

Establishing Ground Rules

Ground rules define the character and focus of a group by outlining expectations for each group member. Ground rules should be renewed whenever a group starts, returns after a significant break or when new members join.

Ground rules can help a leader confront bad behavior by allowing them to appeal to agreed on rules rather than personal opinion.

Each group should set their own ground rules. Some areas of discussion include:

1. Timing. When do we start, when do we end, how much time do we spend on study, sharing and support? Is there a timekeeper?
2. Attendance. We will do our best to attend the group and call when we know that we cannot make it.
3. Homework. How should people prepare for a meeting?
4. Protecting Confidences.
5. Feedback. We will talk to our leaders when dissatisfied so that we can deal with problems that may arise.
6. Childcare. Are children welcome in the meeting? How is childcare organized?
7. Food. Will there be food and who is responsible to bring it?
8. Advice. Is it freely given or should we ask permission?
9. Participate but don't dominate: All members should be free to contribute to a discussion and all members must guard themselves from talking too much.