

Leading Classes & Groups

Ways to Make Every Group Time Count

Thank you for being God's Servant. Your role as facilitator is a special one.

As the facilitator you ...

... **enable** something to happen,

... **assist** the process,

... **encourage** people to find their own answers/ discoveries/ solutions to problems, tasks, and / or new insights or information.

1. Preparation

- a. **Pray for your group.** All group members are people arriving at different stages from different experiences with different insights, none of which is the facilitators' job to evaluate. Pray for God to work in the lives of everyone in your group.
- b. **Review curriculum/questions.** Even though some lessons / curriculum are easy, and can almost lead themselves, preview and read through the lesson and questions. Make note of the questions you feel are most important so that you definitely get to those.
- c. **Check out your classroom.** Before your group is scheduled to meet, make sure the meeting environment is ready. Have enough chairs? Lighting adequate? Have all the supplies you need?

2. In the Classroom (or living room)

- a. **Welcome everyone.** Make an effort to personally welcome and greet each person as s/he arrives.
- b. **Silence cell phones.** Plan to keep interruptions to a minimum.
- c. **Always start and end on time.** Honor the time of those who are on time. If you don't do this faithfully from the first meeting, people will arrive later each time. This communicates that you value and respect people's time.
- d. **Give everyone a voice.** Don't hesitate to break into smaller groups to discuss some of the questions. This encourages greater participation by everyone—especially those uncomfortable in a large group setting. We want everyone to have a voice.
- e. **Encourage "safe" participation.** While you want everyone to participate, however be careful not to put anyone on the spot. Let the group members know upfront that they don't have to answer questions they're uncomfortable answering.
- f. **After session conversations.** Be prepared for people who want to hang out and talk at the end. If you need people to leave by a certain time, make this clear during the meeting. Be aware of nursery closing times.
- g. **Thank people for coming** and let them know you're looking forward to seeing them next time.

3. Facilitator Reminders

- a. **Enjoy the process.** Enjoy learning and growing with your group.
- b. **Limit your talk.** The ratio of facilitator talk time to group members talk time is ideally 20%:80%.
- c. **You (or anyone) are not expected to be the expert.** None of us have all the answers... seek together. A facilitator is not: a lecturer, sage, answer giver, or an expert. Allow the Holy Spirit to be "in charge". Remember, it's God's plan.
- d. **Be neutral.** Try not to interrupt, judge, or minimize comments/input. And, don't begin with preconceived expectations.
- e. **Silence is okay ☺** It's okay to wait even a couple of minutes for someone to answer. Try to never be the first one to answer a question and rephrase if needed.
- f. **Keep on track.** Encourage good discussion, but don't be timid about calling time on a given question and moving. Part of your job is clock management. If the group decides to spend extra time on a given question or activity, consider skipping or spending less time on a later question or activity in order to stay on schedule.
- g. **Building "Group Trust" takes time.** While you want to do the best job you can to lead and facilitate, avoid setting unrealistic expectations. Take what you get and build from there.
- h. **Not everyone wants to talk...that's okay.** Give people freedom to participate as they feel comfortable.
- i. **Encourage others to lead in prayer,** you can close. Remember, for many people it takes time before they feel comfortable praying out loud.
- j. **Don't put people on the spot.** Some people are very comfortable sharing, others are not. Ask people to offer answers, testimonies, stories as they are comfortable.
- k. **Read scripture aloud.** Have participants volunteer.
- l. **Focus feedback on sharing ideas** rather than on giving advice
- m. **Build on strengths** of members
- n. **Reach for information:** ask for facts, opinions, impressions
- o. Use **open ended** questions
- p. **Know the limits of your group.** Some problems require other forms of intervention. If you notice someone who seems to need more assistance than what the group is intended for refer them to the ministry staff. Of course, respect their privacy and discuss the possible referral after group has concluded.

4. Possible group member roles:

- **Monopolizer:** tend to dominate the discussion. It is important to moderate their input because others in the group will begin to say less and less. This person takes over!
 - Give little response to their comments
 - After they comment give a general invitation to the group: "Let's hear from someone who hasn't shared yet today."
- **Challenger:** questions the leader/facilitator in front of the group.
 - Encourage them to elaborate on their viewpoint
 - If warranted, encourage additional discussion on their idea
 - Say, "That's something that I can research and get back with you next week." The goal is to move on to another topic or point of view.
- **Introvert:** quiet and rarely participates in the discussion.
 - Encourage their participation by responding positively when they comment.
 - Do not put them on the spot initially; this will only make them retreat more.
 - Instead after group say, "I would love to hear your point of view next group, is there something that I can do to make you feel more comfortable?"
- **Hero:** person who "saves the day" in each group. He/she wants everyone to feel comfortable so will answer for others and has a difficult time with silences; silence is a form of communication too!
 - It's best to try to extinguish this behavior in the beginning of the life of a group.
 - If they interrupt to let someone off the hook, say, "Let's wait to see what great insight Logan has."
 - Explore comfortable silences in group. What are the members thinking about? How can we grow in silence?

*With all of these roles listed above, you may have to meet with them outside of the normal group meeting, or ask the church staff for help.