

A practical guide for group facilitators. Use as a checklist or share with co-facilitators.

BEFORE THE GROUP STARTS

- Set clear group agreements with members in the first session (confidentiality, respect, attendance).
- Send a welcome message before the first meeting with the Zoom link, agenda, and what to expect.
- Have a plan for latecomers — decide whether you'll pause or continue when someone joins late.
- Know your crisis protocol. Have 988 and local emergency resources visible during every session.
- Test your tech. Audio, camera, and screen-share should all work before members join.

OPENING EACH SESSION

- Start with a brief check-in — a word, number (1–10), or short phrase. Keeps people grounded.
- Review group agreements briefly for new members or when the group needs a reset.
- Set the agenda or theme for the session so members know what to expect.
- Acknowledge if the energy feels off — naming it reduces anxiety and builds trust.

FACILITATION SKILLS

- Use open-ended questions: 'What was that like for you?' not 'Were you scared?'
- Reflect back what you hear. 'It sounds like...' and 'I'm noticing...' are powerful tools.
- Balance airtime. Gently redirect dominant speakers and actively invite quieter members.
- Normalize. Remind members that their experience is common without dismissing it.
- Name the dynamic, not the person. 'I notice we've moved off topic' not 'You're going off topic.'

MANAGING DIFFICULT MOMENTS

- If conflict arises: pause, acknowledge both perspectives, return to group agreements.
- If a member discloses a crisis: follow your protocol. Don't manage it alone in the group.
- If a member is consistently disruptive: address privately first, not in front of the group.
- Silence is OK. Let it breathe for a few seconds before filling it — often someone will speak.

CLOSING EACH SESSION

- End with a closing ritual — a word, gratitude, or brief reflection. Creates continuity.
- Preview the next session so members leave with something to look forward to.
- Allow 5 minutes after session ends for members who need a brief check-in privately.

- Document any concerns or follow-ups needed before your next session.

GROUP WELLBEING OVER TIME

- Revisit group agreements every 4–6 sessions. Groups evolve and agreements should too.
- Celebrate milestones — 10th session, a member completing a goal, group anniversaries.
- Watch for burnout in yourself. Peer support and supervision keep facilitators grounded.
- Ask for feedback. A simple anonymous poll mid-run helps you course-correct early.