

When Guidelines Are Broken: Helpful Phrases

For example:

1. **Sharing is not self-focused.**

Group members who are new to recovery meetings may not be accustomed to keeping their sharing focused on their own thoughts and feelings. You can say:

- **“Please use ‘I’ statements.”**
- **“‘I’ statements please.”**
- **“Please refer to your own thoughts and actions.”**

2. **If sharing time is exceeded.**

Keeping sharing to three to five minutes can be an intimidating task. Effective ways to help you incorporate this would be to use a timer or develop a hand signal. However you choose to do this, when reading the five guidelines to the group, explain what will happen if they go over the three to five minutes. They won't feel singled out when it occurs.

If you are using a timer and the timer goes off, reset the timer for no more than one minute to allow the participant time to complete their thought.

If you use a hand signal, if you raise your hand that means it's time to wrap up their thoughts.

As a leader, you will need to address someone in the meeting who has exceeded the five minutes. Helpful phrases are:

- **“Thank you for sharing.”**
- **“Let's give the next person an opportunity to share.”**
- **“Please complete your thought.”**

3. **If someone cross-talks.**

- **“Thank you, but there is NO ‘cross-talk.’” “No ‘cross-talk’ please.”**

4. **If someone directs their sharing to what someone else has shared.**
 - **“Speak only in terms of your own experience.”**
 - **“Please refer to your own recovery.”**
5. **Anonymity and confidentiality are basic requirements. What is shared in the group stays in the group.**
 - **“Please do not use names.”**
6. **Offensive language has no place in a Christ-centered recovery group.**

A Newcomer may slip using a swear word, so allow grace, but if it continues to be a problem with someone, address it with him/her after the meeting in private. Avoid shaming.

- **“Please be careful with your language.”**
- Raise your hand, and say, **“Please, too graphic.”**

If at any time a participant demands a dialogue after you have addressed the broken guideline, simply say:

- **“I’d be happy to meet with you after the meeting; let’s talk about it then.”**
- **“Let’s not take up meeting time; rather, let’s meet after we close.”**

If one particular area or Guideline starts to be a problem, address it during the next meeting by re-emphasizing that particular Guideline. This might be all it will take to refocus the group. If it continues to be a problem with one particular person, address it with him/her individually. You might want to set up a time to meet before the meeting.