

# Gundersen Health's Book Club Facilitation Guide

## Creating an Engaging Book Group Experience Tips for Facilitating Book Group Discussions

Leadership learning through book group discussion is powerful. Leader peers have the opportunity to share ideas and experiences as well as consider new perspectives in a comfortable setting. Insights from these discussions can enhance our leadership approach, contribute to personal and professional growth, and pave the way for continuous learning. Below are tips that will help you as you facilitate a leadership book group.

### Logistics:

- a) You will receive the list of your book group's registrants from Rachel Miller
  - a) We will keep you informed of add-ons, although not likely to happen at this point as registration ends on Wednesday, December 31<sup>st</sup>
  
- b) As people register, they will be sent a copy of the book by Organizational Development
  - a) It may take 2-3 days for the book to arrive via inter-office mail following registration
  
- 3) Email your group to introduce yourself as the facilitator
  - a) Here is a sample of what could be sent:

"Hello and thank you for registering for the  (title of the book)  book group starting on  (start date) . I have been asked to facilitate this session and will be your contact for any questions you may have regarding reading assignments and attendance. It is recommended that attendees are able to be present for 75% of the session. I will be sending meeting invites out for the session dates and times shortly.

You should have received a copy of the book via inter-office mail or will be receiving it from Organizational Development soon. Please allow 2-3 days for the book to arrive after you've registered. If you do not receive a book within that timeline, please contact Rachel Miller at x54594.

Thank you and I look forward to participating in this group with you."
  
- 4) Send Outlook meeting invitations to the participants in your group for each session
  - a) Include the location and whatever else you might find helpful within the body of the invite
    - i. Some suggestions:
      - Map of the conference room so people can find it easily
      - List of dates
      - Assignments
      - Attached document of the session questions
  
- e) At the end of your 4 sessions, contact \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_@gundersenhealth.org with a list of those that participated so we are able to enter that information into Learning Zone

### Preparation:

**Make dedicated time to read the featured book**, highlighting key passages or taking notes along the way. Plan on finishing the book with enough time for you to process it further before the group first meets. Before each group session, plan to review/re-read the chapter(s) so that they are fresh for you.

**Write down important page numbers** (or bookmark in your e-reader). If there are parts of the book that made an impact on you or which come up in discussion, write down the page numbers so that you can access the passages easily while facilitating discussion.

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**Before each group meeting, review the discussion questions in advance** and determine which ones you plan to use. The group experience may be enhanced by sending all discussion questions out in advance to participants, so they can organize their thoughts. If questions haven't been sent out in advance, consider having copies of the questions for participants. Participants can also use this sheet for note-taking or discussion prompts.

**Arrive at each group meeting early if possible.** This is most important for the first meeting of the group; 20 minutes early will allow time to greet people and insure the room is set up for comfortable group discussion. Take notice of where restrooms and water fountains are for those who may need them.

**Be prepared to manage the group's time well.** Allow 5-10 minutes at the end of each session to check in as a group regarding one insight they had and one action they plan to take as a result of their learning.

## Facilitating the Discussion

### Introductory Reminders:

1. Welcome everyone as they arrive to the group. If you don't personally know them, introduce yourself.
2. At the start of your first session, do a round of introductions (such as name, department, length of time in role) along with an icebreaker. Icebreaker examples include: one interest/hobby that you enjoy; favorite place to relax/renew; or one part of your leadership role you find rewarding/stimulating. If new members join the group at a later time, again conduct introductions.
3. Review the scheduled meetings with the group, and reinforce meeting locations. Invite leaders to contact you with any questions or concerns between book group meetings.
4. Remind the group of the expectations that they attend 75% of the book group sessions, so as to maximize their learning and contribute to the learning experience of peers. Let them know you would appreciate an e-mail if they cannot attend a meeting.
5. Briefly review your role as Facilitator:
  - ✓ You are learning with them, so are a "guide on the side" vs. an expert on the book.
  - ✓ You are also charged with helping to keep discussion flowing and on-topic as much as possible. That may mean gently interrupting people to allow others a chance to chime in.
  - ✓ You will also help manage the time for the group.
6. Briefly review their roles as participants: (also becomes the group guidelines)
  - ✓ Come prepared having read the agreed upon chapter(s).
  - ✓ Openly share perspectives, ideas, and examples from own experience.
  - ✓ Listen actively, allowing others the time to participate also.
  - ✓ Maintain the confidentiality of others in the group.
  - ✓ Have fun learning together!
7. Remind participants of "Insight and Action"; that you will be setting aside the last 10-15 minutes of the group session to ask each person to share one insight they had in reading the book or the group discussion and one action step they will take for themselves.

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## Beginning the Discussion:

8. Begin with the first discussion question, using these tips to keep the discussion flowing:
  - ✓ Make connections between comments – As facilitator, it can be helpful for you to make connections between participant comments or comments that may be related to an alternate discussion question. This helps to build momentum in the conversation and allows you to be flexible with the discussion guide to best meet the needs of the group.
  - ✓ Occasionally direct questions toward quiet people - You don't want to put anyone on the spot, but you want everyone to know their opinions are valued. If you have a few talkative people who always jump right in, directing a question to a specific person may help draw out the quieter people.
  - ✓ Consider using the “round robin” technique to jump start a discussion. This approach involves going around the room and asking each participant to share their perspective on a particular question or topic. This can increase comfort for all in responding and assures getting input from each participant.
  - ✓ Rein in tangents - Book clubs are popular not only because people like to read, but also because they are great social outlets. A little off topic conversation is fine, but you also want to respect the fact that people have read the book and expect to talk about it. As the facilitator, it is your job to recognize tangents and bring the discussion back to the book.
  - ✓ Don't feel obligated to get through all the questions - The best questions sometimes lead to intense conversations. That's a good thing! The questions are there as a guide. While you will want to get through at least three or four questions, it will probably be rare that you finish them all. Respect people's time by wrapping up the discussion when the meeting time is over rather than pushing on until you finish everything you planned.
  - ✓ As a reminder, some group members may need to think before they answer. Part of being a good leader is being comfortable with silence. Don't feel like you have to jump in if no one answers immediately. If needed, clarify, expand or rephrase the question.

## Wrapping Up the Discussion:

9. Insight and Action - Ask participants to share one insight they had from the discussion and one step they may take for themselves going forward.
10. Review of next group meeting date/time and assigned reading. Encourage them to review the discussion questions and give thought to them before the meeting.
11. Thank group members for their participation and congratulate them on continuing their leadership learning.