

HORIZONS

A Newsletter for La Leche League Leader Applicants
Spring 2009

How Do La Leche League Meetings Look to a Newcomer?

Think back to your first La Leche League Series Meeting. Did you feel welcomed? Did the meeting seem to run smoothly? Were you comfortable with the ideas you heard at the meeting? Did you have a positive image of La Leche League?

Most likely you came away from your first LLL meeting with some good feelings, or you wouldn't have kept coming back, and eventually applied for leadership. We do not expect that every mother who comes to LLL will want to become a Leader, but we do hope that every mother who comes to LLL will leave with a positive view of us. A Leader can help ensure that a mother has a good first impression of LLL by planning ahead, observing carefully, and being sensitive to each mother's needs during Series Meetings.

Let's think about some factors that influence how LLL looks to mothers. A Planning or Evaluation Meeting would be a good place to discuss these with the Leaders and others in your Group.

Location

Take a look at your Group's meeting location with the eyes of a newcomer. Is the building or home easy to find? Is it convenient to parking and public transportation? Is the room neat and clean? Is it safe for babies and toddlers? Is there anything in the room that might be offensive to some people, such as an overly religious or otherwise controversial message on the wall?

Organization

We make a better impression if we are organized. Does the meeting start on time (or close to it)? Is it clear to newcomers who the Leaders are, and who the treasurer and librarian are? Are library books arranged rather than just in a jumble or in a box? Does the Leader seem to be in charge of the meeting structure, and are the other mothers generally following her plan? If there are toddlers or older children at the meeting, is it obvious that someone thought of their needs ahead of time?

People

Are the Leaders dressed appropriately? Do the people at the meeting seem relatively "normal"? Some examples of things that might make a bad impression: a three-year-old pulling his mother's shirt all the way up to nurse, a long tirade about circumcision during the meeting, a Leader with a political slogan on her tee-shirt.

Friendliness

Do mothers in the Group make an effort to chat with newcomers before and after the meeting? Are newcomers encouraged to add their knowledge to the discussion rather than just ask questions? Do mothers feel comfortable not participating if they'd rather just listen? Does the Leader explain terms that newcomers might not know, such as "attachment parenting" or "nursing strike"?

Acceptance

Many Leaders start meetings with a statement such as, "LLL believes that mothers know their babies best. You will hear many different ideas and opinions here tonight. We hope that you will take the ones that will be helpful to you and leave the

rest.” Do the Leaders and the other mothers in the Group act as if they believe this? For example, if people are discussing how wonderful baby slings are, it can help if someone adds another side to the story with, “I found that my baby didn’t really like the sling. She loved being on the floor.” Or “The sling hurt my back too much. I found a backpack to be much more comfortable.”

Did She Get What She Came For?

Does someone make sure that a newcomer gets her needs met? She might have specific questions, she might want to meet people, or she might just want to find out what La Leche League is like.

When a mother comes to her first LLL meeting, what happens at that meeting IS LLL to her. If that is her only contact with LLL, we want it to be a good one. Whenever she speaks about La Leche League to a friend or relative, we hope she will have something positive to say about us.



Confidentiality

from *Leader’s Handbook*, p. 16

Mothers come to LLL for breastfeeding information, just as they might approach a health care provider. It is important to respect a mother by keeping personal information private.

Keep identifying information confidential. This includes names, distinguishing family characteristics and any other information that does not pertain to the breastfeeding situation itself.

It’s necessary to keep confidentiality in mind when:

- Consulting with another Leader about a helping situation
- Discussing examples of questions mothers ask and ways Leaders respond with a Leader Applicant

- Showing a Leader Applicant how to keep a telephone log
- Describing a helping situation in a workshop, at a Chapter Meeting, or in an article for a Leader publication
- Talking about others’ breastfeeding experiences at Series Meetings.

When mothers are reassured by a Leader’s actions that helping calls and conversations are kept confidential, they can feel confident recommending LLL to others.



Why Be a Leader?

Some reasons I and many others have become La Leche League Leaders and remained Leaders for years:

- We want to help mothers breastfeed.
- We want to support people in LLL-style parenting.
- LLL is a great place to meet like-minded friends.
- Leadership provides opportunities for us to grow. I have learned to lead meetings, manage a group, plan my time and communicate better in person and on paper.



Find What You Need Online

Ready to move ahead on your leadership preparation? Many of the materials an Applicant needs can be found online at:

<http://www.llli.org/leaderpages/LAD/app/applicant.html?m=0,3,4>



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