

10 ESSENTIAL TIPS FOR HANDLING GROUP DYNAMICS

If you've ever led a small group, you know it can be tricky. Small groups are comprised of all personality types representing the diversity and beauty of the body of Christ. One of the biggest challenges a small group leader will face is figuring out how to balance the discussion among all members: from the reserved, quiet friend to the excessively chatty sister. As a leader, your first and best strategy is prayer. Pray to have words of grace, sensitivity, and creativity as you lead. Pray for the Holy Spirit to work in each member so there's an attitude of kindness, humility, and unity. We need His help! In addition, here are some practical techniques you can try the next time you're facing a leadership dilemma with the quiet and talkative members:

5 Tips for Leading the Quiet Member

1. Prompt her to share on easier topics. A comfortable way to engage the quiet member is to ask if she'd like to add any comments to the discussion. Try saying, "I'd love to hear what your thoughts are, Mary," or "We don't want to miss what's on your mind, Renee."
2. Seek to connect meaningfully with her outside the group to strengthen your relationship. Listen intently to discover what she's excited about learning, and ask her to share it at the meeting.
3. Ask group members to select one or two favorite questions from the study, and volunteer to answer those during the group time.
4. Give positive feedback for participation. Genuine affirmation will encourage members to share with more ease.
5. Take natural opportunities to invite quiet women into conversation without being forceful. For example, if you're talking about education, and she's a teacher, invite her to share what her experience has taught her.

5 Tips for Leading the Talkative Member

1. This outgoing lady generally needs no prompting to share, so avoid calling on her to contribute.
2. Engaging in eye contact can encourage a member to speak, so minimize eye contact by having her sit beside you.
3. If necessary, during a private conversation, ask her to hold back from sharing too often so quieter women have more opportunities to participate. Let her know of your desire for equal group sharing, and enlist her help to draw out others.
4. Graciously and gently interrupt when the talkative member monopolizes the discussion. As she pauses for a breath, you might say, "I appreciate your thoughts, Ruth, but I'd also like to hear from others. Who else would like to share?"
5. To broaden the conversation, consider saying, "I'd love to hear from someone who hasn't shared yet. Now is a great time to jump in!"

