

# HOW TO HANDLE CHILDCARE

The need for childcare in a small group can often become a real deal-breaker for families that would like to be a part of a group. It seems that sitters are tough to find, some families don't have the money to lay out for childcare and for many leaders it's just too much to try and coordinate. To top it off, a group of ten can easily become a group of twenty five once you include children...where do we put everyone?! We've seen groups derail because they were unable to sort out the childcare dilemma. There are groups out there, waiting to be formed right now, but they just can't get over this hurdle.

Webster's online dictionary defines nitty gritty, (yeah it's in there) as "what is essential and basic: specific practical details." That's what this resource is about. It's not going to solve all of your small group childcare issues, but we hope it will offer some insight and stir your thinking about what might work best for your group.

## HOW TO GET STARTED

We've noticed that most parents have a network of babysitters. Even if they only have one or two "go to" sitters, they have friends who have sitters, who have friends that have sitters, and so on.

**Work that network.** We've used sitters from the neighborhood where our group meets, to personal sitters of parents in other groups. We continue to do all we can to exhaust those connections and create new ones whenever possible.

**Don't stop.** Each person in the group is continually on the look-out for potential sitters. We have found that you can't stop doing that. Sitters get other jobs, go off to school, have extracurricular activities to attend, etc. So, you need to constantly look for sitters. We continue to ask ourselves, even when we have sitters in place, who do we know that are potential sitters for our group?

**Do what it takes.** Once we identify sitters we do whatever is needed in order to get them to the group. If their parents can't drive them, someone from the group picks them up. If their parents can't pick them up, we drive them home. We try to remove whatever barriers are in the way.

## HOW TO PULL IT OFF

One of the biggest mistakes that a small group leader makes is trying to do everything on their own. It is critical that as the leader of the group you involve others, especially in this area.

Our group had two people who lead our child care coordination. One oversaw the finances, the other set up the schedule with the sitters—and they do an awesome job! We am confident that most groups have capable people who can handle this area of group life. Keep in mind that everyone in the group can be involved in making sure that the child care is the best it can be—you'll notice that throughout this guide.

We found it best to have everyone pay in advance for at least two months. This kept us from having to remember to bring cash or our checkbooks with us each week. It simplified things nicely.

When we paid in advance we all pay the same amount even if we weren't going to be there on a particular week. In reality, we were paying for the opportunity to have sitters. This ensured that the sitters were getting paid appropriately and kept our costs the same. If there was ever a week where we need only one sitter, we saved the extra money for future childcare needs.