



BRAVE

THE HOST HANDBOOK

(a guide to achieving host greatness)

HELLO THERE, HOST.

Thanks for stepping up to host a small group. If you've done this before, welcome back—and enjoy this hosting refresher. New to this? Awesome. We're here to help you along.

Small groups are key to each person's BRAVE Journey experience. They're a time for people to encourage and challenge each other and a way to share the next five weeks in community. As your group's host, you'll not only get a chance to be around others as they grow, but you'll have the chance to significantly grow yourself.

Hosting a small group isn't rocket science, but we've learned that if you focus on creating a good and comfortable experience for your group, the Journey is so much better. We want you to have an awesome group experience so your group can continue as an ongoing small group if you'd like. It just takes a little etiquette, a little pre-thought, and a little love. Ready? We thought so.

HOST RESPONSIBILITIES

Being a host means that you welcome a group of people into your home—or another suitable spot—for five weeks. You don't need to have all the answers, and we don't expect you to be a Bible expert or therapist. Just be friendly, inclusive, a good role model, and use these tips to lead your group.

Before BRAVE starts:

- 1: **Register as a host.** Since you're reading this, you've probably already registered as a host (high five). If you haven't registered online yet, please do so at crossroads.net/journey. That's how we'll keep you in the loop and send you helpful info.
- 2: **Form your group.** If you already have a group, great. Now, consider expanding your group to add new friends, neighbors or coworkers. (We like to bring others into the mix.) To form a new group or open your group to new members, go to crossroads.net/journey and post it. There, others can find and contact you via email.
- 3: **Contact your group.** As soon as your group is formed, contact everyone to confirm a meeting time and location.
- 4: **Create your group in the app.** Create your account in the app with "(HOST)" after your first and last name and your picture to designate yourself as the host in the app. Then search for your group members' profiles (they'll all need to have an account created in the app on their device or online). Once you invite them to join the group, you'll be able to communicate through the app and follow along with each other's journeys.

Once BRAVE starts:

- 1: **Help your group follow the ground rules.** In the first week, your group will go over some ground rules—like listening well and respecting others' beliefs. As the host, you get to be the ground rules superstar. (Ground rules listed on page 6 of this booklet.)
- 2: **Be a timekeeper.** Do your best to make sure your group is starting and ending at the agreed upon time. Plan for each weekly meeting to last about 1.5 hours—or 3 hours if you guys are old friends and really get into it. The app will help you manage time in the group, but discussion may last longer which is great. Just be respectful of your group's time.
- 3: **Bring everyone into the conversation.** You don't have to put on your journalism hat and ask hard questions to get people talking, but if you notice that someone's being quiet, ask for their input. Or if you notice someone hogging the floor, you can gently interrupt and say something like, "Ah, it looks like we've got a few more things to talk about...mind if we move on?" Note: even though you're the host, don't feel like you have to carry every conversation. Share the love.
- 4: **Make it safe.** Your small group should be a safe and comfortable place for people, wherever they are on their spiritual journey, so be sure to respect all questions. Some people might uncover experiences in their past that elicit emotion, so give them space and empathy. People usually don't want to be "fixed" or given advice—just listen in an understanding way and affirm them for their discovery. Note: Sometimes creating a safe place requires vulnerability on the host. Just one person sharing something can open up opportunities for others to share because they feel safe now.
- 5: **Pray together.** Remember that people in your group are likely at very different places in their spiritual journeys, and will have varying levels of comfort and experience with prayer. Don't feel obligated, but if you decide to pray, you can keep it simple. Maybe something like this: God, thanks for bringing this group together today. Please open our hearts and minds to receiving and learning from You. We want whatever You have for for us on this journey. Amen.

WEEKLY HOST PREP

The BRAVE app provides the group directions for each week and it's self-explanatory. But we've also provided you a heads' up or two for each week so that you can be prepared. And unless you have a memory like an elephant, it's probably easiest to come back and read these before each week's group. P.S. It's totally okay to look through the group level ahead of time, if you like.

Week 1: **ADVENTURE:** The group will go over Ground Rules. Also, they will have chosen Headings (a new direction they're headed in with God) in their individual work and will be asked to share those with the group.

Week 2: **STORM:** The group will have named a storm (a place of fearful resistance) in their lives and will be asked to share that in the group. You will do a repentance challenge. Don't overthink it, just make sure you get to there—it's the last thing. Prep your group for Week 3 individual work - one activity takes some time so they'll want to get started early in the week.

Week 3: **POWER:** Your group will be praying for each other so be sure you're meeting some place where that can happen without distraction or spectators. Also, encourage your group to attend The BRAVE Experience.

Week 4: **LEAP:** Your group will have taken a brave step toward their heading. And they chose another step in group time. There will be discussion and encouragement about participants' next steps. Make sure you get to the "Thumb Jury" level. It's fun.

Week 5: **BRAVE LIFE:** Celebrate your journey with a potluck dinner. You can host the meal or give someone else a turn. This group meeting will happen around the table as you enjoy the deliciousness.

SMALL GROUP GROUND RULES

BE GREAT LISTENERS.

When someone else is talking, make eye contact. Pay attention to what someone is saying instead of thinking about what you'll say next.

GIVE EXAMPLES, NOT ADVICE.

Instead of feeling like you need to give advice if someone's struggling, try giving an example from your own life that relates. Make sure they feel heard, and empower them to decide what to do.

Keep it confidential. Whatever is said in the group, stays in the group.

SHOW UP.

Commit to being at every weekend service for six weeks, coming to every small group meeting and doing your weekly challenges.

Be real. Bring your authentic self to this journey. Genuinely engage in the challenges and your small group, and let yourself be vulnerable. It's better this way.

UNPLUG.

So we're all using a mobile device during each meeting, but try to unplug from outside distractions on the device or yours if it's not the one being used. We just want to be sure that everyone is engaging with the group (after you check in on Facebook, of course).

FAQs

What if someone consistently breaks the small group ground rules?

Your first step should be to talk one-on-one with the person, away from the rest of the group. Remind them of the ground rules and how they can help you keep a positive experience for everyone. Focus your discussion on the “event” that happened.

If that doesn't work, sit down with the person and someone else from the group. If no meaningful changes occur after taking these steps, it would be appropriate to ask the person to step away from the group. This plan follows the guidance given in the Bible in Matthew 18:15-17.

What if there's conflict within the group? What if a discussion turns into an argument?

Thumb War.

Seriously, there's a healthy principle that says, “What happens in the group needs to be resolved in the group.” As host, your role is to remind everyone that the group needs to be a place that allows healthy disagreement, but not at the expense of respect for one another. This is a great opportunity to look at what the Bible says about disagreements. Have the group take out their Bibles and turn to Ephesians 4:15 to read about speaking the truth in love, and to Ephesians 4:32 to read about forgiving each other.

FAQs

What if someone consistently dominates the conversation and there isn't room for others to talk?

This usually happens, and sometimes the chatty person is super-nice, so you hate to say anything. But do, because it will help. Even as host, you might be tempted to carry a lot of the conversation, but it's better to let everyone take equal part. Go for the “start-and-hand-off” approach. And use the timer in the app, that should help you make sure everyone gets equal time to talk.

Consider following up with the chatty person outside of group time. Ask him or her to be intentional about holding back so that less-vocal members can participate more easily. If it happens again, step in diplomatically and say something like, “Dave, we've heard from you on this, but let's hear from others who haven't had a chance to share yet.”

What if someone in the group experiences a crisis?

This is what community is all about. It's not all fun and salty snacks. It's being there for someone when they're hurting. Your first step is to see if there's a way that the group as a whole can be of help. For instance, if the person is in the hospital, you could call the other members to see if they can visit on different days, or split up help in a way that one person isn't responsible for everything.

FAQs

What if I have kids and don't know what to do with them while my group meets?

Your group experience will include serious discussion, prayer and some surprises. And it will almost certainly be boring for young kids. Parents are encouraged to investigate babysitting options (some groups even share a sitter). Every situation is different, so talk it over with your group and decide what's best for everyone.

How do I use my app for the small group?

It's easy once you get in there. Tap the anchor icon - that will open your small group time. Simply follow the prompts in the app. Here are a few tips to help this run smoothly for you:

Make sure your device is fully charged before your group starts. Put it on Do Not Disturb so you aren't distracted by texts and emails coming in. Turn off your passcode or make it simple that everyone in the group knows what it is. You can also change your settings so the screen doesn't autolock for a longer period of time.

FAQs

What if my app stops working?

If you're in the middle of your small group, try someone else's device if you can and fix your app later. Delete the app and then reinstall it. Your information is saved to your account, so you won't lose it. If that doesn't work, email braveapp@crossroads.net and someone will help you promptly.

What if I'm doing more than one group?

Well, aren't you an over-achiever. You'll have to create a separate account in the app for each group you do, and you'll need a unique email address for each account. (It doesn't have to be a real account, but that may make it hard if you forget your password.) The app is designed for a single group experience for each user, so you'll have different group experiences for every group you're in.



BRAVE