

Ten Commandments for a Group Leader

- 1. Remind the group of *confidentiality*. What is said in the group remains in the group. This is essential for building trust.**
- 2. Have the group *sit close together*. Every group member should be able to see every other member. Don't let anyone sit outside of the group space.**
- 3. *Make eye contact*. Fix your gaze on the person who is speaking. He or she may need the strength of your eyes to feel free to speak. Also be sure group members can all see each other easily.**
- 4. *Don't give advice*—even when it is asked for. People need to solve their own problems. Don't fall into this easy trap because of your own need to be a helper. *Advice does not help, it hinders solutions.***
- 5. *Listen*. In any group, most of your time should be spent listening and using summarizing responses.**
- 6. *Don't be afraid of silence*. The creativity and pressure of silence is far better than any pressure you may exert to get the group to speak.**
- 7. *Sit on your own story* and your own problems. The group is not the place to go into your issues. You are there for others. If you wish to identify with the speaker, do so in a simple statement. (For example: "I kind of know what you mean because my father tends to yell too much too.") *Do not elaborate.***
- 8. *Watch for nonverbal clues*. Focus more on the feelings of the speakers than on their words. Words are often a protective screen for what is really going on inside. Observe how relaxed or nervous, hostile or depressed the person seems to be. For example, people who reveal supposedly heavy problems to the group in a perfectly relaxed manner are probably not being honest: people**

whose eyes fill up when discussing something they say doesn't bother them are probably not being honest either.

- 9. Keep the group discussion focused on one person's issues at a time. Don't let one group member attract the attention of you or the group while another still has unfinished business. Never leave a person out there hanging. Ideally all group members should respond to each person's problem, but *at the very least*, the leader *must* respond.**
- 10. Touch. If people become emotionally upset in the group they should be held, ideally by the people next to them in the group. If others don't respond, you as leader should move next to the person. It's also helpful to lay your hand on anyone in the group, especially a person who needs encouragement in speaking. You set the tone of the group. Your freedom in taking the risk to touch gives other group members permission to touch also.**