



ROLE OF THE FACILITATOR

Maybe you dreamed of becoming a Drug and Alcohol Support Group, facilitator. Perhaps you feel led to support addicts and alcoholics in their recovery journey with a heart and passion for it, but do not have the slightest idea where to start or what to do. The fact is that many people turn addicts or alcoholics in recovery away, even families seeking support. Why? because of their lack of knowledge and fear of getting involved. Our goal at Choose Life is to provide you with the right tools, practices, and skills to be equipped to facilitate such support groups.

Facilitating Drug and Alcohol and/or Family Support groups is similar to facilitating any other group. So, set your fears aside and learn with us.

What makes a good, skilled support group facilitator? A facilitator's role is to get the group talking, to listen, accept, and love each person attending your sessions. The goal is to get your participants to think critically, develop solutions, and ask meaningful questions, but refrain from solving all the challenges for them. A skilled facilitator will know how to eliminate the friction between members as you will have different personalities attending the group with different needs.

The first step to becoming a facilitator is to find a place to host support meetings. Many churches and schools are open to running such meetings but need a skilled facilitator to lead.

Firstly you need to know that when recovery support group meetings are held at churches or schools, that you will have an obligation to give feedback reports to either; the school principal, your church minister or board members. Although information discussed in recovery meetings is highly confidential, you will deal with people in crisis mode who need to be flagged and guided to receive help.

You will have 3 main different personalities in your group.

1. The needy person

As you start your meetings, you will have a lot of these people in your group. The needy person will probably be the person who is in crisis and most likely still an active user. We do not turn such people

away. Some people in recovery might get and stay sober with the help of these support groups. Yet, some individuals need to be guided to understand that they need professional help. Think of your support group as an aftercare service.

In session 2 you will find a simple contract that each member must agree to in order to attend your meetings. This will protect you and everybody else in the group. This contract needs to be established at the very first meeting attended.

2. The introvert

The second type of person is an introvert. It is difficult to get information from this person. However, it is critical that you get them involved. You can do that by having discussions during your sessions circling around giving everyone a chance to take part by sharing their ideas and thoughts. Everyone in your group wants to feel heard and understood. Your introvert will sometimes be the person who comes to talk to you one on one after a meeting. Be prepared to stay an extra 15 minutes to help these individuals.

3. The leader

Your third type of person will be your leader. In general, they are extroverted and like to dominate conversations. You can keep this person occupied, by giving him simple tasks to do, like taking notes on the whiteboard while the discussions are taking place. You can also let him be the person who is going around to do check in's with each member. When the leader wants to take over the conversation, you can say things like. We appreciate your input on this matter, but let us hear what the next person has to add.

The most basic rule that needs to be set is that no person under the influence will be allowed to attend. As it may put the entire group at risk. Such a person needs to be escorted out of the room with the help of one or more people from the group. If the person arrived at the meeting with his own vehicle, see if it is possible to escort the person home. Some people will argue or get violent. Do not fight with them and do not allow them to corrupt the group. After releasing them, tell them he may not enter your support group until he sobered up again. Please make sure to flag this person under the authority where you are facilitating.

The Facilitating Process

Step 1: Preparation

- Always make certain that you have watched and read the weeks material before presenting it yourself. Pray and ask God to speak through the teaching.
- Be prepared before everyone arrives. Make sure the venue is ready and eliminate any noise or distractions you can.
- Set up a special counseling session afterwards, if needed.
- You can also provide coffee and tea for your early arrivals. Those early arrivals are normally the ones who would like to get to know you better. Their goal is to build a relationship with you, gain your trust, and have a deeper connection with you.
- During your sessions look and listen for people needing ministry and guidance

Step2: Welcoming

- Welcome your participant
- When you are a Christian group getting together, always open your meetings with prayer and be sensitive and open to the Holy Spirit.
- Revisit the previous week's session.

Step 3: The Introduction

- Your introduction serves the purpose of getting to know your members.
- Let everyone tell their name, where they are from, and what they hope to gain from attending the recovery support group. After your group has been well established, you can now allow each person to share their highs and lows of the week.
- It will amaze you how openly people they will share as to how their week was. Always make new commers feel safe.

Step 4: Presenting the material

- You will either be playing the video clips regarding each session, or you can use the material provided for each week to facilitate your group. Both options will be made available to you, using the weekly sessions provided. Take notes of what you may want to highlight and discuss afterwards. Doing this might help trigger more effective discussions.

Step 5: Discussions & Strategies

- Each week will have discussion points. If you are using the video clips provided, there will be time to pause which will allow time for the group to discuss the questions given. Do not rush this time.
- This may be a critical time when people will identify or relate to the day's topic or have questions about how to apply the lesson of the day. Sometimes during these discussions, people will take the courage to share their intensely personal issues, experiences, struggles, and thoughts. You can allow the rest of the group to strategise to help such struggling individuals.
- Allow the group's input, ideas, and thoughts regarding the session. Topics may arise beyond our comfort zone. Do not shut it down, because you do not relate or have the experience. There will be others in the room that will be able to help you during these times. Count and put together the years of addiction of each person in the room and you will find that you have years of knowledge and experience among you.
- If you do not have answers to questions, be honest enough to say so, or say that you will do research and get back to them. Remember, the most crucial aspect of running these meetings is total honesty. Honesty is the key to freedom, which will lead to your group's character development.
- When burning issues come up in discussions, you may have to be flexible. However, you still need to respect attendees who are time bound. Should you run over your scheduled time, take a 5-minute break to release these people, then continue with your session. If it is an individual needing help, you can get the group to help with answers, or you can simply ask the person to speak to you afterwards. Use the counselling corner you have set up.

Step 6: Conclusion

- Continue with the video until it concludes,
- Close your meeting by circling around and asking each individual what they have learned and what they think they can apply to themselves
- Finally, close with prayer

In a nutshell, let us emphasize your role as a facilitator:

A facilitator brings people together and facilitates support and encouragement among a group of people who share common problems and experience. Your role is to empower these individuals to find solutions on their own. Never try to fix things for them. When people get to know one another and feel safe, your group can have more power than the professionals have with them.

In a support group, members are equals; and this can make people feel much more comfortable opening up about their problems. Talking to others in support groups reduces anxiety, improves self-esteem, and helps the member's sense of well-being overall.

Apart from providing help to those directly affected, a support group can often feel like a family, and you'll feel more empowered as you help others.

Now go out there, speak to your minister or school principal and start offering support to those in need.

Let's pray for one another. Pray that God will help us open our hearts, so we may learn and be well-prepared for our roles as facilitators.