

GUIDELINES FOR STARTING A DISCUSSION GROUP

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Create a Life That Tickles Your Soul
Recharge in Minutes
Teams At Work: 7 Keys To Success

If you're thinking about starting a discussion group based on one or more of Dr. Zoglio's books, we invite you to use this quick-start guide to get things rolling. Although every group will evolve to reflect the interests of its members, your chances of success are higher if you follow a few good group management tips.

Individual Commitment

Because it will take a while for members to bond, it's good to ask potential members to "sign-on" for at least three meetings (weekly to start, monthly later if desired). And remember some groups ask people to sign-on for one 6-week session and then revisit commitment.

Group Guidelines

If you want a discussion group where members feel secure, supported, and motivated, establish a few ground rules upfront, and then review them quickly at the start of each meeting. If you're headed in the same direction, you'll find the meeting more productive and enjoyable.

1. **Mum's The Word.** Discuss the importance of not inadvertently disclosing information that a member shared in group. Mum's the word if you want to build trust in a group. No one repeats anything that is said in the discussion, unless it is to assist the individual and you have prior permission.
2. **Pass The Talking Stick.** To be sure each member has an opportunity to speak, set a ground rule about "first-round" check-ins and then set a timer (one that rings!) or appoint a timekeeper each week. Once every one who wishes, has spoken you can always go back to discuss someone's comments in depth. It's also best if you start with comments only-no discussion- then progress to dialogue. Or you can use an agenda of 2-3 topics and allow 15 minutes per topic (set the timer!) Then before moving on to topic 2, check to see that everyone who wished to comment was able to do so. Be adamant that discussions be balanced...otherwise you'll find the same few talking every week and fewer and fewer people coming.
3. **Be Supportive.** Encourage members to "paraphrase" what a speaker just said before making a comment or suggestion. No judging or criticism should be allowed, and suggestions should be offered only when a member asks for ideas/or gives permission.
4. **Rotate Leadership.** Ask all members to take turns "facilitating" a meeting (perhaps even rotate the "hosting" of meetings. This allows everyone to be both leader and follower, and minimizes the opportunity for bossiness.
5. **Be Solution Sleuths.** Although personal problems and venting will inevitably come up, try to stay solution-oriented, focusing on answers more than complaints. Set "whining" time limits (no more than a few minutes before gently shifting to what CAN be done. Acknowledge progress, what's working, and member's strengths.
6. **Respect Every Member.** Half-way through each meeting, stop and do a quick "check-in" to assess how members feel the meeting is going. Consider how well ground rules are being followed, the level of participation, timing issues, and if people are feeling listened to. After the first 3 or 4 meetings, you might evaluate meetings every other meeting, and then every third. If an issue arises, immediately discuss how to fix it.

Different Types of Discussion Groups

Some groups follow a Zoglio book (*Create A Life That Tickles Your Soul, Recharge in Minutes, or Teams At Work*) setting discussion topics by book chapters. Others hold a general discussion around the whole book (changing your life, renewing energy, successful teams) and then go into depth on subtopics that are most relevant to the group. Others pick a chapter (ex. *Recharge*, Ch 1, “I Can’t hear Myself Think” at a time to discuss. Check the message boards for discussion ideas.

Sample Meeting Agenda

1. Welcome, introduce new members
2. Review the ground rules.
3. Quick check-in. Each member gets 60 seconds (no more!) to report 1 significant success or event since last meeting and/or 1 “wish” for tonight’s meeting.
4. Begin discussion with reactions to any “homework” or meeting preparation (ex. A chapter read or challenge to be completed). Allow the first person to speak without interruption for the allotted time. When finished, allow this member to ask for feedback and/or support from others (again a time limit), and commit to any individual homework.
5. Move on to the next person or topic until all have been heard.
6. Summary/Wrap-up: ask individuals to restate any personal “homework” and –if time-have members make “open” comments or ask for any additional group support.

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