



## **Relationship Builders**

There's one part of group life which we don't pay as much attention to, yet has huge importance: relationships. Though we may spend little time training how to build, deepen, and maintain friendships within the group, we can't ignore them if we want groups to be healthy. And we can't assume they'll naturally develop.

Consider for a moment a small group *without* deep relationships. This group will be made up of simple acquaintances who don't do much to support one another. They'll hold in hurt and disagreements rather than seek to forgive wrongs committed against each other because they're not invested in the relationships. They won't respond to needs that are expressed, assuming someone else will take care of it. And they won't experience much life change together because depth and accountability simply aren't present.

Without a strong emphasis on relationships, the best thing a small group can do is impart head knowledge. ***That same knowledge, when discussed in an environment that promotes relationships, has the power to move from the head to the heart.*** Group members allow that knowledge to impact them, and they seek to apply it. That's when life change happens. So let's look at how we can model and emphasize healthy and life-changing relationships within small groups.

### ***Make the group SAFE by:***

- Being Transparent
- Allowing space for deeper sharing, without rushing to rescue
- Giving our full attention without side conversations
- Refraining from giving advice or fixing
- Modeling "I" Statements rather than "We" Statements

- Allowing for disagreements
- Respecting varying opinions
- Practicing active listening

### ***Stay in touch between meetings by:***

- Effectively sharing members contact information
- Intentionally contacting/sending notes/meeting members individually
- Finding the best platform for communicating with the entire group

### ***Care for group members by:***

- Engaging in meaningful acts of service and care
- Celebrating birthdays & special occasions
- Having informal dinners together
- Quickly addressing needs when they are expressed

### **For Discussion and Reflection:**

1. How safe is your group for developing deep relationships? What can you do to make it safer?
2. Name three ways you could keep in touch with your group members between meetings. How well are you doing this currently?
3. How well do you care for your group members? What's one thing you can do in the next week to do this better?

By Mark Ingmire, Small Groups and Adult Education Pastor at Savannah Christian Church in Savannah, Georgia; © 2014 by Christianity Today.

*Original article appeared at:*

**<https://www.smallgroups.com/articles/2014/emphasize-relationships-in-your-group.html>**

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