

## Listening & Feedback

**Check-in:** Use the check-in time to get current. The group exists so we can help each other. That can only happen if there is complete honesty and complete trust. What is shared here stays here.

**Feedback:** Permission should be granted before feedback is given. Remember, we cannot work another's program, but we can be supportive and offer accountability.

The purposes of feedback may include:

- To share our experience, strength and hope, not our advice. To offer encouragement or grace.
- For a reality check (sometimes addicts like us are not seeing reality).
- To help focus/clarify an issue.

Reasons to NOT give feedback:

- Condemnation.
- To hear ourselves talk.
- To show the rest of the group how wise I am in solving *other people's* problems.

Feedback is usually most effective and constructive when offered in context of a relationship with the person, built through meetings, calls, etc., which is why those giving feedback should be *actively* working the program themselves.

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### Key Principles

- James 1:19 "My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry."
- "Speaking the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15) is how we grow in maturity and unity. Doing either of these without the other is destructive, leading to condemnation, judgment and potentially hardened heart on the one hand, and on the other a lack of confrontation that would lead to maturity and repentance and an ability to receive grace. Also Ephesians 4:25-29
- Note that something comes before "speaking the truth in love". In Ephesians 4:1-2, "...I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love."
- Proverbs 27:6 "Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses." Then verse 17, "As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another."
- Proverbs 18:13 "Answering before listening is both stupid and rude."
- We are not responsible *for* each other's recovery. *But we are responsible to each other and to God.* Sometimes that will look like exhortation and facing consequences, and sometimes it will be compassionate listening to the out-pouring of someone's heart. We respect the need for everyone to check-in and will maintain awareness of when the group needs to end. We understand that relationships are further developed and nurtured outside this group.
- As a group, we may challenge, but we will never shame.
- Sometimes, when one member gives good feedback, it inspires further comments/questions from others. But be wary that this can turn into "piling on" which can be shaming and counterproductive.
- Sometimes, nothing needs to be said. The person just needs to vent or feel that they've been heard.
- The best feedback usually comes out of relationship. If you've been calling someone, building a trusted relationship and have been there for them in the past, then you have a greater context of this person's life into which this particular comment or feedback fits and so your feedback is more likely to be wise and appropriate. It also will be taken more credibly. Also, within relationship it's easier to distinguish which feedback should be given immediately in the group and which should be shared when you speak next privately. If you don't make calls to this person, you're more likely to share everything in front of the group, which isn't always best.
- Often, asking questions is the best form of feedback. Get the other person talking. Never tell someone what they should do when asking appropriate questions could have led them to think of it themselves.
- "Be still, and know that I am God." (Psalm 46:10). Sometimes we jump in to avoid moments of awkward silence. Quiet is ok, and allowing someone to sit and think without interrupting can be a great service to them.
- Brainstorming can be constructive. Consider helping someone come up with multiple alternate ways to respond to a situation and let them decide which is best.
- Don't give advice in areas in which you are not qualified by profession or experience. In this kind of group, where people make life-altering choices, if you don't have a deep relationship with someone, often the best advice is to encourage them to listen to their counselor who usually has a more extensive understanding of the situation and context (versus a 2 minute summary).

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- Be careful of:
  - **Pontification:** Hiding behind a lot of \$5 words. Makes us sound more important than we are and allows us to hide behind something we are not.
  - **Excessive Religiosity:** Sounding holy; using Christian buzzwords/phrases that allow us to escape from showing ourselves. It is easy to say “*Man, I really feel blessed by God! He is so awesome! There is no way I could have done this step without Him!*” But harder to say “*It felt as though I was sitting quietly in the lap of God as I wept and realized how much I had hurt both my wife and my God. I felt so close to Him then!*”
  - **Using ‘We’ and ‘Us’ and ‘You’.** “*We feel tempted when...*”, should be replaced with a more personal “*I feel tempted when...*”. To state otherwise is a ‘sharing of ownership’ allowing escape from individual responsibility.
- If someone gives you unwelcome advice, be gracious and say you will consider it. Then, setting aside any irritation, listen to it and think about any value it might have. Proverbs 19:20 “Get all the instruction and advice you can, so that you may be wise the rest of your life.”