

HORIZONS



A Newsletter for La Leche League Leader Applicants *Spring 2011*

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:

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 a religious or controversial message on the wall?

Organization

We make a better impression if we are organized. Does the meeting start on time? Is it clear to newcomers who the Leaders

are, and who the treasurer and librarian are? Are library books arranged for easy access? Does the Leader seem to be in charge of the meeting structure? 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 that she will have something positive to say about us.



Communication Skills Enrichment

Do you worry about how you will respond to a mother who wants you to solve her problem? Have you thought about how a new mother will feel about the information you share with her? Do you feel awed by the amount of information you will need to lead an LLL Group? If your answer to any of these questions is “yes,” Communication Skills Enrichment (CSE) could be a valuable resource for you!

Mothers often look to La Leche League Leaders to provide solutions. Not only does this put a burden on the Leader, but it can also backfire if the “solution” fails, or lead to dependence if it succeeds. Listening and offering information without telling a mother what to do can be challenging. Yet by being empathetic and reflecting her feelings, we can help her understand her situation and support her as she finds 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.

La Leche League’s Communication Skills Enrichment program helps participants to improve their interpersonal communication

skills. The CSE Basic Series presents a range of skills such as interpreting body language, active listening, offering information, and generating solutions. The fundamental principles of CSE are empathy, genuineness, and respect for the individual. During the workshop, participants have the opportunity to learn about and practice these skills.

Workshops are led by LLL trained Communication Skills Instructors (CSIs), and the CSE Basic Series can be delivered in one full day or broken up into several sessions. Most areas have a CSI nearby. If you are interested in setting up a workshop, ask your LAD representative for contact information.



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
- Describing a helping situation in a workshop, in an article for a Leader publication, or in an online discussion.
- 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.



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