

# PRE-MEETING & POST-MEETING WHAT IS IT ALL FOR ANYHOW?

**No matter how long you've been a facilitator, it can be helpful to reconnect with the purpose of pre-meeting. Knowing why we gather for this hour enables us to best utilize our time together.**

**Pre-Meeting serves many purposes including:**

- Share news about upcoming events
- Problem solve and prepare for group logistics
- Time to get focused and grounded
- Create connection, safety, and cohesion among facilitators
- Opportunity to explore personal grief

The last three of these happen during personal check-ins, a time that might leave you worried you don't have anything to share that qualifies as good, bad, or interesting. For some, it's difficult to talk openly about thoughts and feelings. Others might think it's impolite to talk about themselves. Sometimes, it's just really difficult to put thoughts and feelings into words. There are times when there is so much going on that when check-in rolls around you might freeze and can't think of anything. If you struggle with figuring out what to talk about in check-in, here are some questions to consider.

## **Check-in Questions:**

- What's most on my mind today/in this moment?
- What is distracting me today?
- What would I like to share about myself to connect with other facilitators?
- What question is most on my mind/heart today?
- What fear(s) is renting out space in my mind/body?
- What am I aware of with my own grief recently?

- Is there a book, movie, or article I've read or seen that connects to grief?
- What am I currently celebrating in my life?
- Is there a question or issue I'd like to ask the other volunteers for input on?



Once check-in starts, one tenet to keep in mind is, "Stay in your own story." Volunteers grow to know one another and it's natural to be curious or concerned about your fellow facilitators. Remember though that in pre-meeting, people are sharing whatever part of their story they need to in order to be ready to offer support to the children and families. Your well-intentioned question or comment can force someone to talk more than they want to or go deeper into their experience, making it more challenging to transition into being there for others. You can best show your support by listening without jumping in to ask more, rescue, or offer educational information.

Pre-meeting is also the perfect place to practice your skill of awareness, not only of your own perceptions, but also time constraints and any impulses to interrupt, give advice, or ask curious questions. It's the ideal environment to notice those urges and talk about them with the other facilitators. There's a good chance you won't be alone and your willingness to speak up enables others to do the same.

What about Post-Meeting then? It's a lot to ask of you to stick around for another hour after playing,

## Facilitator Tips:

talking, and listening intently to participants. The hope is that post-meeting is part of your self-care as a time to metabolize thoughts, emotions, moments of confusion, or questions from the group. It can be tempting to spend the hour gathering information about participants' stories, an urge that is often rooted in a well-intentioned instinct to help and our natural desire to create narratives as a way to make sense of difficult situations. It's a really a huge request: you're tasked with being deeply present with the intricacies of participants' stories, which often means sitting with the ambiguity and pain of loss, while overcoming an inclination to figure it out or fill in the gaps with fact finding. Who knew being a facilitator would require such olympic feats of dismantling the ways we are socialized to be helpful?

Some of you might be wondering, "Alright, so what CAN we talk about?" Here are some questions to help guide post-meeting conversations.

### Post-Meeting Questions:

- What was confusing for me during group today?
- What situations left me unsure of how to respond?
- Which group dynamics do I like/am I drawn to?  
Which ones are difficult, boring, scary, or annoying?  
(when kids cry, intense conversations, lighthearted topics, lots of play/talking/silence, etc.)
- Is there a situation I would like feedback on from other facilitators?

- What brought my own grief to mind?
- If I think group or something that happened in group was good or bad, what do I mean by good or bad? (What did I hear and see happening?)
- Is there a kudos I want to give another facilitator or the whole group?

To be open and honest about these questions, there has to be trust and cohesion among your facilitator group. To help create this foundation of trust, turn to the same skills of awareness and communication you use with participants. When the families leave, it can be easy to toss those skills aside, relying instead on the advice giving, dismissing, and interpreting that are so common in everyday interactions. Remember that post-meeting calls for a similar degree of attentive listening. Work with your other facilitators to create an environment that is both relaxed and safe. Model for one another by talking about when you were unsure of what to do or times you felt frustrated. Don't forget to also share moments of celebration!

As always, if you have any questions or confusion about the purpose of pre- or post-meeting and how to utilize the time most effectively, ask! If you're wondering, there's a good chance someone else in the group is as well.



The National Grief Center  
for Children & Families

### Our Mission

Dougy Center provides grief support in a safe place where children, teens, young adults, and their families can share their experiences before and after a death. We provide support and training locally, nationally, and internationally to individuals and organizations seeking to assist children who are grieving.

### Dougy Center Bookstore/Resources

Dougy Center has been helping children, teens, young adults and their parents cope with death since 1982. Our practical, easy-to-use materials are based on what we have learned from more than 60,000 Dougy Center participants. To order online, visit [dougy.org](http://dougy.org) or [dougybookstore.org](http://dougybookstore.org), or call 503.775.5683.

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