

*Facilitator
Training
for*

Alpha

Church of the Good Shepherd

1370 Grundy Ave. Holbrook, NY 11738 www.goodshepherdRCchurch.org

Nuts & Bolts

What skills do you need to be a great facilitator?

- Listening Skills
- Communications Skills
- Group Dynamic Skills
- Ministering Skills

What is your commitment?

Listen

*When I ask you to listen to me,
and you start giving me advice, you have not done what I asked.*

*When I ask you to listen to me,
and you begin to tell me why I shouldn't feel that way, you are trampling on my feelings.*

*When I ask you to listen to me
and you feel you have to do something to solve my problems, you have failed me, strange as that may
seem.*

*Listen: All that I ask is that you listen,
not talk or do – just hear me.*

*When you do something for me that I can and need to do for myself, you contribute to my fear and
inadequacy.*

*But when you accept as a simple fact that I do feel what I feel,
no matter how irrational, then I can quit trying to convince you and get about that business of
understanding what's behind those feelings.*

So, please listen and just hear me.

And, if you want to talk, wait a minute for your turn – and I'll listen to you.

- Author Unknown

THE ART OF ACTIVE LISTENING

1. Restating

To show you are listening, repeat every so often what you think the person said — not by parroting, but by paraphrasing what you heard in your own words. For example, “Let’s see if I’m clear about this. . .”

2. Summarizing

Bring together the facts and pieces of the problem to check understanding — for example, “So it sounds to me as if . . .” Or, “Is that it?”

3. Minimal encouragers

Use brief, positive prompts to keep the conversation going and show you are listening — for example, “umm-hmmm,” “Oh?” “I understand,” “Then?” “And?”

4. Reflecting

Instead of just repeating, reflect the speaker’s words in terms of feelings — for example, “This seems really important to you. . .”

THE ART OF ACTIVE LISTENING

5. Giving feedback

Let the person know what your initial thoughts are on the situation. Share pertinent information, observations, insights, and experiences. Then listen carefully to confirm.

6. Emotion labeling

Putting feelings into words will often help a person to see things more objectively. To help the person begin, use “door openers” — for example, “I’m sensing that you’re feeling frustrated. . . worried. . . anxious. . .”

7. Probing

Ask questions to draw the person out and get deeper and more meaningful information — for example, “What do you think would happen if you. . .?”

8. Validation

Acknowledge the individual’s problems, issues, and feelings. Listen openly and with empathy, and respond in an interested way — for example, “I appreciate your willingness to talk about such a difficult issue. . .”

THE ART OF ACTIVE LISTENING

9. Effective pause

Deliberately pause at key points for emphasis. This will tell the person you are saying something that is very important to them.

10. Silence

Allow for comfortable silences to slow down the exchange. Give a person time to think as well as talk. Silence can also be very helpful in diffusing an unproductive interaction.

11. “I” messages

By using “I” in your statements, you focus on the problem not the person. An I-message lets the person know what you feel and why — for example, “I know you have a lot to say, but I need to. . .”

12. Redirecting

If someone is showing signs of being overly aggressive, agitated, or angry, this is the time to shift the discussion to another topic.

COMMUNICATION BLOCKERS

These roadblocks to communication can stop communication dead in its tracks:

- “Why” questions. They tend to make people defensive.
- Quick reassurance, saying things like, “Don’t worry about that.”
- Advising — “I think the best thing for you is....”
- Digging for information and forcing someone to talk about something they would rather not talk about.
- Patronizing — “You poor thing, I know just how you feel.”
- Preaching — “You should. . .” Or, “You shouldn’t. . .”
- Interrupting — Shows you aren’t interested in what someone is saying.

SOURCE: Excerpted and adapted from Lee Scheingold, “Active Listening,” McKesson Health Solutions LLC, 2003.

UNDERSTANDING GROUP DYNAMICS

THE DOMINANT MEMBER



- try not to make eye contact with the person
- sit next to them rather than opposite
- politely interrupt the person
- look directly at the other guests
- talk to them about giving others a chance

Ideas for Handling Difficult Situations

- **Interrupting, Jumping in...**“Maybe we could stop for a moment to be sure that we are listening to each other.”
- **Two People Talking at Once...**“We seem to have two conversations going on here; maybe we could hear from X first and then Y.
- **No Response to Questions...**“Perhaps the question is difficult to respond to; let’s reword it” (or ask another question related to it.)
- **One Person “Wipes Out” Another Person’s Comments...**“What _____ has said is from his/her felt experience and has value.”
- **Member Remains Silent...**Gently invite participation, reaffirm the right to silence. Get to know the person before and after the meeting. Say, “_____, you have been listening intently. Is there anything you’d like to add?”
- **Repetition of the Same Idea...**Summarize their main points and go on. Say: “That’s helpful; maybe we could hear now from someone else.”

More Ideas for Handling Difficult Situations

- **Wandering from the Topic**..“To bring ourselves back to the purpose of our sharing, it appears the basic question here is...
- **One Member Dominates the Session**...Remind the person that each person needs to have the opportunity to share before we hear from the same person again. Say: “What you are saying is helpful, but maybe we could hear from someone else.” Remind them of the “Basic Principles for a Small-Group Agreement or Contract between Members”.
- **A Member Questions Each Response**...Remind the person that each statement is not open to group scrutiny. Say, “We hear your criticism and questions on this but what is it saying to you personally?”
- **A Member Begins to Cry**...Comfort any way you are able (just touching is often enough). Offer option to be silent for a few minutes. Acknowledge the person, and thank them for the gift of the tears.
- **The Sharing Becomes Too Academic**...“While what we are discussing can be very interesting, it is not the purpose of our time together. I think if we look at the questions we will come back to the focus of this session.”

BASIC AGREEMENT BETWEEN MEMBERS

It is very important to go over the Basic Agreement Between Members with your group before you begin. Copies should be given to each member.

When a rule is ignored by one of the members it makes it easy to rectify by saying, "I am so sorry but as the facilitator I must keep us focused on the rules we agreed to..."

Basic Agreement Between Group Members

- 1. Don't miss, except for emergencies.** A group works because members make the group a priority. Each member must make a commitment to each other.
- 2. Share yourself.** Let people know you to the extent you are willing. How you feel and how you look at life matters.
- 3. Listen closely to others.** Don't give advice, counsel or therapy or comment on what others say, but let people know you understand and are trying to appreciate the feeling they are expressing.
- 4. Never argue your point or badger another .** Be yourself, be firm, but don't try to win others over to your viewpoint. People can be different. In fact, differences enhance a group.
- 5. Try to show support to each person in the group.** Help people see their strengths and confront them when they are not using their strengths.
- 6. Expressing negative feelings can be helpful.** Bottled-up feelings can set up unspoken barriers. Avoid ridicule or attack. Focus on how someone's behavior in the group affects you and how the situation can be improved. A one-to-one talk can help sometimes.
- 7. Don't talk about people behind their backs.**
- 8. Nothing said leaves the group.**
- 9. Take responsibility for the life of the community.** Call an absent member. Pray for each other.

Gleaned From "Creating Small Church Communities" 3rd Edition Father Arthur R. Baranowski,

A Good Minister

Models the Good Shepherd

Being a minister is the most awesome of opportunities to serve.

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- You have the gift of modeling the Good Shepherd for your group.
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- You are to hold up a mirror to the people in your group and help them see the God in them.
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- Help them to see their gifts as gifts to the community for the use of God and God's people.
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- A pouring out of yourself into the other---It is most definitely not about you.



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What Are the Qualities of a Good...

Minister

- Ability to make people feel comfortable and at ease
- A personal sense of God
- A good listener
- Ability to affirm others
- Freedom from parish controversies; not hooked on particular issues
- Responsibility and follow-through
- Openness to change
- Good self-esteem (Not the person who needs to be noticed, who grabs for attention, who appears unproductive in other areas of life and unhappy at home.)
- Ability to work with the Pastor and staff
- Love and concern for the church at all levels

Facilitator

- Knowledge of group dynamics
- Skills for dealing with difficult people
- Ability to move meeting along
- Organizational skills
- People skills
- Listening Skills
- Skill at Setting a tone & comfortable, safe attitude
- Encourages people to share their lived experience
- Awareness of individual needs
- Understanding the stages of group development

As a public representative of the Church you must uphold Church teachings. It is not about your opinion

The Minister...



Empower people

- To deepen the prayer experience, pull others alongside you to help.
- Invite others to opportunities you find that you think uses their gifts
- Prepare yourself for the Alpha meeting by watching the videos and reading the questions beforehand.

Practice a healthy personal prayer life that connects into every corner of your life.

Use your leadership gifts. Being a Ministerial Facilitator will require a bit of organization and encouraging people to follow. Much wisdom and people skills are needed.

Develop a servant's heart and teachable spirit.

A Minister must have true spiritual humility, and a deep respect for our parish and our Pastor, Father Jerry

Promote Alpha and be present at Alpha Meetings, This helps you and others feel connected and supported.

Reminders for Facilitators

- Watch the video trainings

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_5icVAwa77w
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MXb6GS7ik9w>

- be attentive to a guest that seems to be progressing at a slower rate.
- Resist arguments
- keep away from Christian jargon
- cultivate a safe environment
- stay spiritually strong
- stay attentive in the worship and teaching time
- Refer to your Training Manual throughout the sessions
- listen to the Holy Spirit

What is Your Commitment as Facilitator?

Faithfulness to growing *your own prayer life* and tending your spiritual garden

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- Commitment to attending all the Alpha Sessions and training meetings
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