

Considerations for Adult Group Facilitation

Adapted from Self-Help Line May 1991, Family; Service Association, Dayton, Ohio

Modified by Tu Nidito, 2019, 2021, 2023, 2024.

Purpose of the Adult Group

- To serve adults and children who are grieving a death loss or the loss of health due to a serious medical condition. The commonality in every Tu Nidito adult group is that they all have grieving children.
- Create a safe space for emotional support and social support.
- Exchange of information and support for adults and their children.

Sharing Circle Structure: 6:45 – 8:10pm

- Welcome and Centering (either with music or silence)
- State intention of the group: We are all here together tonight because we have a child who is grieving a death loss or the loss of health due to a serious medical condition.
- Rules (if there are new participants)
- Check In: be mindful of the amount of time spent on check-in so the Sharing Circle Questions can be discussed.
- Sharing Circle Question(s): Sharing Circle Questions are usually based on what the children are discussing in their groups. Questions will relate to the adults' personal grief process as well as ways to support their grieving children.
- Wrap Up: please make sure Sharing Circle has concluded by 8:10pm so we can begin Closing Circle by 8:15pm
- At the end, you are welcome to invite the group to stand and gather closer together in the center of the circle, as you thank everyone for coming. Feel free to add your own wrap up thought for the group.

Role of the Facilitator

- Create an emotionally and physically safe space.
- Encourage the open expression of emotions. Crying is both natural and healthy. While crying outside this room is not always possible or safe, in this group, you may give yourself permission to cry freely without embarrassment. In this room, with others who share your experience and feelings, it is OK.
- Reinforce and ensure confidentiality.
- Guide, rather than direct
- **Do not talk about yourself, except sparingly, or to highlight connections between participants/empower a participant. Remember this is not your source of support.**

- **Embrace silence. Do not feel the need to fill the void. Someone will usually speak up when they are ready. Go with your gut feeling on when you may need to move the discussion along.**
- Time keeper/moderator. The importance of one adult facilitator keeping an eye on the time while the other monitors the group. Sit across from each other and support each other, etc.
- Watch for non-verbals of the group (scan the room every few minutes)
- Monitor and intervene when necessary (Inappropriate comments, off topics, monopolizers, etc.)
- Be authentic.
- Support: allow the group to “do its thing”. Each group has its own personality. Our work is to support their ability to be present for the children they bring and for one another. The style and the culture they create is all theirs.
- A facilitator does not:
 - Provide counseling or therapy.
 - Give medical or legal advice.
 - Allow names of specific agencies, doctors, etc. in derogatory discussion.
 - Help with cumulative non-death grief.
 - Interpret or analyze: We are not here to judge each other, but to listen and offer understanding. We sometimes find the experiences, expressions and feelings of others to be completely different from our own experience, upbringing or value system. We learn to lovingly accept everything expressed here, as legitimate for the person expressing it.

Adult Group Rules/Agreements

- We use a Sharing Stick that is passed in a circle from participant to participant. If I choose not to speak when it is my turn to speak, I will say “I Pass.”
- I want an emotionally and physically safe group in which to share my thoughts and feelings. Therefore, I promise confidentiality. Group members will not speak about what is discussed in this group outside of this group and will not disclose any identifying information about fellow group members to those outside of Tu Nidito, unless their permission is provided. Exceptions to the confidentiality rule include when someone in the group discloses harm to self or others, or an intention to harm self or others.
- I recognize that while we all share the similarity of grief, we are all different. I will maintain emotional safety for the group by allowing other group members to have their thoughts, feelings and opinions and will listen with empathy, care and trust. I will be mindful of sharing my thoughts, feelings and opinions in a way that feels respectful to everyone in the group.

- I understand the importance of consistency. Therefore, I will attend each group meeting. I will arrive at 6:45P.M. and the meeting will end by 8:15 P.M.
- My needs are important. When I need to share, I will speak up.
- I trust that we all have the inner resources to heal from our losses. Therefore, I will not give advice to fellow group members unless explicitly asked. Advice includes guidance, recommendations or “shoulds” of any kind, including past, present and future actions.
- I will allow other group members to have their thoughts, feelings and opinions. I will listen with empathy, care and trust regardless of my own thoughts, feelings and opinions.
- We all experience grief differently. Therefore, I will not compare losses and respect the validity of each group member’s grieving process.
- I heal best when I am present for myself. Therefore, I will not use alcohol or drugs before group meetings.
- Out of respect for the members of the group, I will turn off my cell phone.
- When I feel we have gotten all I can from our Tu Nidito group and am ready to end my participation, I will respect the trust the group has afforded me by announcing my intention to close. I will make this announcement during our second to last group meeting.

Handling Challenging Situations (see separate handout)

- Remind individuals/group of purpose and call attention back to creating safety for all
- Exert gentle leadership
- Advise that things can be addressed privately after group AND identify one member of the facilitation team to offer said support
- Be aware of when this support slips outside the realm of your role or your comfort level
- If a rule is being broken, feel free to gently interrupt the participant by saying “I’m going to pause you right there for a moment...” and then continue your statement based on which rule was broken:
- If a participant is monopolizing time: find a moment to pause them, typically as they are taking a breath, and express your concern for time: “There are a few people who haven’t shared yet and I want to make sure we get around to everyone” or “I want to respect everyone’s time and make sure those who want to share have time to” or “How about we come back to you at the end if we have time so that everyone who wants to share has a chance to”
- If a participant is interrupting another participant: Kindly remind them of the Sharing stick rule and that if they would like to speak, they can wait until after so-and-so is done.

- If a participant is giving unsolicited advice or asking many follow-up questions: “One of our ground rules is that we do not give advice unless asked for, maybe we should ask so-and-so if they are in need of advice or if they are just sharing”
- “If you have specific questions, please keep in mind the speaker may not feel comfortable answering those. Since (the speaker) has the Sharing stick, let’s make sure they have their time to speak.”