



Recruitment

One of the challenges in conducting a social support group is recruiting participants. Some people join groups readily, others are hesitant, and still others will not attend at all. Here are a few ideas to keep in mind when recruiting participants:

Characteristics of the participants

Who are they? Age, ethnicity, primary language or health condition, concern or need
Do they have experience in attending groups?

Barriers to participation

Is the site accessible by public transportation or is private transportation necessary?
Are there child care issues?
Are there gate keepers to attendance?
What time of day is best to meet? How long is the meeting?
Is there a cost for attendance?
Are there other groups that offer similar services?

Awareness building

What are the ways in which prospective participants get information?
What are multiple-sensory ways for advertising, such as flyers, radio or oral communication?

Bridging techniques

Who endorses the social support group and are they trustworthy?
Should group staff or volunteers make personal contact by telephone or home visiting?
Can persons other than the target participants attend?

Incentives

What might be acceptable incentives: food, friends, fun or free gifts?
What topics might engage the interest of the participants?

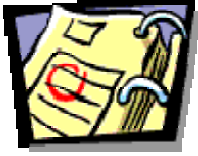
Role of the Facilitator



The facilitator...

- Remains neutral and impartial
- Clarifies information
- Protects individuals and their ideas from attack
- Helps people listen to each other and share discussion.
- Accepts emotion and feelings; helps channel hostility, resistance and competition into productive discussion;
- Keeps the group focused on a common task and avoids side-tracking.
- Helps avoid repetition.
- Paces (speeds up or slows down discussion)
- Assures all points of view are expressed and understood.
- Clarifies areas of agreement and disagreement.
- Summarizes and checks for completion of each agenda item.
- Suggests alternative discussion methods if something is not working.
- Helps the group find win/win solutions or reach consensus or compromise as appropriate.
- Helps maintain a sense of humor.
- Deals with problems such as interrupters, people who monopolize, and late-comers
- Works with a recorder. Assures that all comments are recorded in some way.
- Brings meeting to closure.





Organizing the Mothers' Group meeting

The mother's group meeting process embraces the philosophy of creating an environment of respect and trust for experiential learning. It promotes positive emotions and positive meaning-making messages to develop friendships for the sake of the baby.

Event	Type of Group	Time – 2 Hours, 15 Minutes
Welcome	Everyone	5 min
Choices Activity	Small Group	20 min.
Updates and Hello	Everyone	10 min
Sharing of Choices	Pairs	10 min
Relaxation or Movement	Everyone in Large Group or in Pairs	20 min
Case Scenario	Small Group	30 min
Snack and Lottery	Everyone	30 min
Closing – Music or Group Activity	Everyone	10 min

Guidelines for Group Discussion



Sit in groups of 4-5 participants (minimum 3, maximum 8)

- Participants must be non-related.
- Select one case scenario to discuss at each table.
- Devote 30 minutes (maximum 45) to discussing a scenario

Everyone gets a chance to be heard using either round style or free style. In the beginning, it's important to respect those participants might be shy or reluctant to contribute. They may contribute when they trust that they will be given a chance to speak. The facilitator should pay attention to cues to open up the discussion space for people to speak, monitor the contribution of others by inviting them to speak, or gently act as a conversation traffic manager.

- The goal is to discuss the topics, not to find a solution.
- Questions that need clarification and information about community services may be offered by team members at the next meeting.

Discussion Rules



Each person can participate, including asking questions, or giving an opinion, information or idea.

Others may build on each the responses of others.

No criticism is allowed. No ideas are bad or wrong.

Suggestions



Keep group structure together for at least 6 weeks, since it takes about 6 weeks to develop a new friend.

Small groups should have the same membership to build friendships and personal connections.

If new members join the program, start a new group of 4-8 rather than adding the new members to a established, bonded group.

If there seems to be an un-resolvable problem at the table, the team can remove the participant and shift them to another new group. Groups can become smaller and remain cohesive but not bigger.

Team member role is to assist in facilitating stagnant conversations and diffusing conflict. However, it is not an opportunity to teach, lecture, do therapy or critique opinions, or to exert power as a professional or agency staff.

Relaxation Techniques

Progressive Muscular Relaxation Technique

Sit comfortably, close the eyes and breathe naturally.

Clench the fists tightly and then tense the arms. Breathe out, release the tension in the arms all the way down to the fingertips.



Say the word 'relax'.

Let the arms fall to your side, like a limp doll. Relax the feet and calf muscles, then the thighs, bottom, stomach, back and head.

Tense the muscles of the face last and with each breath out say the word 'relax' so the entire body feels heavy and relaxed.

Imagine a peaceful scene and put yourself there. It may be a boat on a calm ocean or a beautiful clearing in the bush.

Stay there for a while.

Slowly arouse the feet, legs, back, and shoulders. Bring the arms forward into the lap, bring the head up, and open the eyes.

Effleurage

Gentle strokes of circular massage done with the fingertips, to be used on the abdomen, hips, thighs, or anywhere on the body where it feels good.



Use a flat-hand stroke on the arms, legs and broad flat surface of the back.

Effleurage with only the fingertips gliding (rather than the whole hand) is called feathering.

Light effleurage promotes relaxation, alleviates pain and encourages sleep. Relaxed muscles short-circuit fear, tension and pain.

Relaxation through Breathing

Inhale and exhale slowly through the nose only.



Then, inhale through the mouth with the lips puckered as if to kiss or making a whistle.

After the inhalation, relax the lips and exhale through the mouth slowly, then inhale through the nose and exhale through the mouth.



Last breath pattern is inhaling through the puckered lips and exhaling through the nose.



Sample Case Scenario

19- year- old Laura wants to attend a Thursday night class at the local community college. She has a 16-month-old child with a previous boyfriend and is currently five months pregnant with her new boyfriend's baby.

If she completes this class, she will receive her general secretary and receptionist certificate. Both her mom and Laura's new boyfriend support her, however both Mom and the boyfriend are out on Thursday nights, having a standing "girls night out" and "poker league".

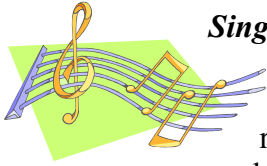
Laura wanted to ask either one to provide childcare, but yet has only hinted how important this class is to her. It's now the night before the class and neither Mom nor her boyfriend have volunteered to sit for Laura's child.

She thinks neither one of them really cares about her future or her and gets angry with them.

Share your ideas, thoughts and opinions.

Closing Activity

Bringing closure to the day's meeting helps with the transition from participating as a group member to leaving the group to resume life as an individual. Select an activity that the group wants or use the ideas listed below.



Sing a theme song of the group, selected by members, and sing it at the end of every meeting. Singing the song at the end of the meeting establishes a ritual that is expected to happen each time. Positive rituals create long lasting memories. Mothers might remember the song and then sing it to their babies.



Do a group activity, such as **Rain**, where the members do the following motions in sequence to mimic sunshine and rain.



The facilitator begins with **arms above the head with fingers touching to form an "O"** to mimic the sun, and turns to the person on the right. Each person does the until the gesture reaches the facilitator.

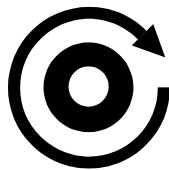


Then, the facilitator **snaps her fingers to mimic drizzle**, turning to the person on the right and around the circle it goes.

The facilitator **claps her hands to mimic heavy rain**.



The facilitator **pounds the table to mimic pouring heavy rain**



The facilitator **reverses** the process, starting with hand clapping, finger snapping, and forming an "O" to mimic the return of sunshine.

The facilitator, then says parting words, such as, “*Thank you every one for coming. We will see each other next week!*”



Saying Good Bye



For some people saying “good bye” at the end of a series of group meetings is hard. It’s important to tell people in a clear way that the group will meet for only a certain number of meetings. When there are two meetings remaining, gently remind the attendees that few meetings are left. The anticipatory guidance helps people cope with saying good bye.

The agency may or may not offer follow-up groups or booster sessions. It’s important to communicate what other classes or meetings are available at the agency or in the community. Some people may have established relationships with each other, so they will continue to meet outside of the group. Others may formalize their informal group so that it takes on a life of its’ own.

To see a Power Point presentation about one group’s experience using this model, [click here](#).

