



Leadership Training

Ready to Start an Umbrella Ministries Group?

The desire to reach out to other moms who, like you, experienced the death of a beloved child, is a calling from the Lord. You may have resisted the idea, feeling inadequate to lead others. Umbrella Ministry stands by you in this endeavor. Just as Jesus led and equipped the twelve disciples, this blog will provide guidance and ideas for this exciting, rewarding outreach.

A few reminders -

- Umbrella Ministry groups are faith-based, Christ-centered. While all faiths and unbelievers are welcomed, the foundation of the group is that healing comes to us through the power of the Holy Spirit and faith in Jesus Christ as the son of God.
- Spiritualism and psychics are strictly prohibited.
- Alcohol is not allowed at group meetings.

Let's Get Started:

Form your Team:

First and foremost, gather together one or two other moms to be a part of your team. Going it alone can be hard work, especially as your group grows. Select moms with skills that support yours - a tech savvy person to possibly set up a website, do email blasts, receive the RSVP's. A mom who loves doing crafts can be helpful, with creative ways for your group to express themselves non-verbally (ideas to follow). A greeter at the door of your meeting room is helpful, greeting timid new moms who aren't sure they want to be there. As the group matures, volunteers willingly offer to help; their way of giving back what you've given them.

Find a Place:

Having a consistent place to meet is reassuring to those who attend. Your home or a team member's home is a welcoming place to gather. A church facility will work but could discourage non believers or moms from other denominations. A neutral, warm, inviting meeting place will come to your mind. Ask - the door will open.

Determine the Best Time/Day/Frequency:

Meeting days/times/frequency should suit your schedule - others will make it work. Some Umbrella groups meet mid-week in the evening, after dinner. Others meet on Saturdays, late morning and include a lunch. Others meet weekdays in the morning. Groups meet every week, every other week as well as monthly. Consider what frequency you can commit to and then you are ready to start your outreach!

Casting Your Net:

After you have gathered your team and determined the time, place, frequency, you are ready to reach out in your community.

- Start with your church pastor or pastoral care office. Umbrella Ministry will provide you with their 501 C3 certification letter. Create a personal letter to pastors, stating the story of your loss, the impact of the ministry on your healing journey and your desire to reach out with the love of Christ to other moms. Ask! Ask for a spot on their website. Ask for a chance to briefly introduce your Umbrella group to the congregation (be bold!). Most pastors, as most lay people, feel ill equipped to comfort a mom whose child has died. You are a blessing to them. Go to other churches with the same requests. Print up colorful handouts with your contact information and the Vision & Purpose of Umbrella Ministry ([CLICK HERE](#)).
- County Medical Examiners Office - introduce yourself and drop off flyers for them to offer moms who come there to identify their child.
- Morticians/Funeral Homes - same as above. This is a valuable contact. Don't miss this opportunity!
- Hospital Chaplains- go into hospitals, especially Children's Hospital and ask to speak to their Chaplain. Take your materials!

Meeting Structure:

New experiences can be intimidating, uncomfortable. Having a consistent format to your meetings puts folks at ease and also simplifies the planning required for you as the leader. Here are some suggestions for a meeting format:

- Photo Board: Ask each mom to bring photo of their child to add to your group's photo board(s). Have a label maker - adhere the name to photo.
- Name Tags are essential. As your greeter welcomes moms there should be a place for them to fill out a name tag. An idea that has proven successful is for you or another designated mom, prior to the meeting time, to put a red heart on each name tag. Moms are directed to put the first name of their child in the heart along with the age when they passed. Then the mom puts her name in the center of the name tag. It fits! This is a great way for mothers to personally ask about a new mom's child using their name. As we know, telling the story of our loss may be painful but also cathartic.

- Have your greeter or another one of your helpers collect the contact information, incident of loss, date, child's name and age, from each new mom to your group. This can be done following the meeting, during lunch or over a cup of coffee. Explain that you will provide this to the Umbrella Ministries office and in turn the office will send her a packet of information and Daisy's book. She can opt out of the contact at any time. This is essential in order for the ministry to provide information on conferences, newsletters, and supportive information to each mother.
- The first experience for a new mom to the group should be a warm welcome, a name tag, and a possibly a chance to get a cup of coffee or iced tea or some beverage before sitting down for the meeting. A meeting that "starts" at 10 AM usually won't begin until 10:15.
- Opening with prayer calling on the Holy Spirit to speak to each mom individually through out your time together. Then there can be a brief time for music/worship if you have someone adept at leading worship. Offer a verse or passage of scripture the Lord has impressed upon your heart and a brief reflection on the meaning and impact on your journey toward renewal and your desire to serve.
- Agenda sounds quite formal but telling the group the plans for the meeting is important. You might say, "This morning we will have introductions, a few announcements about up-coming meetings/events, our presentation by ———, followed by discussion and lunch." Now your group is comfortable with what they will be experiencing.
- Introductions: Don't miss this suggestion. It will save you having to interrupt a long winded talker or comfort a mother drowning in tears.
- Have a 3x5 card or a piece of paper on each chair before the meeting starts. Announce that each mom will be introducing their new best friend sitting next to them. Pair everyone up in two's. If there's an odd number, you opt out and start the intro's with your information. On the card write the following for your new best friend:
 - Her name, area of town she lives in, email (for future connections)
 - Her Child's name, age
 - The incident of the child's death
 - What date/year of passing
 - Some meetings for small groups you could add a unique question, related to the meeting, time of year, in general. For instance - child's favorite sport, crazy or silly thing they used to do, child' fave vacation.
- Give the group 10 minutes to interview each other - remind them each needs a turn to respond. Then have each mom introduce the other mom.

This all takes time but is an essential way for moms to connect and share.

Getting Started:

Inspiration comes from the Lord! The web is full of great studies that inspire and promote joy, comfort and healing. Listed here are a few that have been used successfully with other Umbrella groups. Be creative - expect to be inspired. You've welcomed your guests, prayed, done introductions, now for a meaningful experience for the moms:

1. Book/DVD studies - a few suggestions -

- Daisy Catchings "Under God's Umbrella
- Priscilla Shirer's Studies - books & DVD's - all fantastic
- Anne Voskamp - "1000 Gifts" with DVD - outstanding
- Studies are to focus on uplifting comfort, renewed joy, forgiveness

2. Crafts

- Mini- scrapbooks - moms bring a mixture of photos, have glitter stuff to
- Decorate - show and tell as they work side by side
- Decorate Rocks of Remembrance - put child's name on rock and/or gifts/blessings in your life, God's faithfulness. This aligns with Old Testament story of God sending Israelites to collect stones Commemorative of all He did for them - we forget our blessings.
- "God Cans" - shelf liner or other decor paper to decorate an 8oz can
 - With felt pen write "God Can" on the can
 - On strips of colored paper write prayers for issues out of your
 - Control where God can heal, act, take control. Cut extra strips for future prayers.
- Dream Boards - collect lots of magazines from friends.
 - Provide an 18x18 tag board for each mom - lots of scissors
 - Moms encouraged to find pictures of things they can lift up to the Lord in prayer for their futures. Amazing how fun this one is.
- Christmas Ornament decorated with Child's name.

3. Personal Testimonies/Speakers- Hearing how a mom survived and even thrived after the death of her child is hopeful and helpful. As group leader you need to be aware of the content and outcome they will share. All speakers should have a time limit. 20 to max 30 minute limitations require your speaker to be organized and respect others' time, interest.

- Christian Grief Counselor
- Nutritionist - value of diet and exercise in healing, mental balance
- Author of book on loss of a child
- Organization Specialist - getting one area cleaned out lifts ones spirit

4. Write a love letter to your child based on Daisy Catching-Shader's book Of letters to Danny.
5. Circles of Love - one of the favorite activities of the annual Umbrella Ministry Conferences is the Circles of Love, where moms go into groups according to the incident of their loss - accident, suicide, murder, illness. As your group grows in numbers, select a topic and a leader for each incident and give them a half hour to share on the topic.

Important discussions can center on Marriage - how are you keeping love alive through your grieving; Forgiveness - a hindrance to healing; Siblings - how to support, understand their grief. Moms love these breakout, small groups where they get to be heard. Group leaders help to be sure no one person dominates the discussion.

6. Family and Friends Meeting - once a year, bring together dads and older siblings to hear a quality speaker on walking through this valley of grief. Ask a couple to share how they grieved differently but supported the other. Authors on grief, such as Daisy Catchings-Shader are great speakers. Most likely an evening or Saturday is best followed by food!
7. Get out of the way and let God inspire your meeting focus. Listen. Pray. Read your Bible for stories that you can relate to the group for their spiritual growth,
8. Annual Walk: Once a year, get outside together and take a walk. Meet in a park or area with easy paths and grassy areas or tables to gather together for AM coffee and a short inspiration. Then provide a discussion topic to get them started and send everyone off for a walk. Re-join to hear what they talked about and how they were impacted. You might have a theme around your annual walk - but not necessary - they love it!
9. Preparing for the Holidays: Mid- November, very early December, plan your last meeting of the year around "Preparing for the Holidays." What changes might you make to take the focus off loss and back onto Christ?

A speaker or small group sharing with discussion provides help for what can be a difficult time for those fresh in their loss. Decorating an ornament to hang in a strategic place in your home can be a reminder of the meaning of this season.

Great things happen around food! Offering a lunch or having potluck lunches, deserts, food following your "formal" meeting is where friendships are formed and encouragement is offered. This is truly the heart of your gathering together. Make it simple. Make it happen!

*"And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Who shall I send?
Who shall go for us?" Then I said, "Here I am. Send me."*

Isaiah 6:8