bowl for cash, and the studio also has an iPad Square swiper for credit cards.

I’d say we collect somewhere between $40 and $75 a night on average. I’m usually $20 of that.

*How it feels, and notes:*

It feels pretty good! Very helpful for me is knowing *why* I’m asking for money: to help the space pay its very real expenses, so that both it and the group can continue to thrive. And knowing that material need is a real thing in the world - not merely a greedy imposition.

Having the “safety valve” of people being free to pay nothing if they disagree with paying ideologically or are really financially strapped is helpful.

It’s also nice that we bring snacks and sometimes wine, so there is a feeling of richness in general, so I think requesting payment feels less incongruous.

*Name:*

Zach Patton

*Group details:*

Young Meditators’ Group, Austin Shambhala Center, Austin, TX. Usually between 25-40 people in attendance

*How we approach money:*

Following encouragement from our center director, we have recently begun to request a donation of $5 at the conclusion of our meetings. We explain that the center is a non-profit organization that is led and sustained by volunteers, and that financial support from the community makes it possible for us to offer this space to our group. As others above have shared, we emphasize that any amount is appreciated, and that it is okay to not have something financial to contribute. Because our larger Austin Shambhala community is very established, we offer a secondary option of donating time/energy. Something like “If money is tight/you are not able to contribute financially but you would like to give back, please consider volunteering your time to [offering a few volunteer options like groundskeeping, sunday tea service, working in the children’s program, etc], and acknowledging the “point people” in the room for participants to touch base with if they’re interested in learning more.

*How it feels, and notes:*

Our group has been going for 4+ years now, and having just made the transition to explicitly requesting a donation, it feels a little awkward to me personally. I believe in giving back, both in exchange for the teachings but also on a more practical level of keeping the lights on. But the sudden change has felt odd in terms of asking people to pay for what once appeared “free.” We have more success with getting people to donate their time, perhaps because we feel more comfortable asking for that type of donation. All in all, considering the size and strength from our group, this is a definite growth edge for us.

*Name:*

Corey Adkins

*Group Details:*

Young Meditators Group, Portland, OR. Usually 10-20 people in attendance.

*How we approach money:*

I’m writing as a recently departed member of this group, as I live in Mexico City as of six months ago, but led the group for two years and have a good idea of how this worked.

For our weekly practice, which is hosted in the Shambhala Center, we mention donations as part of our announcements at the end of the practice. We don’t mention a specific amount, just simply say “The Portland Shambhala Center hosts us for free, and they are run by donations, so if you’re able to help out by giving a little bit, that would be really great.” We don’t count the amount that is given by the group as we haven’t been pressed to do that by center leadership. In general there hasn’t been a big feeling of center pressure to make money from the group, there’s a feeling that the center is happy to host as they’ll have the space open anyway.

A couple of years we have done more explicit fundraising for the center during its year-end fundraiser, which had a few regulars give a bigger donation who I think might not have been donating otherwise.

*How it feels, and notes:*

It never felt like too big of a deal, because we were lucky enough to not get too much pressure from the leadership. I’m not sure that we were ever really raising much money though, so that’s the flip-side of the relaxed attitude. I don’t know how it would pan it were the tone of leadership on this to change, as the group is mostly attended by people who don’t attend other events in the Shambhala Center, including some in leadership who might be upset if they felt like they *had* to give to the Center.

*Name:* Alex Vlasic

*Group details:* 30’s and Under Night, Montpelier, Vermont. Usually 10-20 people

*How we approach money:* As part of our announcements at the end of the evening (after we have left the shrineroom) we let people know that they have the opportunity to offer money (in our bowl by the door that always out at the Shambhala Center) as they are able and feel inspired. We are run primarily on donations and this helps sustain the center.

*How it feels, and notes:* It feels fine. I like offering it as an optional opportunity. It is in no way mandatory. I also think it’s nice to do it at the end of the evening, so it isn’t like they have to pay to participate. It’s a way for people to express their appreciation.