

## Section A: Facilitator Handbook

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As a Fresh Hope Facilitator there are some fundamental things that you should know before you jump into the water! Our desire is that all Fresh Hope groups operate according to a consistent model, regardless of their location. We've included some of those basic principles and values in the following material in order to help you. Please take the time to read them carefully, and acquaint yourself with both the expectations, and the responsibilities of your commitment.

## PURPOSE OF FRESH HOPE, INC.

### **Fresh Hope Mission Statement:**

Fresh Hope exists to empower people and families affected by mental health challenges to lead victorious, purposeful lives in complete wholeness (mental, physical, and spiritual) through participation in local, Christ-centered, peer support groups, online forums, and educational opportunities.

The purpose of Fresh Hope is to provide a non-threatening, accepting, encouraging, and confidential setting for individuals living with a mental health diagnosis/challenges, for their families, and for their friends. Fresh Hope is a place where participants can share struggles and insights, as well as progress and setbacks in an effort to exchange information and encouragement within a Christian context. The ultimate purpose of Fresh Hope is to help people come to a point where they are not only surviving, but enjoying and finding purpose in their lives.

Within this context participants inspire one another by confronting their problems, instead of denying or blaming them on someone else. Fresh Hope is built on a foundational faith-based belief that healing and hope come only from the Lord. Since spirituality is a part of emotional wholeness, participants will have opportunity to inspire and encourage one another by sharing how their faith in Christ continues to help them deal with their struggles surrounding their mental health diagnosis. *(Any sort of religious debate, religious "superiority" or condemnation of someone else's beliefs is not permitted.)* Within the Fresh Hope group there will be no judgment, no comparison, no advice -- only insights and suggestions based on common tools, identification, affection and encouragement shared between peers.

Fresh Hope is not intended to replace professional treatment such as therapy and prescribed medications. Rather, Fresh Hope serves as a supplemental support and information system so that participants and those who love them might develop tools to help them live a rich and full life in spite of their illness/mental health challenges on a daily basis in order to live with dignity and hope in Christ.

## TYPE OF SUPPORT GROUP

Fresh Hope is a "mutual-help group" (*peer to peer*) in which members encourage one another as equals, both in small groups and within the larger group led by a facilitator.

Fresh Hope is a "knowledge/education group" (*speakers, videos, discussion topics etc.*).

Fresh Hope is a "professionally guided group" (A small group of mental health professionals and spiritual leaders assist in providing guidance, resources and suggestions.).

Fresh Hope is NOT licensed to provide therapy or medical services.

## WHO MAY PARTICIPATE?

Anyone who now or has had a mental health challenge, including anxiety and panic disorders, bipolar disorder, schizo-affective disorder, schizophrenia, PTSD, as well as depression, and other diagnosable conditions, may attend Fresh Hope.

The loved ones, family members and/or friends of those who have a mental health diagnosis may also become part of a Fresh Hope group.

Students in medical or psychological fields may occasionally ask to observe a Fresh Hope group. Ideally, these requests should be presented to the group and discussed a week prior to the visit; however this is at the facilitator's discretion. It should be requested that the students participate in the group discussion, and not take notes or merely observe.

## TOPIC CRITERIA

Since "many scientists, psychiatrists, psychologists and social workers agree that the causes of mental illness involve a combination of physiological, neurochemical, psychological and social or environmental factors" (Hannah Carlson, M.Ed., C.R.C. *The Courage to Lead* pg.33), the topics covered both for discussion and education will come from the following areas:

1. Medical
2. Physical
3. Social
4. Emotional
5. Spiritual

Under normal circumstances, topics, tools and speakers should be on the calendar a minimum of one to two months ahead of the presentation date. Topics or speakers not in alignment with the Fresh Hope Values are not to be utilized.

## FRESH HOPE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Rev. Bradley D. Hoefs**

B.S. Comm., Concordia Univ. (Seward, NE)

M. Div., Concordia Univ. (St. Louis, MO)

Neurology

**Dr. Michael Egger**

M.D. Psychiatry

UNMC College of Medicine

Board Certified: Psychiatry,

**Brian B. Koenig**

CPA, B.S. accounting, University of Nebraska

**Donna Hoefs**

B.S. Education, Concordia Univ. (NE)

**Brenda Rief**

Family Representative

B.S. Communications, Concordia Univ. (NE)

Salvation Army

**Phyllis Butkus**

Community Advocate

Program Coordinator -

**Tony Stella**

Community of Grace Board Representative  
Department

**Michael McGee**

Lieutenant, Omaha Police

**Lisa Fahrlander**

B.S. Education, University of Nebraska-Kearney

## SHARED VALUES

As part of a Fresh Hope Leadership Team, it is important for you to understand and embrace the Shared Values that we hold. These values form our foundational philosophy of ministry and shape the operational procedures of Fresh Hope groups.

Fresh Hope is about positive choices regarding recovery. When people come for the first time, they should leave with a sense of:

**Acceptance:** “God loves you and has a purpose for you.”

**Validation:** “This group cares about you as a person.”

**Refreshment:** “This is a safe place where you are accepted and cared for.”

**Encouragement:** “Don’t give up; we will help you push through.”

**Growth:** “We continue to look for ways to improve our lives and grow in Christ.”

**Unity:** “We are in this for the long haul; we will do this together.”

**Victory:** “We are not victims; we can live full, abundant lives in spite of a disorder.”

A recent attendee at a Fresh Hope group observed: “Every time there has been a new person at a meeting, I’ve seen at least one person go to them and offer themselves as support beyond the meeting with a phone number, email, etc. It happened to me my first meeting. That says a lot about Fresh Hope.”

Another group member said, “We are welcoming, and the way the meeting is structured at the beginning allows for everyone to relax, even those who are there for the first time and feeling a little anxious. I can look around the group and watch people slowly growing calmer. I know it’s true for me!”

Professionals can come and go; relationships can change; but the support available at Fresh Hope should remain constant. As a Fresh Hope Facilitator, you have a strong influence on the environment and culture of your particular group by the way that you implement Fresh Hope values. We believe these Shared Values significantly influence each member’s sustained recovery.

Please take a few moments to familiarize yourself with these values before you move on.

- *We value the individual’s ability to choose to live the most fulfilling life possible, believing that we do not need to become our disorder.*
- *We value choosing to have a victor mindset as opposed to a victim mentality, allowing ourselves to push through when things are going tough.*
- *We value faith-based healing and hope that comes from the Lord.*
- *We value living fulfilled lives IN SPITE OF our disorders, rather than living WITH them, always holding as the goal that we can come to a point in our recovery that we are no longer being afflicted in our daily lives by our disorders.*
- *We value healthy physical and mental lifestyles (including medication when needed) that allow us to experience sustained recovery/remission/managed recovery.*
- *We value true accountability in our recovery - counselors, pastors, physicians, peers, and loved ones who talk to one another for the sake of our best interest.*
- *We value committed relationships, not allowing ourselves to push people away and withdraw into isolation.*
- *We value personal responsibility for the dysfunctional behaviors caused by our mental health issues, understanding that the disorder may be an explanation of “why”, but cannot be the excuse!*

- **We value choosing to have a positive attitude, resulting in a more solid, sustained recovery.**
- **We value disciplining our thinking, bringing every wild thought into captivity to our will.**
- **We value acceptance and creating a positive, uplifting environment for all participants, regardless of their state of mind when they arrive.**

## FACILITATOR REQUIREMENTS

Fresh Hope groups are led by a team of 2-3 facilitators, generally mixed-gender teams. These facilitators will have each completed an application, including their personal statement of faith, and will have been interviewed by a Fresh Hope Director or Board Member. All Group Facilitators will be trained in creating a “belonging, hopeful” environment prior to leading groups on their own.

Fresh Hope Group Facilitators play one of the most significant roles in the Fresh Hope program. The success or downfall of any given Fresh Hope group rests largely upon the shoulders of the facilitator and his/her ability to create a group where the shared values are communicated. In order to meet such a challenge, the group facilitator needs some very specific character qualities and skill sets. Let’s talk about character first.

### Character

In order to lead a group successfully, a facilitator must first have a strong confidence in his/her own identity, must be individuals with a high degree of personal maturity, including common sense, wisdom, and a tactful sense of humor. These traits will help to lighten the mood in the room when it threatens to become heavy. The facilitator must be able to follow-through on commitments to both the Fresh Hope Organization and to the members of the group. This includes being at group meetings, communicating with Fresh Hope, Inc., and a willingness to be held personally accountable. A Group Facilitator must be a person of high moral character who understands good personal boundaries, and who is not prone to co-dependency in relationships. The facilitator must be non-judgmental, stable in his/her emotional life, and demonstrate an ability to maintain confidentiality.

### Skills

Specific skills are also required of a good facilitator. He/she must have a proven ability to be able to successfully manage groups and facilitate discussions, making sure that all interactions are appropriate and that everyone has a chance to participate. The facilitator should demonstrate good leadership skills, and must be experiencing success in their own treatment/recovery program, if applicable. (If

this is applicable, the facilitator should ideally have lived successfully for an extended period without any episodes, and should have their doctor's approval to lead the group.) A good leader knows how to ask good, penetrating questions, how to listen carefully to what is being left unsaid as well as said, and will lead the group to meaningful conversation by modeling participation.

### **Spiritual Commitment**

The third area that is essential to the success of a Fresh Hope group is the spiritual commitment of the Facilitator. Because Fresh Hope is built upon the faith-based premise that lasting healing and wholeness come from the Lord, and since spirituality is a part of emotional wholeness, we require that our facilitators have an authentic relationship with Jesus as their Lord and Savior and be under the authority of a church body or organization to which they are spiritually accountable. The facilitator must have a good understanding of the Scriptures, demonstrate maturity in their faith, be comfortable praying with/for someone, and have the ability to share the message of the Gospel. This definition is purposely left somewhat open-ended, because our primary purpose is not to promote any one theological position over another, or to engage in spiritual debate.

Fresh Hope Group Facilitators will be expected to do several things:

- 1) Submit a Facilitator's Application and complete the interview process.
- 2) Complete any required training and be certified by the national office of Fresh Hope.
- 3) Provide letters of recommendation from their pastor and doctor.
- 4) Be faithful in their commitment to attend Fresh Hope group meetings.
- 5) Complete a Confidential Info Sheet for each member of the group.
- 6) Complete and submit a Facilitator's Meeting Summary for each meeting.
- 7) Identify and develop small group leaders and potential facilitators.
- 8) Maintain a lifestyle that models the ultimate purpose of Fresh Hope, including all the aspects of treatment and recovery.

## Fresh Hope Tenets

### TENET I

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My life is affected by a mental health issue and can become unmanageable and hopeless, especially if ignored or untreated. Therefore, I choose the help and support of others to overcome the struggles and find more joy in life.

My loved one's mental health challenge has also left me feeling helpless and hopeless. Therefore, I choose the help of others in learning about the disorder and choosing healthy boundaries for myself.

***Together, we have understanding. We remind each other of the Lord's love, and that He alone can do all things. He is the source of our hope, and in Him we can overcome all things.***

*"I can do everything through Him who gives me strength." Philippians 4:13 (NIV)*

### TENET II

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My mental health challenge has also affected my relationships and the lives of those around me. Therefore, I choose to overcome for both my own good, and the good of those who love me.

I haven't always responded to my loved one's mental health issue in ways that were good for the relationship. Therefore, I choose to learn better ways to communicate with, support, and encourage my loved one.

***Together, we commit to speaking the truth in love, healing broken relationships and viewing each other as the Lord view us.***

*"So let's pursue those things which bring peace and which are good for each other.  
Romans 14:19 (God's Word Translation, 1995)*

### TENET III

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My disorder can become an excuse. Therefore, I choose to believe I can live a full and rich life in spite of my disorder. I choose the support of people who will urge me to "push through".

At times I don't understand my loved one and can allow them to either wallow in their excuses, or push them too hard. Therefore I choose to learn healthy, appropriate ways to contribute to my loved one's recovery.

***Together we do better than trying on our own. We will hold one another accountable for learning, growing, and choosing to push through in hope.***

*"Therefore, encourage one another and build each other up." 1 Thessalonians 5:11 (NIV)*

### TENET IV

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My disorder can lead me to feel hopeless. Therefore, I choose to believe, regardless of my feelings, that there is help and hope for my physical, emotional, psychological and spiritual well-being.

At times I also feel hopeless, letting my loved one's actions and recovery define my happiness. Therefore, I choose to live with healthy emotional boundaries, and I choose my own joy despite the ups and downs of my loved one.

***Together we remind each other that our hope and joy come from the Lord. He alone is able to fulfill our needs in every aspect of our lives.***

*“For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV)*

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#### TENET V

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While medicine is a key component in my recovery, it is not the only answer. Therefore, I choose to explore new ways of thinking and acting in my relationships and daily living.

I, too, have been part of the cycle of dysfunctional living, either thinking I had all the answers or thinking the problem didn't belong to me. Therefore, I choose to submit myself to learning new behaviors and taking responsibility for my own healthy, balanced living.

***Together we choose freedom over suffering, and joy in living through self-knowledge in action.***

*“We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.” II Corinthians 10:5*

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#### TENET VI

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At times I have allowed myself to become a victim, “defined” by my disorder. Therefore I choose to overcome and live in hope and joy, in spite of my disorder.

At times, I have viewed myself as a victim of my loved one's behavior and disorder, living in resentment, anger, unforgiveness, or self pity. Therefore, I choose to separate the disorder from the person I love, forgive and let go of the past, and live as a contributor to successful recovery.

***Together, we share in each other's victories and celebrate the whole person.***

*For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and love and a sound mind.” II Timothy 1:7*

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**Our purpose is to encourage one another to choose God's fresh hope for our daily life and future.**

**Who we see here remains confidential. What is said here stays here. We don't judge; nor do we lecture. We listen, we share and we grow.**

## FACILITATOR WEEKLY DUTIES

### DAYS PRIOR TO THE MEETING:

Choose a topic from the Topic Cards and become familiar with the information.

Review the handouts, exercises, and any other references you may be using.

Co-Facilitators should decide what portions of the meeting each will lead.

Call or email group members who have not attended the last few meetings.

### DAY OF THE MEETING:

- 45-60 Min. Prior      Set up room: chairs, white board, media, tissues in the center.
- Write the evening's topic and schedule on whiteboard.  
Place Group Tenets/Group Guidelines/Handouts on each chair.  
Have Clipboard/pen with Confidential Information Sheets.  
(Completed Conf. Info. Sheets go in dark, sealable folder).
- 30 Min. Prior      Facilitators and lay leaders meet for update and prayer
- 15-20 Min. Prior      Greet participants, ask new members to fill out Confidential Information Sheet. (Or assign a group member to greet).

### MEETING FORMAT:

- 10 Minutes      Welcome, Opening Prayer, Tenets
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- Read through Group Tenets, those with a diagnosis reading the first paragraph, loved ones reading the second, everyone reading the "Together" and scripture portions
- 15 Minutes      Introductions- 30-Second-Check-In 5-Steps
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1. Name
  2. Diagnosis (*don't "become" the disorder, as in "I'm bipolar", instead, say "I have..." or "I've been diagnosed with ..." We are not our disorder!*)
  3. Mood: (*On a scale of 1-5 with 1 being low, how is your mood?*)
  4. Clarity of Thinking: 1 (*muddled*) to 5 (*very clear*)
  5. Hope Tank: *How full is your tank of hope? Empty, half full, full tank?*
- "Hi, my name is Chris, I've been diagnosed with depression, my mood today is a 3, and my hope tank is full."*
- Family members introduce themselves as a "loved one."*  
*"Hi, my name is Taylor, I'm a loved one, my mood today is a 4, and my hope tank is full."*

30-45 Minutes	Educational or “Encouragement” Component
	(Topic cards, speaker, video, testimony, etc.) If using the Topic Cards, Facilitator may choose to have “Discussion Questions” in the large group or in the small groups.
30-45 Minutes	Small Group Discussion Time
	Divide large group into smaller groups by “Interest”, such as Depression, Anxiety, Bipolar, Family, etc. - or just smaller groups. Number of groups will depend on how many people are in the large group and how many small group leaders are available. This is a chance for everyone to share how their week has gone, or share any special concerns they have or further discussion regarding the topic of the meeting. Make sure everyone who wants to talk gets the chance. Follow small group guidelines.
5-10 Minutes	Large Group Prayer
in with	Join hands in large circle. Facilitator or group member closes prayer. Conclude with saying the Lord’s Prayer together. End Fresh Hope motto: “Keep Coming Back, Our God is ABLE!”

AFTER THE MEETING:

Fill out the Facilitator Meeting Summary (with other facilitator and small group leaders) while the information is fresh in your mind. This is important for many reasons: 1) It serves as good feedback for you 2) It helps you plan for the following week 3) It helps all leaders stay apprised of what is happening in the group 4) It provides information which will help Fresh Hope apply for grants and other funding. Please mail, e-mail, or fax this summary to the Fresh Hope office within the week after the meeting. Of course we are always interested in hearing from you in person also. Call us anytime.

Consider whether any group member could serve in a “helper” position: greeter, set-up, clean-up, absent member follow-up, small group leader, etc. These are not positions that *must* be filled, but rather a way to keep members engaged and contributing. Contact these members before the next meeting.

The facilitator(s) can choose small group leaders at their own discretion. Facilitator(s) should review the Small Group Leader guidelines with them

prior to their first small group. Potential facilitators within your group need to complete the application process prior to leading a large group.

## GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDELINES

*(These are to be reviewed at each meeting where new members are present.)*

*(Guidelines adapted from “Celebrate Recovery” and used by permission.)*

- 1. We will keep our sharing focused on our own thoughts, feelings, and actions.**  
This means not your spouse’s, your friend’s, or your family members’ habits, or hang-ups. Focusing on yourself will benefit your recovery as well as those around you. Stick to “I” and “me” statements, not “you” or “we.”
- 2. Limit your sharing to 3-5 minutes during the assigned discussion times.**  
Everyone deserves an opportunity to share.
- 3. There is NO cross-talk. Cross-talk is when two people engage in a dialogue while someone else is talking. Each person in our group needs to be free to share without interruption.**  
This also means no distracting comments or questions, interrupting, or speaking to another member of the group while someone is sharing. Cross-talk is also if a member responds to what someone has shared during his or her time of sharing. If someone is crying during their sharing time, do not interrupt by offering them a tissue. The tissue box is placed in the middle of the group so that people may get their own tissue if they need one. This is meant to be a respectful way of not interrupting someone’s time.
- 4. We are here to support one another, not “fix” one another.** This keeps us focused on our own issues. We do not give advice, solve a problem someone shared, or offer book referrals or counselor referrals without being asked for help. **Speak only in terms of your own experience.**
- 5. We give each other anonymity and confidentiality. What is said here stays here!**

Therefore, we are not to share anything from small group with our spouses, family or friends. This also means not discussing what is shared in the group among group members. This is called gossip. If this guideline is broken, the group member is warned. If it happens again, inform your leadership. The member will be requested to leave the group indefinitely.

6. **We avoid offensive language in our group, including profanity and swearing. We also avoid graphic descriptions and vulgarity.** If anyone feels uncomfortable with how specific a speaker is expressing himself/herself regarding his/her behaviors, then he/she may indicate so by simply raising their hand. The speaker will then respect that individual's boundaries by being less specific in his/her descriptions.

## ROLE OF SMALL GROUP LEADER

1. **The small group leader helps the group improve its process and discussion. The leader can improve the quality of the discussion by:**

- Asking questions
- Paraphrasing
- Redirecting the group if the discussion goes off-track
- Encouraging divergent views
- Summarizing

1. **Each small group leader will assist the group in following the group discussion guidelines by reviewing them verbally at the beginning of each meeting.**

### 2. **Actively participate**

- a. Share within your group in the same way each of the members shares for 3-5 minutes.
- b. Offer your opinions, encouragement and ideas.
- c. Give small group sessions your undivided attention.

- 3. Don't allow individual participants to dominate the sharing time.**
- 4. Encourage open and honest discussion.**
  - a. Be respectful of divergent views
  - b. Remember that group members speak only for themselves
- 5. Gently encourage quieter group members to participate.**
- 6. If a group member fails to follow the participant guidelines, try this approach:**
  - a. Reiterate the importance of the guidelines.
  - b. Indicate that in your opinion, the group member is not following one of the guidelines - be specific.
- 7. Ask for assistance from the main facilitator of the large group if any difficult problems arise in your group.**

## SMALL GROUP LEADER HELPS

The small group leader's job is to help people talk openly and listen carefully to each other. Unfortunately, there are no hard and fast rules about how to facilitate group discussions, only general guidelines.

\*If the group members are not already well acquainted with each other, it is good to begin a meeting by having each member say his/her name aloud. Greet participants individually when they arrive and thank them individually when they leave. Your simple friendliness communicates that you, and God, are glad they were born and are in your life.

**\*Room environment:** When possible, set up the room for discussion. A circle works best, especially if the group can sit around a table. If you can't re-arrange the furniture, then move around the room, sit among the students; become a discussion participant rather than a teacher. Little things like seating and lighting can make a difference. Lighting that is too bright can make people feel vulnerable. Ask the group if the setup is comfortable and make changes if you can. Also, consider the temperature of the room.

**\*Plan, but with flexibility:** Your job is not to "cover" everything you had planned to discuss, but to make sure that discussions are thorough and interesting, taking your cues about topics from the group.

**\*Model the way.** If you want people to listen to one another, then listen closely to people. If you want them to be transparent and candid, then you go first. If you want them to dig deeper to identify root causes of their problems, then model that yourself. If you want them to be accountable to one another, then be sure they know of your accountability relationship. Lead by example, not just by what you say.

**\*Create a Safe Environment for Sharing.** In almost any small group, there will be people who are intimidated or shy about participating. Group members will not contribute to a discussion if they are afraid that they will be ridiculed for what they say.

There are some things you can do, though, to make it safe for them to engage. For starters, be transparent. Share your own struggles. Admit your own challenges with the issues being discussed. Confess your own imperfections and others will feel freer to then share theirs.

Provide positive feedback for participation. If a group member is reluctant to speak up and then makes a contribution that just lies there like a dead fish, they are not likely to try again. If you can't think of anything better, simply thank them for their contribution. It's much better to build on what the participant has said,



add an insight, ask others how they would respond to what the person said, and otherwise weave that contribution into the fabric of the discussion.

It's also important to be supportive of almost every comment. That doesn't mean you tolerate heresy, but it does mean signaling that people don't need to be profound to contribute something of value. Try to avoid strongly disagreeing with people until such a point when everyone has had an opportunity to feel comfortable contributing.

Along the same lines, it's also wise to remain sensitive to others' traditions. If you have an ecumenical small group, seek to understand where others are coming from and minimize the disparagement of other denominational perspectives. Of course, there will be times when it is appropriate to raise and examine these differences, but those discussions should probably be deferred until the group has matured a bit.

Discussion will be encouraged by the leader's kind reception of comments and questions. Even if a participant states something that the leader does not believe is true, he/she should never respond harshly. For some people, the courage it takes to contribute to group discussion is inestimable. These people can be encouraged by appreciative comments by the leader. If the question or comment is not clearly understood, the leader should ask further questions to clarify the matter for discussion.

**\*Confidentiality:**What is shared in the room, stays in the room.

**\*Hone your Listening Skills.** An old adage says, "Being listened to is so close to being loved, that most people can't tell the difference."

Active listening is crucial for good facilitation. It means total listening, instead of only partially listening while thinking about what you want to say next. The active listener thinks of himself or herself as the one whose main job is to help others express themselves. Becoming an active listener takes lots of practice and self-restraint.

Concentrate on what each person is saying, rather than thinking about your own response. Rephrase their point when appropriate, so they will know they've been heard. Use non-verbal cues as well that show you are listening....cues like maintaining a comfortable level of eye contact with the person speaking, occasionally nodding, positioning your body to squarely face the speaker and leaning towards the speaker slightly. You'll be amazed at how such little things can make a person feel listened to and loved.

**\*Check for Meaning.** Check your understanding of a participant's statement or ask the participant to clarify what he/she is saying.

**\*Stay on Point.** One tangential comment can give license to the next, and before you know it, a series of loosely related remarks has eclipsed your entire meeting time.

This is a leadership problem more than a participant problem. To avoid it, keep the group focused on the question at hand and follow up tangential comments by bringing the group back to the actual question. Everyone benefits when a leader steers the conversation and everyone suffers when he/she does not!

**\*Be sure that Scripture is Your Filter.** Sometimes our filters for right and wrong get clouded, even in Christian circles. Some people use their experience as an arbiter of right and wrong. Others use “society rules”. Some are pragmatists, basing the right or wrong on what works.

Many worldviews are infecting Christian thinking these days, so when group members suggest solutions to problems, don’t shy away from asking whether their suggestion aligns with Scripture.

**\*Listen for Segues to the Next Question.** It’s invaluable to always know where you want to go next with the discussion. Expert group leaders listen closely for comments that connect to where they want to go next and quickly use those comments to move the discussion forward.

**\*Echo What’s Been Said.** This is an essential small group leader technique! You’ll find it helpful to restate what was just said to echo it for the group. Echoing not only lets the speaker know that he/she has been understood, it also serves to clarify that person’s point for everyone else. Paraphrase comments where appropriate, and then, since you have the floor at that moment, invite commentary on what’s just been said. The flow of discussion will improve dramatically.

Paraphrase what a participant has said so that he/she feels understood and so that the other participants can hear a concise summary of what has been said.

**\*Cut off Dominators.** Sometimes one group member monopolizes the discussion and thereby takes the reins of leadership away from the appointed leader, irritates the group, and intimidates other members. Lengthy contributions can be cut short by saying, “Thank you for sharing your ideas with us,” or “You have given us a lot to think about, so let’s stop here to consider what has been said.”

One solution is to talk to the person away from the group. Start by affirming the positive and then candidly make your request....”Would you be willing to scale back a little so that others will be more willing to contribute?”

Another way to balance contribution is to simply cut in when the dominator takes a breath, echo what he/she has said, and then invite someone to respond to that.

**\*Ask for People's Opinions. Ask Questions.** Questions are essential to the structure of discussion. Questions that cannot be answered by a yes or no will elicit responses that build concepts and understanding. The leader should not assume responsibility for answering each question that comes from the group. The whole group should be invited to consider the questions and comments, and then the leader should try to summarize the discussion of the questions.

“How about somebody who hasn't spoken yet?” “Anyone else want to comment on this issue?” Does anyone have a different perspective on this? These and similar questions are non-threatening ways of inviting people into the conversation.

Usually when you ask a question that begins with “why, or how”, people tend to answer with more thoughtful, more extensive responses. Answering a question of this nature will take more than one or two words. If your goal is to get people talking, think about reframing the questions you ask.

**\*Permit Silence After You Ask a Question.** Avoid the temptation to fill the void with your own voice. Give people time to think. Let them muster the courage to answer a tough question. Get comfortable with silence after posing a question. Often, your patience will be rewarded with some of the richest and most poignant answers of the week.

**\*Stay with Fruitful Conversation, even if it's taking too much time.** For group leaders who are especially time conscious, it's natural to march through a set of questions and make sure everything gets covered in the time allotted. The best group leaders remain mindful, though, that the real goal of the meeting is transformation, not completion.

Sometimes a topic will stimulate lots of discussion. It will go deep; it will touch a chord; it will create excitement; it will surface pains or misunderstandings that need to be addressed; it will plant the seeds of lasting change for people. Avoid cutting off God's work in these situations. Learn to discern when to deviate from the original plan.

Keep in mind that as you discuss the topic, things don't always go as planned. Be flexible and help point people to the central truth.

**\*Use a Board or Easel, if Appropriate.** Chronicling on a board the relevant points that people make is a wonderful way of affirming, echoing, and clarifying what's been said. Many people will retain more of what's said if they have both heard and seen it in writing.

**\*Summarize Key Points.** Many people will find it helpful if you can recap some of the most important lessons from the discussion. Brief, oral summaries from the leader enhance learning and retention, so take notes during the discussion and bless the group by emphasizing the essential take-aways.

\*Don't be afraid if someone asks a question that you can't answer. Don't fake an answer. Refer the question to the whole group and see what kind of responses will follow. Or explain that you don't know the answer, but will look to find one for the next meeting.

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# FRESH HOPE FACILITATOR



## SCREENING APPLICATION

First Name \_\_\_\_\_ Last Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Cell \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_ Marital Status \_\_\_\_\_

Children:    Yes    No                      Grandchildren:    Yes    No

How long have you been a Christian? \_\_\_\_\_

Name/city of your Home Church  
\_\_\_\_\_

Church/Ministry Location where meeting will be held (if different) \_\_\_\_\_

What Ministry Training have you had, if any? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What Experience do you have leading small groups? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Do you have a Mental Health Diagnosis? If so, what is the diagnosis  
\_\_\_\_\_

When was the diagnosis made? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What type of Care and/or Medication are you currently receiving? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Do you have a Relapse Prevention plan or system of Accountability? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Please rate yourself in the following areas (5=high; 1=low)**

\_\_\_\_\_ Work well with difficult people

\_\_\_\_\_ Self-Motivated - Self Starter

\_\_\_\_\_ Readily recognize my mistakes

\_\_\_\_\_ Take correction well

\_\_\_\_\_ Sensitive to the needs of others

\_\_\_\_\_ Just willing to help

\_\_\_\_\_ Spiritual Maturity

\_\_\_\_\_ Good Listener

\_\_\_\_\_ Spiritually stable

\_\_\_\_\_ Stability in relationships with others

\_\_\_\_\_ High degree of integrity/honesty

\_\_\_\_\_ Well organized

\_\_\_\_\_ Respectful of those in authority

\_\_\_\_\_ Self-disciplined

\_\_\_\_\_ Open to change

=====  
=====

- Please share a brief summary of coming to know Jesus as your Lord and Savior, and His influence and plan in your life today. How has He been part of your recovery?

- Please ask your pastor to complete the following endorsement. (may be enclosed with your pages, or sent separately)
- **If you have a diagnosis**, please ask your doctor or therapist to complete the following endorsement. (may be enclosed with your pages, or sent separately)

Please submit via email, mail, or fax to:

[Julie@FreshHope.us](mailto:Julie@FreshHope.us)

Fresh Hope  
3434 N 204<sup>th</sup> St  
Elkhorn, NE 68022  
Fax 402.763.9257



## Letter of Recommendation - Pastor

*Fresh Hope is a peer-to-peer support group in which members encourage one another as equals under the guidance of a facilitator. The purpose of Fresh Hope is to empower those with mental health challenges and their loved ones to live a full, rich, and faith-filled life in spite of having a mental health diagnosis.*

*Fresh Hope is not intended to replace professional treatment such as therapy and prescribed medications when needed. Rather, Fresh Hope serves as a supplemental support and information system so that members and those who love them might develop tools to help them manage their illness on a daily basis in order to live with dignity and hope in Christ. More information may be found at [www.FreshHope.us](http://www.FreshHope.us).*

\_\_\_\_\_ has expressed a desire to train and serve as facilitator for your church's Fresh Hope Group.

What is your relationship to the applicant?

\_\_\_\_\_

How long have you known the applicant?

\_\_\_\_\_

### Please check all that apply:

\_\_\_\_\_ Sensitive to the needs of others

\_\_\_\_\_ Works well with difficult people

\_\_\_\_\_ Self-Motivated - Self Starter

\_\_\_\_\_ Accepts criticism & correction well

\_\_\_\_\_ Spiritual Mature/Stable

\_\_\_\_\_ Good Listener

\_\_\_\_\_ Stable relationships with others

\_\_\_\_\_ Well-organized

\_\_\_\_\_ Self-disciplined

\_\_\_\_\_ High level of integrity & honesty



Comments or Concerns

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ I recommend this applicant to serve as our Fresh Hope group facilitator.

Signature

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_ Date

\_\_\_\_\_

Print

Name \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone

\_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Church Name and  
Location \_\_\_\_\_

Please submit via email, mail, or fax to:

[Julie@FreshHope.us](mailto:Julie@FreshHope.us)

Fresh Hope

3434 N 204<sup>th</sup> St, Elkhorn, NE 68022

Fax 402.763.9257



## Letter of Recommendation - Doctor/Therapist

*Fresh Hope is a peer-to-peer support group in which members encourage one another as equals under the guidance of a facilitator. The purpose of Fresh Hope is to empower those with mental health challenges and their loved ones to live a full, rich, and faith-filled life in spite of having a mental health diagnosis.*

*Fresh Hope is not intended to replace professional treatment such as therapy and prescribed medications when needed. Rather, Fresh Hope serves as a supplemental support and information system so that members and those who love them might develop tools to help them manage their illness on a daily basis in order to live with dignity and hope in Christ. More information may be found at [www.FreshHope.us](http://www.FreshHope.us).*

\_\_\_\_\_ has expressed a desire to train and serve as a volunteer Fresh Hope Group Facilitator.

What is your relationship to the applicant?

\_\_\_\_\_

How long have you known the applicant?

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**Please check all that apply:**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Sensitive to the needs of others
- \_\_\_\_\_ Works well with difficult people
- \_\_\_\_\_ Self-Motivated - Self Starter
- \_\_\_\_\_ Accepts criticism & correction well
- \_\_\_\_\_ Spiritual Mature/Stable

- \_\_\_\_\_ Good Listener
- \_\_\_\_\_ Stable relationships with others
- \_\_\_\_\_ Well-organized
- \_\_\_\_\_ Self-disciplined
- \_\_\_\_\_ High level of integrity & honest

Comments or Concerns

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\_\_\_\_\_ This applicant is receiving / has received treatment under my care, and is at a point that I believe is capable of leading a Fresh Hope group.

Signature

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Title \_\_\_\_\_ Date

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Print

Name \_\_\_\_\_

---

Phone

\_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

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Please submit via email, mail, or fax to:

[Julie@FreshHope.us](mailto:Julie@FreshHope.us)

Fresh Hope

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Fax 402.763.9257