

How to Master the Art of Support Group

Facilitation





Family Voices Mission Statement

Family Voices, a national grassroots network of families and friends, advocates for health care services that are family-centered, community-based, comprehensive, coordinated and culturally competent for all children and youth with special health care needs; promotes the inclusion of all families as decision makers at all levels of health care; and supports essential partnerships between families and professionals.

Key Goals

- Build confidence
- Enhance listening skills
- Identify strategies to enhance support groups

Getting to Know Each Other

- BINGO!!! (5-10 minutes)
- Partner up (3 minutes!)
 - Share yourself & your story
 - As it is relevant to the group topic
 - Ask others to share
 - Name, Job, Family Composition
 - As they are comfortable

Welcome

- Introductions

- Rules

1. It's our show.
2. Everyone is equal.
3. No relevant topic is excluded.
4. No discussion is ended.
5. Respect opinions.
6. Respect the time.
7. Silence is agreement.
8. Non-attribution.

Life is like cooking. It all depends on what you add and how you mix it. Sometimes you follow the recipe and at other times, you're creative.

Strengths

- What are your individual strengths?
- What are strengths of your family?
- What are the strengths of your community?

Challenges

- What are your individual challenges?
- What are challenges exist in your family?
- What are the challenges in your community?

Leadership vs. Facilitation

- When you lead, you are able to offer encouragement to follow a pre-determined course or direct instruction in building a set of skills.
- When you facilitate, you make it easier for people to participate in a more casual, less structured environment.

The Four Stages of Adaptation

- Surviving
- Searching
- Settling In
- Separating

From "Nobody's Perfect – Living & Growing with children Who Have Special Needs"
By Nancy B. Miller, Ph.D., M.S.W. adapted by Laura J. Warren

Surviving

- What you do to keep going when you are feeling completely overwhelmed because something totally out of our control has taken away your child's equal chance at life.
- First time through survival is the longest.
- Ways to ease the Surviving Process:
 - Understand that your feelings are normal.
 - Try to make time for yourself.
 - Create and use your support system.

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Searching

- Some leap frog right into this stage.
- What you do when you are looking for answers for your child. You will probably have periods of Searching during your whole life with your child.
- Will learn to recognize what you can control and what you cannot.
- Two kinds of searching:
 - Outer Searching: Looking for a diagnosis or services such as Family Support.
 - Inner Searching: Trying to find your identity as the parent of a child with special health care needs. (Why did this happen, what does this mean for me).

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Searching (continued)

- Things you may become aware of during your inner search:
 - Life is not fair.
 - If you devote all your time, energy and thoughts to your child, someone will pay the price, and that someone may be you or your child.
 - Being realistic about your child's abilities and limitations does not mean giving up hope.
 - How your child feels about his/her abilities and limitations is more important than what he/she can or cannot do.
 - Things will change. Some will become harder and some will become easier, but things change. It is how you deal with the change that matters.

Settling In

- Seeing the world for what it is and seeing yourself for who you are.
- It is moving beyond the intense emotions of surviving and urgency of searching into a greater sense of control and balance in life.
- What you do when the frantic pace of Searching lets up. You begin to choose your battles and balance your child's schedule and your family life. Not only has your Outer Searching subsided for a while, but more important, your attitude about it settles down.
- You will see a shift in your balance as well as in your attitude.

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Settling In (continued)

- Some families are not able to enjoy the normality of feeling Settled In or this stage is delayed due to:
 - Continued medical crisis
 - Lack of financial resources
 - Marriages or relationships that are unable to survive the change.
 - Single parenting resulting in juggling all the responsibilities.
 - Old Surviving or Searching issues that come back into the foreground.

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Separating

- What you do as a normal, gradual process that occurs in tiny steps throughout childhood. When a child has special needs, the process may need to be altered or slowed down. Extra parenting may be required – you may have to initiate separation, plan it, find it and make it happen.
- Letting go on your part is also necessary.
- Letting go means giving up some control.
- Letting go feels like you are losing something – and you are.

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Remember

- Everyone passes through these periods in their own way and at their own time.
- There is no “right way” to adapt.
- The tasks in each stage may overlap. They actually have more of a circular quality than a linear one.

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Essential Facilitation Skills

- Leadership
- Respect
- Excellent Verbal & Listening Skills
- Flexibility

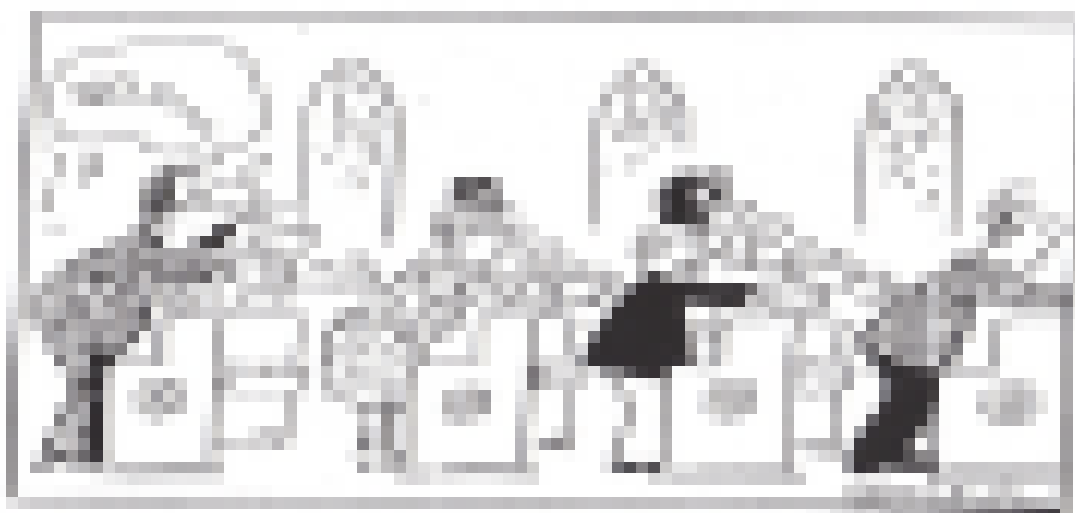
Being an *Active* Listener

- Supportive body language
- Furthering responses
- Reflective comments
- Articulate unspoken feelings
- Ask for clarification
- Stay consistently curious
- Validate feelings or behavior
- Answer a question with a question
- Point out similarities
- Focus on the positive
- Joining
- Feedback
- Empathy
- Open-ended responses
- Paraphrasing
- Responding to non-verbal cues
- Resist the urge to problem-solve or give advice

Active Listening Techniques

Type of Statement	Purpose	To Achieve Purpose	Examples
Encouraging	To convey interest. To keep the person talking.	Don't agree or disagree. Use noncommittal words with positive tone of voice.	"I see." "Uh-huh.." "That's interesting...."
Restating	To show that you are listening and understand. To let the person know you grasp the facts.	Restate the other's basic ideas, emphasizing the facts.	"If I understand your idea is..." "In other words, this is your decision..."
Reflecting	To show that you are listening and understand. To let others know you understand their feelings.	Restate the other's basic feelings.	"You feel that..." "You were pretty disturbed by this..."
Summarizing	To pull important ideas, facts, etc. together. To establish a basis for further discussion	Restate, reflect and summarize major ideas and feelings.	"These seem to be the key ideas you have expressed..." "If I understand you, you feel this way about the situation..."

COMMUNICATING



Shared Leadership

- Everyone participates
- Everyone has something to give or learn
- Everyone helps to shape today's training
- Continuous feedback loop

Confidentiality

- You want to respect the privacy of families you interact with.
- You want to build trust, not only with families but with the community too.
- You want to build relationships with families who need help and with members of your community.

What does confidentiality mean?

According to Webster, it means....

- Containing information, the unauthorized disclosure of which could pose a threat or harm to another.

What this really means...

- It may seem harmless, but what families share with you is their business, so unless there is danger in not sharing, you should keep information to yourself.

Just Remember..

What happens in Vegas....Stays in Vegas

- Again, erring on the side of caution is just about always your best bet!
- Some things are just better left unsaid, and unrepeated!
- Building a reputation for discretion in your community will serve your team well!
- This reputation will bring more families to you, where one bad incident can cost your Team for a long time...

Listening

- Think of a time in your life when you needed someone to listen to you. It might be recent, it might be something from childhood, maybe it was a problem you wanted to talk about, maybe it was something you were angry about, or maybe it was something exciting in your life.

Who did you choose
to talk to? Why did
you choose that
person?

WHAT QUALITIES DID
THIS PERSON HAVE
THAT MADE HIM/HER
A GOOD LISTENER?

How did it feel to be
listened to?

Did you ever have an experience when you wanted to be listened to, but the other person was not a good listener?

What did that person
do that made him or
her into a poor
listener?

Why is it sometimes
difficult for people to
be good listeners?
What are some barriers
to listening?

Tips for Effective Listening

- Work through feelings and find solutions
- Ask appropriate and open-ended questions
- Be patient and allow plenty of time
- Don't interrupt
- Don't prepare answers while the person is talking
- Take mental notes (writing notes can be distracting)
- Avoid premature conclusions and interpretations
- Have desire to hear what is being said and to be helpful
-

Tips for Effective Listening

- Empathize with the person and put her/him at ease
- Recognize that feelings are transitory and change over time
- Don't try to change a person to your way of thinking
- Be alert for your own negative feelings
- Hold your temper; think constructively
- Trust in the person's capacity to handle his/her feelings
- Stop talking and listen

Examples of Empathy

- “I’m really frustrated with the school my child attends because they think all of his problems are my fault”
 - You’re angry because the school is blaming all of the problems your child is having on you.

Group Development

- Evolving, not stagnant
- Normalize experiences
- Let participants learn to strategize
& solve issues on their own

Group Development

Stages

- Forming
 - Why are we here?
- Storming
 - Sorting out processes and bidding for control or power
- Norming
 - Self-organization
- Performing
 - Maturity & mutual acceptance

Develop a Group Structure

- Create House Rules
- Healthy Group Participation
- Recruit & Maintain Attendance
- Have an Opening & Closing Statement
- Evaluate your Group



Group Operations

- Teamwork!
 - Regular meetings
 - Primary contact person
 - Transportation?
 - Child care?
 - Celebrate milestones



Self-Help Principles

- All help is self-help.
- Be willing to give and receive help.
- Let go of the negative & embrace the positive.
- Belief in one's self.
- Identify needs
- Plan & set goals.
- Seek & ask for help.

Self-Help Groups

Things to Think About:

- Environment
- Speaking & Listening
- Group Discussion
- Leadership



The Ideal Group has...

- Consistency
- Trust
- Support
- Empathy
- Respect
- Safety
- No fee

Successful Groups Have...

- A common issue
- Participants willing to share information
- A safe place to talk about difficult subjects
- Mutual demand
- Individual problem-solving
- Strength in numbers

People 1st Language

Say . . .

child with a disability
person with cerebral palsy
without speech
developmental delay
emotional disorder, mental illness
deaf, hard-of-hearing or
uses a wheelchair
person with retardation
person with epilepsy
has a learning disability
non-disabled
has a physical disability
congenital disability
condition
disease)

Instead of . . .

disabled or handicapped child
palsied, CP, spastic
mute or dumb
slow
crazy or insane
deaf and dumb
confined to a wheelchair
retarded
retarded epileptic
is learning-disabled
normal, healthy
crippled
birth defect
disease (unless it IS a

Family Centered



"I guess we'd be considered a family. We're living together, we love each other, and we haven't eaten the children yet."

Family Centered Support

- Support that is offered to the family as a whole, rather than to the child with a disability alone, and is based on the priorities and concerns that are identified by the family, rather than by professionals.
- Recognizes and respects the pivotal role of the family in the lives of children with special health care needs; promotes normal patterns of living at home and in the community; and

10 Components of Family Centered Care

1. Acknowledges the family as the constant in a child's life.
2. Builds on family strengths.
3. Supports the child in learning about and participating in his/her care and decision-making.
4. Honors cultural diversity and family traditions.
5. Recognizes the importance of community based services.
6. Promotes an individual and developmental approach.
7. Encourages family-to-family and peer support.
8. Supports youth as they transition to adulthood.
9. Develops policies, practices, and systems that are family-friendly and family-centered in all settings.
10. Celebrates successes.

Effect of a disability or special health care need on family members

- Mothers
- Fathers
- Mother-Father Relationship
- Single Parents
- Step Parents
- Grandparents
- Brothers and Sisters

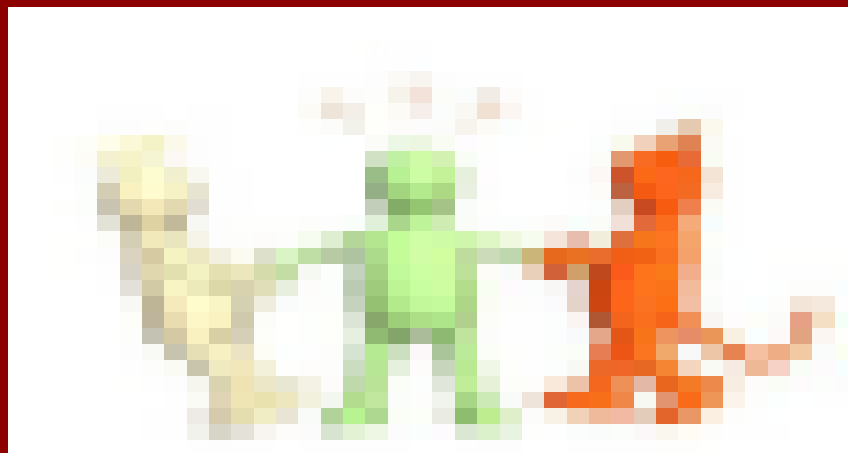
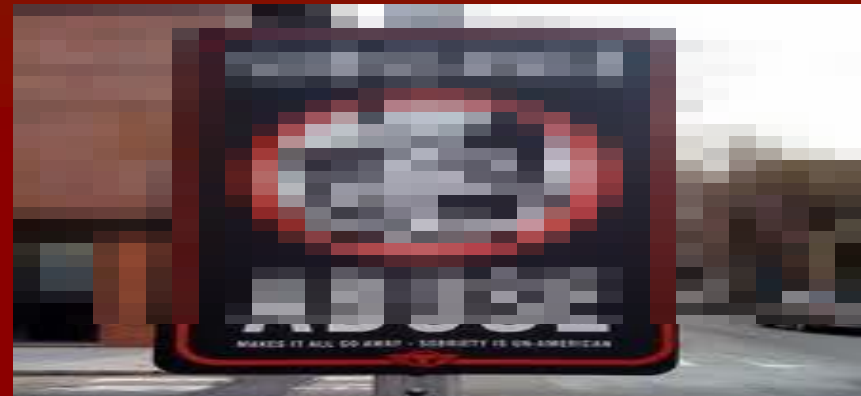
Challenging Situations

Dealing with Participants who are:

- Dominating
- Argumentative
- Super-Helpful
- Rambler
- Side Conversationalist
- Muddled
- Shy or Withdrawn

Be Prepared

Issues that may impact the group



Growing your team

- Do invite all families to events no matter what the disability.
- Do include all family members (parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, siblings)
- Do have all ages of self advocates (teens, young adults, older adults)
- Do tell others about the Navigator Team
- Do be positive.

Working with and involving professionals

- Do invite professionals to be part of the team.
- Do invite professionals to speak to your team.
- Do invite professionals to assist your team with fund raising.
- Do continue to build relationships with professionals.

Evaluation Tools

- How well does the group interact?
- Do individuals show respect when there is a difference of opinion?
- Are you able to discuss taboo topics?
- Are group members empathetic to each other's issues?
- Is there a demand for knowledge about the subject matter?
- Does the group show support when a member has a difficult action to take?
- Is there individual as well as group problem solving?
- Do members plan on returning?

Public Relations

- Make good use of brochures
- Take advantage of free community events, get involved.
- Remember when your media is targeting families be sure to use simple language with which everyone can understand and identify.
- Always communicate time, place, details of an event or meeting in a clear and defined way.
- Have a designated person to take pictures.

Do's of Public Relations

- Do always use people first language.
- Do make sure time, date, and location are clearly stated.
- Do get your brochures in the community.
- Do use language that everyone understands (no acronyms)
- Do use great pictures.
- Do get information out in a timely manner.
- Do get Parent Navigator Team Directors final approval before sending in a press release.

Use the Media to Reach Out

- The media can be useful in helping people understand the issues that face the disability community.
- Positive stories about families who experience disabilities provides good public relations.

Resources - FVND

- Family Voices of ND, is a statewide grassroots network of families and friends, advocates for health care services that are family-centered, community-based, comprehensive, coordinated and culturally competent for all children and youth with special health care needs; promotes the inclusion of all families as decision makers at all levels of health care; and supports essential partnerships between families and professionals.
- Website (www.fvnd.org)
- Big Tent (www.bigtent.com/groups/ndp2p)
- 1-888-522-9654
- New Beginnings Guide
- missi.baranko@gmail.com
- vickiascd@bis.midco.net

Resources - Pathfinders

- A statewide parent center for families and schools. We offer educational information and training for ND families of children and youth with learning difficulties, ages birth to 26. Offers parent training and support for schools that want to enhance student achievement through parent involvement
- <http://www.pathfinder-nd.org/>
- 1-800-245-5840
- info@pathfinder-nd.org

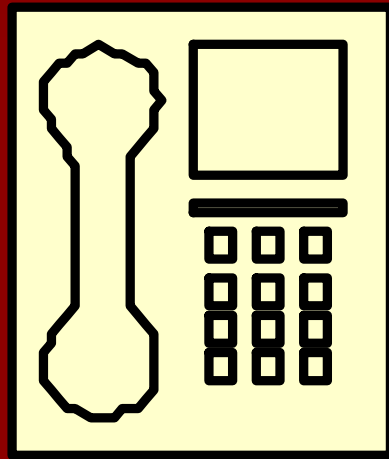
Resources – Federation of Families

- The Center for Mental Health Services awards grants to statewide, family-run networks to provide support and information to families of children and adolescents with serious emotional, behavioral, or mental disorders.
- 701-222-1223
- Carlotta McCleary:
carlottamccleary@bis.midco.net
- Deb Jendro: debjfederation@yahoo.com
- Becky Severt: bsevert@bis.midco.net

Resources - other

- Support groups already in your area.
- School organizations (PTA, etc)
- Other Non – profit organizations (March of Dimes, United Way)
- State Agencies (Department of Human Services, Department of Health, Department of Education)

Contact Information



- Family Voices of North Dakota
- fvnd@drtel.net
- 701-493-2634 or 888-522-9654