

## Guidelines for a Successful Group

**Get to Know each member of the group—help them get to know you.** Greet participants as they arrive. Nametags for the first few sessions can be a good idea.

**Trust** is a big part of a successful group. Participants must feel that everyone will be heard and will be safe from criticism. It can help build a good rapport if members feel they can safely share personal stories and that others are really listening to them. - Good listening skills are a must—not interrupting the speaker is a cardinal rule.

**Discussion topics must be flexible.** Don't be afraid to adapt to the needs and preferences of the group.

**Ask for suggestions and ideas** for making meetings more helpful, fulfilling and meaningful.

It is also important to **maintain a balance** between shared stories and staying on task with the agenda. A good transition practice is to close the current discussion topic and ask if the group is ready to move on to the next topic on the agenda.

**Adjust group size** — if your group is larger than 7 or 8, consider dividing into two groups for part of the meeting time. That can ensure that everyone has a chance to speak. When the groups reconvene, have someone from each group report back to the whole group on their discussion.



**Be the Difference**

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**Be a good listener** — wait to express your own view. If you give your opinion too early it might influence others and be interpreted as the ‘right’ opinion. It might also keep others from expressing their opinions.

**Silence can be golden** — Sometimes groups need time to process something has been said or questions that have been asked

Remember silence can be quiet reflection.

**Be respectful of all members of the group** — There is no “one” way or “right” way to make a contribution to the group. Members should be encouraged to find comfortable ways to participate. Respect each person’s contribution or right to be silent. Guarantee there is a right to ‘pass’ and say nothing.

**Discourage speech making or hogging the floor** — try not to let participants ramble or preach to the rest of the group.

**Avoid taking sides** — try to ensure each person feels heard, regardless of their perspective. Encourage others to speak—don’t let them rely on you as ‘the expert’ or see it as ‘your’ group.

**Help the group stay focused**

**Snacks are always a good idea**—rotating snack responsibility gives each member a chance to contribute and nurture the group.



**Be the Difference**