

HORIZONS

A Newsletter for La Leche League Leader Applicants
Fall 2008

Looking at LLL Meetings in a Different Light

by Lea Hepworth, former CLA, Iowa

No doubt you're seeing LLL meetings from a different perspective now that you are a Leader Applicant. Maybe for you it's not quite as relaxing as it once was. For one reason, your child is mobile. For another, you are now beginning to imagine yourself in your Leader's chair.

How will you handle technical questions, telephone calls, organizing publicity, the treasury, let alone these meetings? By now you are aware of some of the many resources available to your Leader and to you. In addition to the written material on the mechanics of leading meetings, I'd like to suggest an idea to help you prepare for leading your first meeting.

At your next Series Meeting, consider just listening. When we sit back and observe, we have time to think about the issues underlying a mother's questions rather than worrying about commenting. Make some mental notes to be recorded right after the meeting on particular topics and on the dialogue that arises. These may help you think through the other person's situation, feelings, and responses.

When you and your Leader have a chance to talk about the meeting, here are some points to consider:

- How may the responses have affected the mother making the comment and the other mothers in the Group?
- What would you have said as the Leader?
- What was the mother really saying? What was the feeling behind her comment?

- How do you think the mother felt about the responses given, either by the Leader or the other mothers?

We can all improve on our communication skills. In order to help a mother effectively, the Leader must first clearly understand what the mother is feeling. Hopefully this little exercise will help to sharpen the effectiveness of your listening skills. Have fun!



When Is It Time for Your "Preview?"

A Preview of Mothers' Questions/Problems and Group Dynamics/Management is a tool designed to give Applicants practice answering typical breastfeeding questions and responding to challenging situations. Armed with questions from the six-page *Preview*, the Applicant and her sponsoring Leader explore a variety of situations and role-play how one might effectively respond.

In the past, the *Preview* was given to the Applicant as she was nearing the completion of her preparation for leadership, and this is still done for many applications. If you would like to integrate the role-playing exercises of the *Preview* into your meetings with your sponsoring Leader in the months ahead, contact your LAD representative, who will provide both of you with copies of the *Preview*. There are many innovative ways to use the *Preview* as a learning tool throughout the application time.



Horizons is edited by Marie Beam, Associate Director for Regional Administrators of Leader Accreditation, EUS

What is “Acceptance” Anyway?

by Maggie Heeger, former CLA, AL/MS/LA

“In La Leche League, we accept mothers wherever they are in their mothering.” That’s a philosophy that is heard often in our circles. Acceptance of others is a vital part of being a Leader, yet it can be very difficult to define.

We welcome mothers to our meetings, regardless of their mothering styles. Often, however, we speak of “accepting” mothers only when they’re doing something we view as wrong, such as supplementing or spanking. Rarely do we speak of “accepting” a mother who agrees with LLLI philosophy. We hope to be able to change a mother’s behavior so that she will no longer need to be accepted; she’ll be “one of us.” Doesn’t all this imply that we are judging what is or isn’t acceptable mothering? That’s not acceptance at all, but rather, tolerance. We tolerate a mother who does things “wrong” and hope that she’ll soon see the error of her ways.

Instead of acceptance, perhaps we should try to project an attitude of respect. Respect of another person’s parenting does not necessarily mean that we agree with her choices, but that we agree with her right to make her own decisions. Mothers have the right to accept, reject or even partially accept the ideas we present. Regardless of their choices, all mothers should be treated with respect—as women making personal decisions that they believe to be best for their families. Mounting campaigns to change their beliefs, gossiping behind their backs, and “writing them off” as non-LLL material does not show respect or acceptance. Let’s try to convey the idea that acceptance is respect; we’re not out to change people’s minds, but are instead welcoming them to what may be a new experience—with no strings attached!



Shhh!

We ask that you not announce yourself as a Leader Applicant at Series Meetings or in other public forums such as on the Internet. This helps avoid being put on the spot by being asked questions about breastfeeding or LLL that you are not ready to answer. It also

takes into account that LLLI liability insurance does not cover Leader Applicants.

Online Resources for Leader Applicants

Ready to move ahead on your leadership preparation? All of the materials you will need can be found online at:

<http://www.lleus.org/Applicants.html>

Among the many resources, you will find:

- “Alphabet Soup,” a guide to LLL acronyms
- Articles discussing leadership application
- A chart providing an overview of the steps in leadership preparation
- Exercises for Applicants
- Back issues of *Horizons*
- LEADER’S HANDBOOK Checklist
- *Breastfeeding Resource Guide*
- *A Preview of Mothers’ Questions/Problems and Group Dynamics/Management.*



Wean Me Gently

by Cathy Cardall

I know I look so big to you,
Maybe I seem too big for the needs I have.
But no matter how big we get,
We still have needs that are important to us.
I know that our relationship is growing and changing,
But I still need you. I need your warmth and closeness,
Especially at the end of the day
When we snuggle up in bed.
Please don't get too busy for us to nurse.
I know you think I can be patient,
Or find something to take the place of a nursing;
A book, a glass of something,
But nothing can take your place when I need you.
Sometimes just cuddling with you,
Having you near me is enough.
I guess I am growing and becoming independent,
But please be there.
This bond we have is so strong and so important to me,
Please don't break it abruptly.

Wean me gently,
Because I am your mother,
And my heart is tender. ♥