

HOW TO BUILD TRUST

Trust is something that takes a long time to build, and there is no magic way to suddenly have everyone open and trusting with each other's deeper feelings, fears and struggles. A great way to build trust is to lay a foundation of guidelines for group.

ESTABLISH CONFIDENTIALITY

Assure the members of your group that nothing should be shared with anyone outside of the group. This is really important. People will never feel comfortable and safe to share something if they are worried others might find out. (*The only exceptions would be if you believe someone is a danger to someone else or a danger to themselves, at that point please contact your Area Leader and the Soul Care team to handle next steps.*)

AVOID GOSSIP

Set a guideline that members should avoid gossip at all times, within the group and outside of the group. The book of James says the tongue is like fire (3:6). Words, like fire, can be useful; they provide warmth and comfort and life. Used wrongly though, your words can burn everything down around you. This takes time for many people, so grace is required, but very important to encourage your group to be careful with their words.

“How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire! 6 And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life,[a] and set on fire by hell.[b] 7 For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, 8 but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. 9 With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. 10 From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers,[c] these things ought not to be so.” **JAMES 3:5-10**

SHOW GRACE

Assure the group the importance of grace and love, if someone shares something, the reaction could break the trust. Encourage each member to avoid making fun of someone else, or making them feel ashamed, or judging them for what they shared. Group is designed to be a safe and sacred space. The top reason people avoid church is because they feel Christians are “hypocritical and judgemental.” Breaking these preconceived notions about the Christian community and it starts with our groups.

DEMONSTRATE VULNERABILITY

You must take the lead with sharing anything personal or vulnerable if no one else will. If you can show that you trust them, they will reciprocate that trust much faster.

GET FEEDBACK

In a private conversation, ask some people you trust in the group if it is a safe environment. Get some feedback, maybe others have a view of the way group is set up that you are unaware of. Maybe there are kids too close in another room and it makes them feel they can't open up. Maybe someone made a joke that turned out to be a personal struggle, and they feel what they struggle with would be made fun of. Check in with your members. See where they are at.

WORK TOGETHER

Do events and serve projects outside of group time. It builds trust that you are real people and not just some weird club. You may hear this idea come up several times; there are so many benefits to planning things and doing things outside of group.

IT TAKES TIME AND EVERY GROUP IS DIFFERENT. DON'T GIVE UP!

Again, trust will be developed over time as long as members of the group are living in authenticity, love, and grace with one another. It could be 2 weeks, or it could be 20, people are different. Continue to trust and pray to God for your group. He will direct it.