

Creating team players

Five ways to get everyone committed to contributing to your group
by Brett Eastman, founder and CEO of Lifetogether

When it comes to getting everyone to participate in your small group, it's important that you — their leader — know that your level of openness is the primary factor in setting the tone for the group's involvement and openness.

Along with that, here are five ways to get your small group members to participate in group life:

1. When you ask the first question, you should answer it first. When you're done, simply ask, "How about somebody else?"
2. Don't rush responses, but learn to enjoy silence. Wait patiently with roaming eye contact. You might count to seven or say, "I can wait longer than you!"
3. As soon as someone says anything, affirm their response, whether it is a great answer or a one-word response. Make it safe for people to share their thoughts.
4. Ask for volunteers to read the Bible passage or a paragraph from a book. But don't put anyone on the spot unless you know they don't mind reading.
5. Pass the baton to another member to host the group next time. This will scare his or her socks off, but also will grow his or her faith.

Remember, God's dream for each of your group members is that over time each will grow to shepherd other people. Simply reading in the group often is the start they need; down the road, they might facilitate a circle of three or four people for prayer. Eventually, Lord willing, some of them will go on to leading a group or mentoring a new believer.