

Guidance for SGLs - Higher Level Needs

Our small groups are the first line of care for the church and may be called upon to meet various needs of their group members. A small group may provide meals during times of need, loss, and celebration. A small group may offer the ministry of presence during particularly difficult times. A small group may meet the needs centered around transportation, home repairs, or sudden financial strain on a short-term basis. But not all needs can be met within the group.

Here are some examples of needs/problems requiring assistance from outside the group:

- Abuse
- Some marriage issue
- Mental health issues or illness
- Addictions
- Ongoing or particularly significant financial strain
- Toxicity beyond the tolerable level of EGRness (Extra Grace Required 😊)
- Other sensitive issues that may arise, including issues between group members or issues with other BPF folks, staff, or the church as a whole

When these things come up, the SGL will want to handle it in a way that best cares for the individual(s) as well as the rest of the small group. Our goal is for leaders to be prepared to:

- Makes the individual(s) feel seen, heard and cared for
- Acknowledges the feelings of the individual(s)
- Does not try to problem solve
- Works toward next steps with the help of appropriate leadership and staff

If an issue comes up during group discussion, a possible response example:

I'm so sorry you're struggling with [issue]. I'd like to chat more about that one-on-one in a moment. For now, let's get back to [dinner/discussion/prayer requests] so that you and I can talk ASAP.

When you are talking one on one, a possible example:

I'm so sorry to hear [repeat issue so that they feel heard AND you clarify your understanding]. I imagine that's pretty [frustrating/scary/concerning/stressful/etc]. I'm not exactly sure what our next steps are, but if you're ok with it, I'd like to talk to Steve/Erin to see what they think.

You DO NOT need to come up with an answer to fix it, but it might be helpful to ask these four questions during the one on one conversation.

1. **How long has this been going on?** This helps determine the level of need while simultaneously communicating that you are listening empathetically.
2. **Who else knows?** You will learn their level of vulnerability and if they are operating in isolation or if they have any other support or influence.
3. **What advice or counsel have you already received?** Even if others know about the issue, that doesn't mean they have sought meaningful counsel. Also, finding out if there is any input they disagree with can tell you how they are processing what they hear.
4. **What would you like to do from here?** This question keeps them empowered, reveals their motivation for coming to you and whether they are willing to move forward. *Be careful not to give unsolicited advice here.*

You are not alone!

We want you to know that when issues or conflict arise in your group, you are not alone. Our staff is ready and willing to help walk with you through these scenarios. You can also use the resource list for different resources you can connect people in your group to.

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