

GRIEF SHARE MINISTRY LEADERSHIP

Finding and Equipping Leaders

One of the most important things you can do to ensure the success of your GriefShare group is to find and equip the right leadership. Warm, caring, mature group leaders set the tone for the group discussion time that follows the video seminars. Having the right group leaders will help group participants feel comfortable, accepted and free to share their feelings and thoughts.

If your church is just beginning a grief recovery ministry, you may be serving as administrator, group leader and snack caterer. If that's the case, this section can help you get started! As your group begins to grow, ask the Lord to help you identify people who can assist you in leadership. This section will also help you identify and equip future leaders. To prevent burnout, remember, never do ministry alone! If possible, always have someone serving with you.

If you are a pastor or lay leader overseeing an existing grief recovery ministry, you will also find help in this section as you build your grief recovery ministry team.

What kind of leaders do you need?

A different type of leadership is needed for recovery groups. The people leading these groups serve as "facilitators," guiding and shepherding the group. These group leaders do not need to be teachers or counselors (in fact, assuming these roles in a group setting is counterproductive). *The primary role of the GriefShare group leaders is to create an atmosphere of warmth, caring and trust in the discussion group.* Group leaders must also encourage discussion about what was seen on the DVD and a time of personal sharing about what is going on in the lives of each group participant.

Defining your leadership needs

You can begin your GriefShare group by recruiting a leadership team: a group leader and a group co-leader. One person can lead a group, but a team is preferable. You won't be able to survive as a leader for very long if you don't recruit and train people to help lead your GriefShare program.

As your program grows, ask other people to join the team and help with tasks like administration, publicity, food, registration, etc. Adapt the structure of your leadership team to meet the needs of your program and church. There's no best way to organize these kinds of responsibilities. Create an organization that works effectively for you!



NOTES

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This section will focus on the development and selection of your group leaders. The right group leadership will be the glue that brings together all the elements of the GriefShare program. A wrong selection of leadership can really hurt your program. The Potential Leader Questionnaire (p. 43) will help you identify potential leaders.

Identifying Your Group Leaders

Effective group leaders come from all walks of life. Here are characteristics to look for in potential leaders:

Profess a personal relationship with Jesus Christ

GriefShare identifies a personal relationship with Jesus Christ as “the foundation for healing.” Group leaders must be able to model the healing that comes through Christ.

Demonstrate spiritual maturity

Group leaders should be mature Christians with a consistent walk. New believers can be recruited to help with administrative and support tasks but should not lead a group. We suggest your group leaders be active, participating members of your church. Remember, these leaders will be representing your church to many people who may not attend church. There may be occasions where it is desirable to place someone from another church in a leadership role in your GriefShare program. If you’re considering such a person, discuss it first with your church leadership to ensure you have their support.

Have experienced grief

The Lord has a desire to take our tragedies, losses and failures and turn them and use them for His glory. This is seen in the experience of the apostle Paul:

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.” —2 Corinthians 1:3–4

People who have lived through and recovered from loss have an intimate understanding of the needs of someone who is hurting from the recent death of a loved one. They will have a special sensitivity as they interact with group members. It is encouraging for group members to see someone who has exhibited substantial healing from grief.

It is not essential that group leaders have an intimate experience with the death of a loved one, provided they demonstrate a sensitivity and calling to such ministry, but your best success will be in finding people who have been through a significant grieving process.

Have recovered from grief

It’s essential that a group leader demonstrate substantial recovery from his or her grief. There’s no precise mathematical formula to apply here, but you typically should not place a person in a group leadership position for at least one year after the loss of a loved one (many take even longer to fully heal).

As you begin to have people “graduate” from your program, you will probably be approached by some of them about leading or helping with a GriefShare group. Indeed, some of these people will become effective group leaders in the coming years. They have a heart for helping others and are enthusiastic about your ministry.

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It's tempting to plug someone with such enthusiasm into a leadership position. We strongly encourage you to protect these people and your program by resisting this temptation. It's almost impossible to effectively lead a group until you have experienced considerable healing (even if you are highly motivated). People who are still healing also face an especially strong vulnerability to developing relationships with group participants. People who aren't sufficiently healed are also prone to quickly burn out.

There are other ways to channel the enthusiasm and commitment of such people. As your group grows, you'll need administrative, publicity, food, registration and other support. These positions of service can be held by people still in the healing process.

You can also develop a one-on-one ministry relationship between a future group leader and someone from your current group who is really hurting. Make sure these are same-sex relationships and that you develop a system to monitor them. A person who is faithful and consistent in this kind of personal ministry will indeed make a good future group leader.

IF YOU ARE LEADING AN ONGOING GRIEF SHARE GROUP, PRAYERFULLY EVALUATE HOW WELL YOUR GRIEF SHARE MINISTRY MEASURES UP TO THESE STANDARDS. IF YOU ARE JUST BEGINNING A GRIEF SHARE MINISTRY, USE THESE TRAITS AS GOALS AND BENCHMARKS.

Participated in a recovery group

It is ideal if your group leaders have been through GriefShare or a similar program while healing from their own grief. They will be better leaders because they've seen the process from the perspective of a participant.

Have a sense of calling

Your best leaders will be those the Lord leads to you!

Accountability

It is essential that your group leaders support your church and embrace its key values and policies. This ministry becomes an extension of your church and represents your church to people from the community who have turned to your program for help.

It's also essential they support your guidelines for issues such as dress and behavior. For instance, establish a clear policy that single leaders not develop a dating relationship with participants (it is inappropriate because most participants are not emotionally ready for a relationship and it can hurt the credibility and trust the group places in its leaders).

You may develop a written leadership covenant to be signed by individual group leaders. See page 46 for a sample.

Training

We recommend you provide ongoing training in order to build a strong leadership team. We also suggest you require future leaders to read through the Leader's Guide, view the Leader Training Video (DVD Disc 6), spend one 13-week cycle as an "apprentice" working

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