



Small Group Facilitator Training Manual



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Small Group Mission

To lead every member of Salem Bible Church to participate in or lead a small group.

Small Group Vision

To continue to build and connect the members of Salem Bible Church through small groups so that:

All members are afforded the opportunity to grow spiritually by the study of the faith

All members are able to share their life experiences creating a community of care

All members will serve one another and the community by acts of love and compassion

Small Group Values

- Authenticity of Scripture
- Prayer

- Integrity
- Confidentiality
- Community
- Creativity
- Worship
- Teamwork

Ministry Overview

Small Group Definition

Small Groups are comprised of any three to twelve individuals who meet to study the Bible, share life experiences, and serve God and others.

Salem Bible Church is a “church of small groups.” We believe that small group participation is

the best method for our members to cultivate their relationship with God and with others. We challenge every member to join a small group.

Benefits of Small Groups

The primary benefits of joining a small group include:

- A sense of belonging
- A method for accountability
- A platform for building and strengthening relationships
- A place of prayer, care and support

Small Group Types

1. CONNECTION GROUPS

Connection Groups are small groups that meet at either of Salem's Atlanta or Lithonia campus on Wednesday afternoons/nights. Connection Groups come together in the sanctuary for a time of corporate prayer, praise and teaching (led by our pastor/s) and then the members breakout into small groups to discuss a prepared lesson based on the previous teaching.

At other times/terms, Connection Groups will offer topical, thematic, and needs based studies where Small Group Facilitators will facilitate the study solely, in place of the pastor/s.

Connection Groups will include:

- Men Groups (these groups are for men only)
- Women Groups (these groups are for women only)
- Mixed Groups (these groups are for men and women, single/married)
- Children Groups (Grades K – 5)
- Student Groups (Grades 6 – 12)

2. COMMUNITY GROUPS

Community Groups are small groups that meet in homes, restaurants, Salem campuses, or other designated venues on various days and times. Community Groups choose their own purpose,

format, and approved curriculums.

Community Groups will include:

- Sheepfold Ministry Groups (members meeting for study & fellowship based on location)
- Couple Groups (couples meeting with other couples)
- Adult Groups (adults meeting with other adults)
 - o College & Career Adults (Ages 18 – 40 year olds, single and married)
 - o Adult (Ages 41 – 54, single and married)
 - o Senior Adults (Ages 55 and above, single and married)
 - o Men Groups
 - 18 !! 40 year olds
 - 40 year olds and older
 - Pastor Led Saturday Study Group
 - Shared Interest Groups
 - o Women Groups
 - 18 !! 40 year olds
 - 41 !! 54 year olds
 - 55 year olds and older
 - Shared Interest Groups
- Support and Special Interest Groups (members and others meeting for support during difficult or trying circumstances)
- Substance Abuse Recovery

- o Grief Support
- o Divorce Recovery & Support
- o Single Parent Support

The Connection Small Groups Schedule

The Salem Connection Small Groups use a Spring, Summer and Fall trimester-based schedule. During each trimester (Spring, Summer and Fall), the Connection Groups meet on a weekly basis for a six week term. However, during the off months the Connections Groups take a break. During the break, members are encouraged to use this time for renewal, recreation and refocus.

During the breaks, small group members are also encouraged to:

- Host fellowship gatherings for members and prospects
- Share in community service/outreach mission projects/activities
- Participate in training and personal/ministry facilitatorship classes

The Community Small Groups Schedule

The Salem Community Small Groups use a Spring, Summer and Fall trimester-based schedule. During each trimester the Connection Groups meet on a weekly, bi-weekly or monthly basis. However, during the off months the Community Groups take a break. During the break, members are encouraged to use this time for renewal, recreation and refocus.

During the breaks, small group members are also encouraged to:

- Host fellowship gatherings for members and prospects
- Share in community service/outreach mission projects/activities

- Participate in training and personal/ministry facilitatorship classes

Small Group Structure

The Salem Small Group Ministry structure is organized in at four levels. The structure helps to maintain ministry continuity, community, and care among the leadership team. The levels of leadership include:

Small Groups Pastor

- Provides oversight for all groups and to Group Coordinators
- Develops and administrates accountability standards for facilitators and groups
- Meets with Small Group Facilitators bi-monthly/as needed
- Grants final approval for Small Group curriculums and study/support materials
- Provides training for Small Group Facilitators, Coaches and Coordinators
- Accountable to Salem Pastors

Small Group Coordinator

- Assists Small Groups Pastor in oversight and facilitatorship of small groups and small group facilitators
- Oversees/supports 2-4 Small Group Coaches
- Provides administrative and informational support to facilitators and groups
- Suggests study/support materials

Small Group Coach

- Oversees/supports 4-6 Small Group Facilitators
- Assists in development, recruitment of and care for Small Group Facilitators
- Provides back up and information for Small Group Facilitators
- Suggests study/support materials

Small Group Facilitator

- Leads small group of 3-12 members by facilitating group discussions, study, and prayer
- Cares for and encourages members in their daily walk and support of SBC
- Facilitates ministry activities that create community and care among members
- Suggests study/support materials

Small Group Facilitator Profile

Love for God, self and others

Exhibits integrity and honesty in relationships

Available to invest time, energy and effort into growing the ministry

Dedicated to vision and mission of SBC and Small Group Ministry

Encourages others to participate in small groups and consider becoming a small group facilitator

Responsible for praying for group members and SBC ministries

Small Group Facilitator Expectations

- Must be an active member of SBC
- Must be committed to following the mission, vision and core beliefs of SBC
- Must be willing to serve at least 6 months (two consecutive trimesters)
- Must be willing to attend small group facilitator training session/s
- Must be committed to identifying and encouraging new facilitators

Small Group Facilitator Responsibilities Overview

- Facilitate group meetings, study and discussions among group members
- Assist group in determining appropriate curriculum
- Facilitate activities that develop fellowship and care among group members
- Lead group in ministry outreach/service project
- Communicate with your coach the status and progress of group dynamics
- Complete small group meeting report within three (3) days of meeting

Small Group Facilitator Description

Position Title: Small Group Facilitator

Reports to: Small Groups Pastor

Time Commitment: Six Months (two trimesters)

Principle Function

To facilitate life-impacting small group discussions by educating, engaging, and empowering members to live out their life purpose.

Specific Responsibilities

Lead the group to *STUDY*

- Know and choose appropriate curriculum options
- Teach in order to effect transformed thinking/living using varied interactive teaching styles
- Focus on biblical and Christ-honoring principles
- Be sensitive to abandon scheduled lessons to meet pressing needs of group member/s
- Update records for enrollment, attendance, and special concerns

Lead the group to *SHARE*

- Create an atmosphere for open and authentic discussion of topics
- Maintain support and awareness for members spiritual and emotional struggles
- Ensure appropriate care is provided for members in time of crisis or exceptional need
- Enlist *Prayer Coordinator* to keep track of weekly prayer concerns
- Encourage group to sponsor one fellowship event

Lead the group to *SERVE*

- Encourage group members to become involved in one church ministry
- Encourage group to volunteer in one mission/outreach/service project at Salem, locally or in other parts of the world.

- Encourage group members to invite un-churched family, friends, co-workers to attend Salem services, small groups and special events

Communications with Coach

- Complete enrollment and attendance updates
- Enlist a *Communications Coordinator* to advise of group/church-wide concerns
- Enlist and mentor an *Apprentice Facilitator* who aspires to be a Small Group Facilitator and who can substitute in the absence of the Small Group Facilitator

Expectations

- Affirm Salem's mission, vision, core values and small group facilitator covenant
- Attend Small Group Facilitator training and church-wide facilitatorship training (S.A.L.T)

Small Group Coach Description

Position Title: Small Group Coach

Reports to: Small Group Coordinator (Assigned)

Time Commitment: One Year (three trimesters)

Principle Function

Leader of Small Group Facilitator for recruitment of facilitators, encouragement, positively addressing small group issues and concerns, solving problems, and facilitating/envisioning the success of small groups and small group facilitators.

Direct Responsibilities

- Provide support of 4 -6 small groups/small group facilitators
- Encourage at least one small group facilitator weekly in person, by phone, email, social media
- Visit each group meeting at least once each term to identify with group and observe group relationships/dynamics
- Meet with small group facilitators as needed for care, development, and encouragement.
- Assist with training and tutoring alongside of Small Group Coordinator and Pastor of Small Groups

Other Responsibilities

- Leadership Development
 - Assist Small Group Facilitators in identifying and training new facilitators (apprentices)
 - Hold Small Group Facilitators accountable for a balanced and healthy group
- Encouragement and Care for Facilitators
 - Pray for Small Group Facilitators regularly
 - Create a community of support and respect among Small Group Facilitators on your team
- Provide Back-up and Support
 - Assist Small Group Facilitators in selecting appropriate curricula
 - Assist Small Group Facilitators in recruiting members for their group
 - Assist in promoting Small Group ministry inside/outside the church

- Assist in involving Small Groups in mission/outreach initiatives

Expectations

- Affirm Salem's mission, vision, core values and small group facilitator covenant
- Attend Small Group Facilitator training and church-wide leadership training Salem Academy of Leadership Training (S.A.L.T)

Small Group Coordinator Description

Position Title: Small Group Coordinator

Reports to: Small Groups Pastor

Time Commitment: Three Trimesters

Principle Function

To serve as a liaison between Small Group Ministry (facilitators/coaches) and Salem Small Groups Pastor while providing leadership and accountability for Small Group Coaches.

Specific Responsibilities

- Assist Small Groups Pastor in development of annual goals/strategy for Small Groups
- Assist Small Groups Pastor in implementing connection strategy
- Assist in Integrating and promoting the vision of SBC among Small Groups

- Be responsible for leading and supervising up to four coaches
- Assist in interviews for qualified coaches, facilitators and apprentices
- Review group data and report on the same to Small Groups Pastor

Other Responsibilities

- Leadership Development
 - Assist Small Group Coaches/Facilitators in identifying and training new facilitators (apprentices)
 - Hold Small Group Coaches accountable for a balanced and healthy group
- Encouragement and Care for Facilitators
 - Pray for Small Group Coaches regularly
 - Create a community of support and respect among Small Group Facilitators/Coaches on your team
- Provide Back-up and Support
 - Assist Small Group Facilitators/Coaches in selecting appropriate curricula
 - Assist Small Group Facilitators/Coaches in recruiting members for their group
 - Assist in promoting Small Group ministry inside/outside the church
 - Assist in involving Small Groups in mission/outreach initiatives

Expectations

- Affirm Salem's mission, vision, core values and small group facilitator covenant
- Attend Small Group Facilitator training and church-wide leadership training (S.A.L.T)

Small Group Facilitator Covenant

God's blessing be upon you for your willingness to serve as a Small Group Facilitator at Salem Bible Church. As a Small Group Facilitator you will be considered by those in your group as a facilitator in our church. Accordingly, we ask that you enter into covenant with the other Small Group Facilitators by making the following commitments:

- I will personify and reflect the mission, vision, values and principles set forth for Salem Bible Church by its Pastors and will follow their leadership,

- I will faithfully attend worship services at Salem Bible Church and:
 - Intentionally identify and greet those members in my Small Group
 - Participate in the life of the church through my financial support
 - Lead my Small Group to serve in a mission/outreach enterprise

- I will make my Small Group a priority by:

- Faithfully leading my Small Group to Study, Share, and Serve together
- Preparing the lesson/review questions before each group meeting
- Inviting/welcoming others to join my Small Group

- I will care for my Small Group members by:
 - Praying regularly for each member in my group
 - Following up with absentee members in my group
 - Leading my group in providing care for one another.

- I will strive to create an environment of growth in my group by
 - Involving as many group members as possible in group discussions
 - Creating a safe, comfortable and welcoming environment for all meetings
 - Beginning and ending meetings on time

Name

Signature

Date

Starting Your Small Group

Recruiting

Small Group Leadership Begins with Recruitment

The success of any small group ministry is largely dependent upon the effort of its facilitator to personally recruit members to become engaged in her or his group.

Jesus Recruited His Own Group

“Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him.”
Mark 3:13

Determining Who is a Good Prospect

The best prospects generally fall into one of five categorized groups as delineated below:

- Those persons you know – church and unchurched.

- Those persons who have indicated that they want to participate in a small group.
- Those persons who are new members.
- Those persons who share one or more affinities (age/life stage/common interest).
- Those persons who live in the same geographical area.

Creating a Prospect List

- Include every person you can think of who meets any of the above criterion.
- Contact Small Groups Pastor/Coordinator/Coach for a list of possible members.
- Include one or more persons who you determine would be a good apprentice.

The BIG ASK

The following are guidelines to consider in your asking people to be part of your group

- Tell them what kind of group you desire to sponsor, including what the group's emphasis will be and how participating in the group will be beneficial to them.
- Invite them to visit your group (if sessions have commenced) to help them decide whether they will join the group.
- Ask them to share any unanswered questions they may have about the group.
- Encourage them to pray about their decision and do not pressure them to make an immediate decision.
- Follow –up with them to determine what decision they have made.

Criterion for Exceptional Small Group Meeting Sessions

Allow for Casual Conversation

- Allow time for casual conversation before and after the sessions begin and end
- Whenever feasible, provide light refreshments
- Lead in beginning conversation with members in the group. Model by example.

Utilize Icebreakers for First Session

- To engage members in conversation and in getting to know each other
- Use non-threatening topics
- Make sure icebreakers are fun

Prayer

- Open and close with prayer
- Ask/encourage members to lead in prayer
- Pray for concerns of group members/Salem family

Lesson Discussion

- Plan group discussions to focus on the major theme of the session
- Do not be overly concerned about finishing the lesson (i.e. answering all questions) but do facilitate leading members to understand/discuss the major theme and how it relates to their personal life experiences
- Probe for understanding of the major theme---ask leading questions
- Include an application exercise that will challenge members to respond by act/deed to some aspect of the lesson/topic being discussed

Outreach

- Lead the group to participate in at least one outreach project each term
- Share your outreach project idea/results and photos by email to smallgroups@salemchurch.org

Conducting Your Small Group Meeting

Meeting Checklist

P Purpose – What is the goal of the meeting?

- Δ Determine the meeting objectives
- Δ Write out the meeting agenda
- Δ Prepare to lead the discussion/bible study

L Logistics – Is the setting for the meeting prepared?

- Δ Determine the location of the meeting
- Δ Determine seating arrangements/special needs
- Δ Eliminate distractions (phones, noise, people, pets)
- Δ Set the atmosphere (lighting, temperature, music)
- Δ Determine if childcare/lessons will be provided for children
- Δ Advise of location/s for future meetings
- Δ _____
- Δ _____
- Δ _____

A Activities – What will happen during the meeting?

Δ The Icebreaker

Δ Prayer

Δ Social Activity

Δ Church announcements/concerns

Δ _____

Δ _____

Δ _____

N Needs – What needs in group members lives need to be addressed?

Δ Unresolved issues between members

Δ Health concerns

Δ Family issues

Δ Faith/spiritual issues

Δ _____

Δ _____

Δ _____

Sample Agenda/Meeting Format

Connection Groups (Pastor's Bible Study) One Hour Format

Praise and Worship	5 minutes
Pastor's Teaching	20 minutes
Bible Study Discussion	30 minutes
Information/Concerns	5 minutes
Prayer/Closing	10 minutes

Community Groups 1.5 Hour Format

Gathering/Refreshments	15 minutes
Prayer	10 minutes
Bible Study Discussion	50 minutes
Information/Concerns	5 minutes
Prayer/Closing	10 minutes

First Meeting Goals

- Δ Cast Vision for Group's purpose
- Δ Clarify expectations
- Δ Make introductions
- Δ Introduce curriculum/study guide/study materials/syllabus
- Δ Distribute and explain Small Group Member Covenant
- Δ Distribute calendar/important dates
- Δ Determine group functions/responsibilities
- **Communications Coordinator** – places reminder calls/emails to group members about special events or changes
- **Reporter** – keeps attendance record and forwards to group facilitator
- **Prayer Coordinator** – keeps journal of prayer requests/prayer responses and praise reports
- **Fellowship Coordinator** – organizes any fellowship events for the groups
- **Outreach/Project Coordinator** – coordinates the group's mission/outreach project

Small Group Member Covenant

- I commit to attending my small group meetings at the designated time and place and I commit to being on time to the meeting.
- I will prepare myself as much as possible prior to the meeting by reading, studying, and reflecting on assignments.
- I will contact at least one group member between meetings to encourage them.
- I will pray for each member of my group as often as possible asking God's blessings upon their life and I will pray for those specific needs of members as voiced in group meetings.
- I will pray for my spiritual growth in faith, knowledge and deeds and will share my progress as I feel led at group meetings or by other means.
- I will keep confidential personal information shared by members of my group unless expressly granted permission to share such information with others outside my group.
- I will participate in group discussions understanding that my views are my own and will respect and seek understanding of other members' views. I will always reflect Jesus Christ as the model and as the authority for my understandings of scripture

and my faith walk.

Signature

Date

Selecting Your Group Curriculum

Curriculum Flow Chart

- Bible Knowledge
- Spiritual Disciplines
- Life Issues

What is your purpose?

- Bible Theme/Book of the Bible Based Study
- Topical Study
- Sermon Based Study

What is the best curriculum type?

- Discipleship
- Encouragement
- Transitioning

What is your group's key need/s focus?

- Seekers/New Believers
- Mature/Experienced Believers
- Mixed

What level is your group at spiritually?

Managing Small Group Dynamics

Small Group Problem Solving

How do I respond when members act up, act out, or ask irrelevant/tough questions?

- First, understand that any time a group of people with divergent personalities, histories, background experiences meet, there is will be the potentiality that conflicts and disagreements will arise. You as Group Facilitator will need to deal with these issues both before and after they occur.

Dealing with Criticism

The proper manner for dealing with members who are critical of the church, church facilitators, or another church member is outlined in Matthew 18:15-17. As Group Facilitator you should deal with any criticisms before they escalate to a greater level of intensity and/or conflict. Use the following guide as your talking points for dealing with criticism:

- Acknowledge your hearing and understanding of the aggrieved person's criticism (Philippians 4:2-3) and seek to reconcile the matter with them immediately.
- Be prepared to invoke the principles of Matthew 18:15-17, namely,
 - Ask, "Have you spoken to (her/him) about this issue?"
 - Respond, "I'd prefer that in keeping with the principles of Matthew 18:15-17, that you make the attempt to resolve this issue with your sister/brother yourself. If you are unable to do so, then advise me accordingly and I will intervene."
- Be prepared to advise and seek counsel from your coach/coordinator or the staff pastor.

Types of Disruptive Behavior

- **The Loner** – Loners are those persons who are very lonely or completely alone. They are great

people, but too often the small group may be the only positive relationship they presently have. Consequently, they are prone to use small group time as a forum to vent their displeasure with life.

Be prepared to advise this person in private and help them understand their impact on the group's dynamics. This may be a great time of personal and spiritual growth for this person, so do be sensitive and caring toward her/him when addressing the concern.

Remember, the group exists for the benefit of all members and should remain positive and full of hope so that lives can be changed for the better.

- **The Echoer** – Echoers love to hear themselves talk. These persons take over group conversations with their testimonies, personal anecdotes, problem-solving answers to every question and just loving the sound of their own voice. Be careful not to allow echoers to dominate the discussion time---lest other members become irritated of her/him and refuse to participate in group discussions or leave the group altogether.
- **The Disputer** – Disputers are those persons who have problems with unity and behavior in group settings. This person might show up late every week, disagree with others opinions/statements just to be disagreeable or just cast a negative spirit by demeanor or expressed statements. This person shows a lack of respect for other members in the group and exhibits selfish behaviors.

How to Confront Disruptive Behaviors

Disruptive behaviors must be addressed in order to maintain group unity and to maintain the best environment for spiritual growth and life transformation. Keep the following in mind when confronting and eradicating disruptive behaviors:

- Think before you speak (Proverbs 15:23, 28).
- Speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:14, 25).
- Seek to edify and be gracious (Ephesians 4:29-32).
- Express your emotions, but do not let anger lead you to sin (Ephesians 4:26-27).
- Attempt to always settle disputes privately (Matthew 18:15-17).

- Avoid needless and empty quarrels (Proverbs 20:3, 2 Timothy 2:24).
- Do not keep a record of wrongs (1 Corinthians 13:5).
- Never retaliate, or exchange insult for insult (1 Peter 3:8-9).
- Check your motives before dealing with conflicts (James 4:1-2).
- Pursue harmony and edification of others for good relationships (Romans 14:19).
- Consider group members' interests as well as your own (Philippians 2:4).

How to Respond to Tough Questions

- Remember, no person has all of the answers to all of the questions.
- Say to the questioner, "I don't know the answer, but I'll do my best to have you a satisfactory answer next week."
- Look it up--- don't make it up. Don't give an answer if you don't know the answer. Research the answer (especially for biblical questions) or seek the advice of someone who can guide you to the correct/best answer. Researching on your own will help you grow as a facilitator and teacher.
- Once you have the answer, be sure to share it with the entire group as others may have had the same question but did not or were reluctant to ask it openly.

How to Respond to Group Conflicts

Every small group should look and feel like a loving community. Nonetheless, all communities have some relational conflict. Conflict should not result in the destruction of the group or a sense of community. The following are some suggestions on how to respond to the inevitable group conflicts, such as:

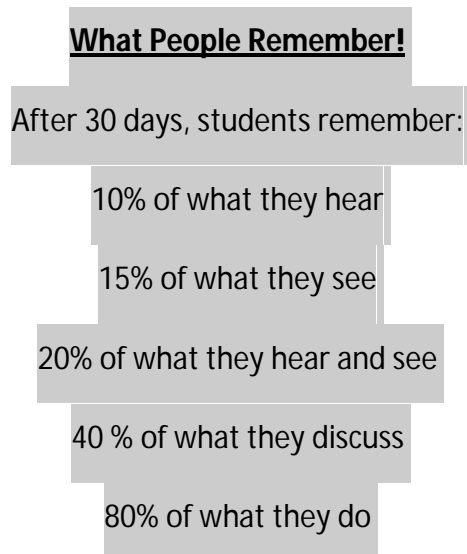
- **Disagreement about the group's purpose and identity.** Remember, you as group facilitator were called to lead this group as was pre-determined/advertised. If the group or a group member attempts to steer it in a different direction, then lovingly help that person/s find a group that fits them better.

- **Disagreements about biblical issues.** Make every attempt to understand what another's point of view is and why they possess that view. Don't be afraid to address their issue at a future meeting. Remember that if biblical scholars disagree on the facts, it is to be expected that reasonable persons will have different views on any given topic, based on their varied experiences, backgrounds and prior instruction. Try to keep the individual and group focused on major themes and indisputable truths.
- **Dealing with individual and family issues and problems.** Listen with care for those concerns of members that center around their personal/family problems. Be prepared to address such issues privately as needed or to refer them to your Coach, Coordinator or Small Groups Pastor. The group does not exist for professional counseling purposes and any suggestions to individuals concerning personal or family concerns should be addressed with care and discretion.

As a facilitator, make every attempt to create a positive environment for every member in the group to be able to freely study, share, and serve in a manner that glorifies God.

Facilitating Group Discussion

The Ultimate Benefit of Facilitation: People Learn More!



90% of what they teach others

Other Benefits of Facilitation

- Facilitation makes group members feel valued.
- Facilitation helps group members develop relationships with one another.
- Facilitation affords members the opportunity to have their questions answered.
- Facilitation helps group members to be able to confidently talk about their faith and God.
- Facilitation is a model that teaches others to become facilitators as they participate in group discussions and other group activity.

Four Facilitator Actions

A Small Group Facilitator ACTS to facilitate dialogue by:

- **A**cknowledging every person who speaks during the discussion:
 - Recognize each speaker by name if/when possible

- Recognize and respond to nonverbal communication such as smiles, frowns, silence.
- **C**larifying what is being said and experienced by the group/individual.
- **T**urning the discussion back to the group as a means of generating further/deeper dialogue.
- **S**ummarizing what has been stated by an individual or the group.

Pitfalls to Avoid in Facilitating Discussions

- **Impatience.** It takes time for individuals to think through answers. Do not answer for members in an effort to move the discussion along, rather, ask a clarifying/leading question.
- **Avoid telling a member her/his answer is wrong.** All members are making their best attempts. Do not directly correct a person. Ask for verification (let's read John 3:16 now for a better understanding) or suggest that there may be alternative thoughts/interpretations.
- **Avoid having the last word in every discussion.** Resist the temptation to have the final say or be the final arbitrator of every discussion---doing so can make you appear to be manipulative, self-centered, or egotistical. If a member articulates the basic idea or theme or gives a sufficient answer, don't bog down the discussion by adding unnecessary/personal commentary.
- **Never ignore the speaker.** Always maintain good eye contact with the member speaking and give verbal and non-verbal affirmation. SMILE!