

Tips for Leading a Group

A group is more time intensive than the 45-60min you're together. It takes intention and planning to lead a group well and it's a skill that is developed over time. Some people have a natural ability, but most people have to consider all the parts and how they fit together. Leading a group is like following a recipe: everyone can do it; it comes naturally to a few, is hard work for others, and some just don't like doing it. But with enough time, space, and resources anyone can put a good meal together.

Take Time to Develop a Plan and a Series of Topics to Discuss

- People will know if you aren't prepared or have a plan
- A lack of preparation or a plan does not feel safe
- 2:1 ratio; it takes at least two hours to prep for an hour meeting

Imagine inviting a friend to dinner, but when they arrive you haven't cooked anything let alone set a menu. You spend the first part of your time together digging through your cabinets trying to piece together something y'all can eat. Your friend would feel confused, uncertain, and that they could be doing anything else. Doing the work beforehand helps make things smoother when they arrive and makes your time together special.

Set the Rhythm and Structure of the Meeting So It Is Predictable

- Write down one or two one sentence goals for your group
- Take time to write down any topics for your group either that you thought of or heard from someone else then refine it so you always have topics in your pocket
- Know what's next: a leader has a plan
- When pitching the group tell people what to expect: goals, topics, structure, etc.

You've invited a friend over to make dinner together, you have the recipe for fried rice and you bought all the ingredients, but you don't have a wok, or a stove, or maybe you didn't pay your gas bill. The idea is there, but the structural things you need to pull it off are absent. Also, they brought ice cream, but you didn't tell them you're lactose intolerant. Y'all might eat, but it won't be fried rice and you're going to have bubble guts.

Making Sure You Are in A Good Place to Lead

- Your wellness is important and impacts how you lead
- Knowing and addressing your triggers will help others identify their own
- Carve out time to be in a good headspace before the group
- Avoid or remove distractions so you can stay focused

Your friend gave you a second or third chance at this dinner you keep inviting them to, but when they showed up you were in your sweats wrapped in a blanket on the couch crying about your ex. They'll stay with you and ride it out, but the dinner they were expecting isn't going to happen.

Calling Before and After to Remind and Debrief

- People feel cared for when they receive a call separate from the group
- Does not have to be long
- Be genuinely open to hearing what people think
- Tailor their input into developing the group
- One on one conversations between groups is when the real connection is built
- Communicate to each participant what they bring is needed

Rob: *Hey, Ken, I'm just confirming we're still on for dinner tonight.*

Ken: *Heck yeah! Also, you know I don't mess with brussel sprouts, right?*

Rob: *Ken! Just wanted to call and thank you for coming over last night. The ranch dressing you made really set the wings off. It was so great spending time with you and I hope you enjoyed the giant bag of wings you took home.*

Ken: *Heck yeah! Those wings were delicious, but real spicy. When can we do it again? Let's try to make Lancaster style chicken pot pies.*

For more information on Community Inclusion and/or training resources, contact:

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