

Ideas for starting a faith-based bereavement support group.

- 1) Basics first
 - a) What focus is your group going to have?
 - i) General Bereavement
 - ii) Parents who lost a child
 - iii) Loss of a spouse or significant other
 - iv) Traumatic grief?
 - b) What is your goal/vision/mission/purpose?
 - i) The goal should have nothing to do with numbers.
 - ii) The mission statement would be a short statement that articulates your sense of calling into this ministry. (examples:
 - (1) This support group will provide a space where all are welcome to express their grief safely.
 - (2) This support group will provide a welcoming space for grieving parents.
- 2) Contact your clergyperson/s
 - a) They have already agreed to support you as you start a faith-based bereavement support group in your place of worship.
 - b) Make an appointment to meet with them.
 - i) Purpose of meeting
 - (1) To inform them of your focus
 - (2) To tell them of your goal/vision/purpose/mission
 - (3) To inform them of the time your group will meet
 - (4) To find out who to talk with about getting a room that the group will consistently use.
 - (5) To determine the process by which your clergyperson will be making referrals to your group.
 - (a) You will need:
 - (i) Names
 - (ii) Address and phone numbers
 - (iii) Date of death and who died
 - (b) Your clergyperson will need:
 - (i) A card (see item number 4)
 - (ii) Contact person for your group and phone number
 - (iii) Meeting times, place
 - (iv) Literature on bereavement
- 3) Book the room
 - a) Do this in concert with whoever handles facility usage in your place of worship.
 - b) Make sure the room is conducive to your group's needs.
 - i) Enough room for circular set up
 - ii) Appropriate seats
 - iii) Lack of clutter, pleasant environment
 - iv) Appropriate lighting
 - v) Easy access for all physical abilities

- vi) Refreshments area
- c) Be clear on what expectations there are for set up, clean up, tear down, air conditioning, etc.
- d) Be clear on what you need
 - i) Times that work for you, once a time is agreed on; keep it.
 - ii) Keys or a reliable person to unlock and relock doors for you.
- 4) Print cards
 - a) Create a business card size invitation to your support group
 - i) Include time, map to the location, address, contact phone and name, focus of the group.
- 5) Enlist your friends – (this will assure at least four people at your meeting)
 - a) Get two friends to help you get started
 - i) If friends have experienced loss in their lives, they are welcome to share in the group.
 - ii) If friends have not experienced grief in their lives, ask them to sit in the group but not to speak
 - iii) Jobs for your friends
 - (1) Refreshments person – have this person bring and set up light refreshments at each group meeting
 - (2) Greeter – have this person meet the participants as they arrive and help them to find the refreshments, restrooms, meeting rooms, etc.
- 6) Make sure people can find you
 - a) Map, address, phone number on the card.
 - b) Signs pointing the way to the room in the building
- 7) Get referrals to the group from clergyperson
 - a) Recent deaths
 - b) 3rd month, 6th month, and one year anniversaries of loss
- 8) Make connections with referrals
 - a) Remember connecting with, being with, being present with people is the key.
 - i) It relates to everything from getting started through the group process.
 - ii) Example: advertising the support group in the church newsletter or bulletin is essential but this is not going to get people there. It will only inform them of its existence.
 - iii) People will come when they are touched personally by the facilitator, a group participant, or perhaps their clergyperson.
 - iv) When approaching someone you want to invite
 - (1) Let your immediate purpose be: to be present with them in this brief moment simply.
 - (2) Don't worry about "getting them to the meeting." They will come when they are ready and if they feel a need for the group.
 - (3) Right now, just be present with them.
 - (a) You only need 5 minutes
 - (i) Tell them who you are (name and the group you are facilitating)

(ii) Why you are there (to give them this flower, candy, plant, home-made cookies, home-made bread, because you care) attach the card with your support group information to the simple gift.

1. You may want to include post-funeral visits by support group representatives, bringing food, merely a home visit.

9) Have first meeting

- a) Be ready to be flexible as you work out the kinks
- b) Use the training from this workshop to inform your process
- c) Don't worry about numbers – remember your GOAL