

HORIZONS

A Newsletter for La Leche League Leader Applicants
Spring 2012

Practicing Leadership Skills

Many skills are needed to be an effective Leader. Here are some ways to practice those skills and become more familiar with the role of a Leader:

- Help the Group Leaders plan a Series Meeting
- Fill out a Monthly Meeting Report
- Make a presentation at a Series Meeting, such as a book review or a report on a workshop or conference session
- Role-play phone helping calls or meeting situations with a Leader
- Brainstorm solutions for Group problems (for example, what to do about noisy children, or how to increase attendance)
- Take on a different Group job
- Coordinate a fundraiser for the Group
- Do some extra publicity for the Group
- Organize a Group social event, such as a picnic, potluck or playgroup
- Organize, lead or help lead a Planning, Evaluation or Enrichment Meeting
- Write a newsletter for Group members
- Visit another Group's Series Meeting
- Organize and/or attend Communication Skills Enrichment sessions
- Attend an Area Conference, District Workshop or Area Leader Day.

This is a long list! We don't expect every Applicant to do all of these things. You and your sponsoring Leader might decide which of the above activities would be most helpful to you. Also, do let your LAD representative know about your LLL activities--she will be pleased to hear about all that you are accomplishing.

Children at Meetings

One of the wonderful things about La Leche League is that we welcome babies and toddlers at Series Meetings and at most other LLL events. Why? Three reasons:

We believe strongly that "in the early years, the baby has an intense need to be with his mother, which is as basic as his need for food." Infants are probably happiest with their mothers. So are many toddlers and even some older children.

Also, especially during daytime meetings, most mothers do not have someone else who can watch their children. We want to make it easy for mothers to participate in La Leche League.

Lastly, what better way to show other mothers our breastfeeding and mothering philosophy than by example? Mothers can see how we mother our infants through breastfeeding, nurse discreetly, spend time holding and enjoying our babies, give our children the attention they need while also attending to the meeting, plan before the meeting for the food and entertainment needs of our older children, and gently and lovingly help our children learn appropriate behavior.

Consider that, to a mother new to La Leche League, the regular members of the Group, including you, *are* La Leche League. You, the Leaders and the other regulars in the Group are all helping to spread La Leche League's special style of mothering through breastfeeding.

Communication Skills Can Help

When a mother asks a question, a La Leche League Leader responds with information to help the mother find her own solution to her problem. By being empathetic and reflecting her feelings, we help her understand her situation and aid her in finding the answer that is right for her. Sometimes the answer she finds is not the answer we would have given her, but it works for her because she discovered it herself.

Leaders aim to give information rather than give advice (telling the mother what she *should* do), because giving advice often will result in one of the following:

- The mother follows the advice and is successful; she may become dependent on the Leader.
- The mother follows the advice and fails; she has to face the consequences and the Leader loses credibility.
- The mother rejects the advice and is successful; she may reject the Leader.
- The mother rejects the advice and fails; she may resent the Leader, or may elevate her because she seems to know best and the mother feels diminished.

Our goal is to help the mother gain confidence and feel more independent. The mother needs information. How do we give it to her?

Empathetic listening, tuning in to the mother's feelings, helping her identify her own feelings--these all lead to the opportunity to impart information and to help her explore alternatives so that she can make decisions appropriate for her, her baby and her family.

If you are interested in attending a Communication Skills session to help expand your own abilities in this area, ask your Leader for contact information for the Area Communication Skills Instructor.

Having Trouble Making Progress?

Are you having trouble working on your preparation for leadership and/or writing your personal history? Here are a few ideas that have helped others:

- “I set a date when my husband was home, sent him off with the children, then wrote the entire personal history. This took about four hours.”
- “I set a deadline for myself, wrote it on my calendar and told my Leader and my husband. The week before my deadline, I looked over the last letter from my LAD representative and started to figure out what I needed to write. It worked!”
- “I typed my personal history while my toddler nursed on my lap.”
- “I decided to hand-write my personal history instead of typing it.”
- Stick the LLL concepts on the refrigerator or cupboard door in the kitchen so they're in full view and you can work on them subconsciously while doing daily chores and making dinner. Keep a pen and pad handy to jot down any bits of insight you have.
- Set aside a certain day of the week for LLL work (perhaps the same day the monthly Series Meeting is on). Not only do you ensure regular work on the application, but you establish a habit that will carry forward after accreditation.
- If you are having a hard time writing, break it down into smaller parts. Sending even a short email or letter can give a feeling of accomplishment. That in turn becomes an incentive to write the next email or letter.

Find the application resources you need online at

<http://www.llluswd.org/deptnet/LeaderAccred/index.html>