

## How to be a GREAT Small Group Member

All of us yearn for a place “where everybody knows your name.” Our small groups are designed to be not only this, but to be a safe place where we can minister to each other, not just this weekend, but should connections be fruitful, long after the retreat is over. Before this can happen, we have to run the scary risk of letting others get to know us. Being sisters in Christ means that we have been given the gift of UNITY in HIM, but we are also called to maintain that unity and to cultivate community. We won't always “click” with everyone—even in Christ—but we can learn to make our interaction truly connectational, and, in the process, will usually discover how God wants us to minister within the body...and who knows, we might even discover a lifelong friend!

## Tips to Building a Great Small Group

1. **Don't interrupt!** No words should come out of your mouth when someone else is talking—though a little silent nodding or appropriate laughter is good! The greatest thing we can offer our group is our ears.
2. **Don't probe!** Probing is asking questions too deep for what a person is ready to share. Let each small group member grow at her own comfort level. We usually grow into a willingness to talk about what we've done...to what we think...to how we feel.
3. **Don't give advice unless asked!** Sometimes the person with the least information is the quickest with her advice. It's not necessary to be Ms. Fix It! When someone shares a concern or problem, sometimes she just needs someone else to know.
4. **Don't be judgmental!** As a group develops into a community that can minister to each other, sensitive areas of disagreement can arise—maybe in lifestyle, preferences, or experiences. As redeemed women, between our collective experiences, we've probably lived through just about any life situation imaginable. God does save sinners, as you know! Acceptance can provide the beginning of repentance and healing and growing in grace.
5. **Do be transparent!** Contribute to the group assignments and questions as much as you comfortably can. It's OK to “pass” now and then if need be, and you certainly don't always need to “spill your guts” as an old friend used to say, but do let your group get to know you.
6. **Do keep what you learn about each other in confidence!** Allow your group to be an environment of trust. What happens in your group stays in your group.

—Teri Anderson, Women's Ministry Trainer