

Helpful Guidelines for Group Members

1. **Participate.** The goal is for everyone to participate. If you tend to dominate discussions, make a special effort to hold back and encourage others to participate. If you are naturally quiet, realize that you have unique perspectives to add. You will profit by hearing these ideas verbalized as much as the other members of the group will. Avoid tangents. Save interesting side issues and talk about them over coffee after the group. Of course there are always some crucial exceptions to this, but generally stick to the topic at hand.
2. **Facilitate community building within the group.** Friction is inevitable. Don't be afraid of problems between group members. Crises are opportunities for growth. That's why we join groups . . . to grow! Small Groups often bring out personality problems, but they also provide one of the best places for working out those problems. Problems and conflicts are a normal part of growing together – even a necessary part. Use problems the way God intended – as a means toward growth. Do your best to keep this perspective in your interactions.
3. **Building blocks to group intimacy.** There are several necessary elements to build group intimacy. It starts with honesty. When people are authentic and transparent in the safe environment of a small group, it will lead to trust. Trust then furthers the value of safety in the group. As people feel safer, they will become more vulnerable and open. And as they share their vulnerability with others in the group, intimacy will be built. As each member of the group focuses on these simple building blocks, the group will see incredible transformation.
4. **Disclosing vs talking.** When people realize that we care, they begin to feel safe and will often stop “talking” and start “disclosing.” They may start out early in the group relationship by simply expressing thoughts or opinions. This will grow to observations and feelings and eventually, when trust is developed, they will share their own needs and vulnerability.
5. **Above and beyond.** Realize that your group life should also extend outside of your formal time. One key to capitalizing on this and building community faster is spending some extra time with other members of your group outside of your formal schedule. Grab a cup of coffee or invite members over for dinner, talk about life, hear people's stories or testimonies, and do your best to place value on those people and really listen. You'll find this practice a great catalyst to group growth and personal transformation.