

MumNet™



Metro Mothers Network

Welcome to Leadership
Fall 2017 Edition



Thank You...

for taking on leadership at MumNet!

We're so glad you've decided to join the MumNet team! You can be proud of your decision because you're providing weekly support for mothers in your community. Our program allows mothers to gain vital support, friendship and resources at a time in their lives that may be very isolating.

For over 26 years, MumNet has provided valuable support to as many as 9,000 mothers and their children—and as a volunteer, you are the lifeblood of our organization. With over 100 volunteers across our network, we offer people like you a great opportunity for personal growth and a way to contribute to your community.

*Call our ED, Dominica Larkin, anytime if
you need help or support!*

416-371-1930



MumNet Leaders Package

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Additional resources on website: www.mumnet.ca/leaders Updated September 2017



Term Dates 2017/2018

MumNet I and MumNet II Groups

Registration: **ongoing**

All groups register online. Members can register throughout the term.

Fall

Term A: Week of Sept. 11th, 2017 to Week of Oct 23rd, 2017
(7 weeks)

Term B: Week of Oct 30th, 2017 to Week of Dec. 11th, 2017
(7 weeks)

Winter

Week of Jan. 9th, 2018 to Week of March 6th, 2018
(9 weeks)

Spring

Week of March 27th, 2018 to Week of June 5th, 2018
(11 weeks)

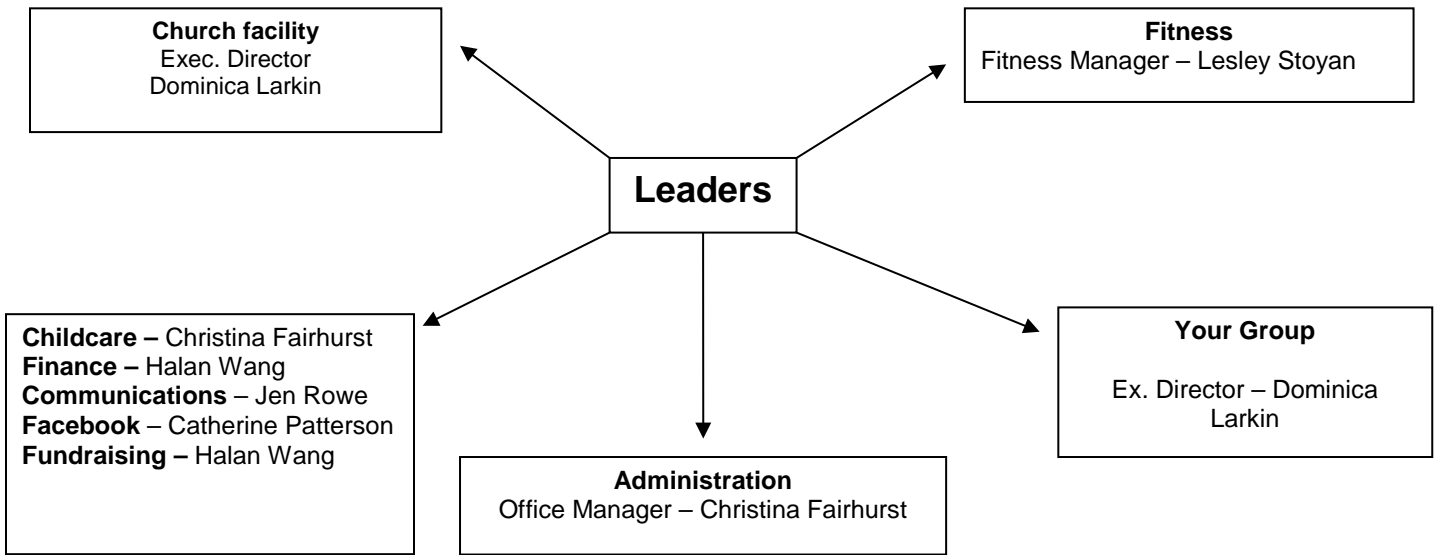


2017/2018 Calendar of Events for Leaders

Date	Event	Notes
WEEK OF SEPT 11th	FALL TERM A STARTS	
Week of Sept 25 th	Completed fire drill	Leader and Childcare rep to arrange
WEEK OF OCT 30th	FALL TERM B STARTS	
Beginning of Nov	Leader Nuts & Bolts meetings	ED to meet with co-leader teams
WEEK OF JAN 8th	WINTER TERM STARTS	
January 2018 Date TBD	Annual general meeting	All members welcome – Location TBD
Week of Jan 26 th	Area leaders meeting or winter workshop	Format details to follow; all leaders
WEEK OF MARCH 23rd	SPRING TERM STARTS	
Week of April 7 th	Area leaders meeting for new spring leaders	Details to follow
May	Area leaders In and Out social	Location TBD – all leaders



Where do Leaders go for help, information or to give feedback?





Administrative Contact List 2017-2018

Executive Director – Dominica Larkin

dlarkin@mumnet.ca

Home: 416-901- 0292

Cell: 416-371-1930

MMN Hours: Tues 9:00 - 3:00, Wed 9:00 - 3:00, Thurs 9:00 - 3:00, Fri 1:00 - 3:00

Fitness Manager – Lesley Stoyan

fitness@mumnet.ca

416-899-1990

Office Manager – Christina Fairhurst

officemanager@mumnet.ca

Home: 416-783-3427

Cell: 647-205-8516

MMN Hours: Mon 9:00 – 1:00, Tues 10:00 – 2:00, Wed 9:00 - 1:00, Thurs 11:00 – 3:00

Childcare Manager – Christina Fairhurst

childcare@mumnet.ca

Fundraising Director – Halan Wang (volunteer), halanwang@yahoo.ca

Finance Rep Coordinator – Halan Wang (volunteer)

halanwang@yahoo.ca

Communications Director – Jennifer Rowe (volunteer)

rowejnw@gmail.com



Background Information & Resources

MumNet General Logistics

Logistics	Details
1. Fitness	<p>Time: 9:15 – 10:00 Attire: come dressed to work out Medical forms: ensure you have spoken to the instructor if you have any medical concerns and be conscious of your own body! <i>Come even if you're late! Better late than never.</i></p>
2. Babysitting	<p>Time: 9:00 – 11:30 Guidelines:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can drop kids off as early as 9am • Sign your child in and out • No outside snacks – they will get arrowroots (if old enough) • Children to stay in childcare rooms, caregivers will come get moms as needed • If children are contagious, you must keep them at home • Nursing babies can come to the program room for feeds as needed • Children not in the program room unless absolutely necessary i.e. nursing, calming a very upset child. We encourage this policy for the safety of the children and to ensure we provide a break for all moms
3. Programs	<p>Time : 10:00 – 11:15 (snack and program) Participation: encourage everyone to participate and request feedback about what they would like to do Help clean up at the end so those who need to leave on time can do so</p>
4. Snack	<p>Moms on snack duty (decided beforehand) bring food and milk/cream. Coffee and tea onsite. Preparation: leave fitness a couple of minutes early or come early to prepare Allergies: no nut products Clean up: everyone help tidy, and wash/put away dishes so people can get out on time Bring your own travel mug for drinks</p>
5. Name tags and attendance	<p>Wear your name tag each week and ask your group members to do the same. Take weekly attendance to help track if certain moms are missing the sessions. Follow up with a friendly call or email as necessary. Idea – print 11 weeks' worth of name stickers (good way to track attendance each week) Idea – provide name tag stickers (or even roll of masking tape) and markers, as well as an attendance sheet. Let moms make their own and check off their names at the start of each week. Idea – have moms make their own “permanent” name tags on week 1 and keep them in a basket in the supply cupboard. Take a look to see what tags are not in use to confirm who's missing.</p>
6. Safety	<p>We recommend having a general attendance sheet kept in the meeting room listing all children in attendance. Moms check in children at the start of each weekly session. In the event of a fire, you will then have a master list of all children who should be accounted for.</p>
7. Reps Needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-leader (also has financial incentive) • Social – organize social events



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fundraising • Childcare • Finance
8. Socials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First one within the first couple of weeks – keep it simple (i.e. walk, coffee, park playdate or drinks) • Confirm with group how often and types of things to do
9. Fundraising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three MumNet fundraisers a year including a bigger event in the spring – stay tuned for more details! • Consider internal fundraisers for things like social events and any crafts / extra costs – all local group money raised must be spent during the year
10. MumNet Website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check out the leader page on the website: www.mumnet.ca/leaders • The Leader's Corner has programming ideas for leaders
11. Parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any ins and outs of parking in the neighbourhood – how long, pay lots, etc.
12. Follow-up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leader or communications rep to send post-meeting email to all members with any relevant information from the session (websites, guest contact). A great way to keep in touch during the week and encourage dialogue!



Program Background Information

Our Childcare Workers

- All MumNet childcare workers have received training regarding cleaning toys, not carrying children to the moms, and general safety. This include direction to refrain from wearing strong scented products, smoking prior to MumNet and wearing jewelry that children could tug on that could possibly pose a choking hazard.
- There is at least one worker in each room trained in First Aid and CPR.
- Many of our childcare workers have been with our organization for many years and are very experienced caregivers.
- If a child needs their mother at any time, the caregivers will come and get them from either the exercise room or meeting room.
- Make sure you pass on any special instructions about your child to your caregiver!

Our Fitness Instructors

- All of our instructors are certified as **Fitness Instructor Specialists (FIS)** or **Personal Trainers (PT's)** through Can-Fit-Pro or other recognized accreditation.
- Many are also certified in other areas as well, such as pre and post-natal fitness, Pilates and nutrition.
- Most of them are mothers as well, and many are past MumNet members.
- Please be sure to encourage members to discuss any health concerns with your instructor. This will enable them to show members alternatives if necessary while exercising with the group.

Letter from our Fitness Manager: Fitness Information for Group Leaders

Your role as leader

As the group leader, your active participation in the fitness class really helps to set the tone for the group. If the members see that you make time to work out, they will too!

In all groups (MumNet I & MumNet II), our instructors incorporate a variety of techniques into the exercise program while remaining sensitive to pre- and post-natal concerns, as well as any other health issues. Please feel free to discuss any health concerns with your instructor. This will enable them to show you alternatives if necessary while exercising with the group.

My role as the fitness manager

I hire all contracted fitness instructors and ensure the smooth running of the fitness component of MumNet. We do not have a “fitness rep” on the Board, but fitness is a key component of the MumNet experience. I also consult with the group leaders and fitness instructors on the fitness program. Throughout the year, I visit each group at least once to participate in the instructor’s class and give verbal and written feedback to them, as well as to introduce myself to any new leaders and members.

Please email or call me if you have questions or if you have any concerns with the fitness component of MumNet, although it is always best to speak directly with your group’s fitness instructor first. I can be contacted at (416) 899-1990, or at fitness@mumnet.ca

Lesley Stoyan
Fitness Manager, MumNet

Administration Representative Summaries

If you have not already found volunteers to help you here are some descriptions of the admin roles. Podcast trainings will be recorded and volunteers will receive a training document to help them with their roles. Please let the office manager know who is taking on each role in your group. Some may seem easy to take on yourself but please delegate!!

Childcare rep:

- Acts as liaison between childcare workers, childcare manager, members of group and leaders on all childcare matters pertaining to your group
- To ensure childcare policies are adhered to, ratios are met and childcare rooms are appropriately staffed (keep a current substitute list)
- Keep childcare manager up-to-date on issues pertaining to workers
- Ensure incident reports are properly administered prior to the mother or childcare workers departure
- Devise a Fire and Emergency Procedure Plan for your location and conduct a fire drill at the beginning of the first term. Submit the Fire and Emergency Plan to the childcare manager.

Finance rep:

- Complete necessary forms for finance director & finance rep coordinator in a timely fashion
- Download Time Station app to track caregiver and fitness instructor attendance, to facilitate payment electronically
- Scan caregiver and fitness instructor ID cards each week to check them in, also have them initial Worker Payment Record

Social rep:

- Organize social events amongst group members, for example coffee or park meet up, dinner, baseball game, etc.
- Help promote larger MumNet events to group members, for example Bits + Bites, AGM meeting, fundraising events, etc.

Fundraising rep:

- Acts as key link between the MumNet fundraising committee and the members of your own MumNet group; plays a central role in MumNet's fundraising initiatives
- Help your own group members (new and old) understand why we fundraise, and the importance of every member's involvement in each of our fundraisers

Required Forms – Who and When?

Below is a summary of required forms and submission timelines for the year.

All forms can be found in the MumNet Binder at your location as well as online on the Leader's Corner at www.mumnet.ca/leaders

FINANCE REPS:

- *Worker Payment Record*
Send to: Halan Wang, Finance Rep Coordinator, halanwang@yahoo.ca
When: As soon as possible after each term has ended via email or mail

CHILDCARE REPS:

- *Incident Report Form*
Send to: Dominica Larkin, Executive Director, dlarkin@mumnet.ca
47 Lawrence Ave West, Toronto, ON M5M 1A3
When: As soon as possible after the incident

LEADERS:

- *Critical Incident Report Form*
If any other incident happens at your group (theft, mom gets injured)
Send to: Dominica Larkin, Executive Director, dlarkin@mumnet.ca
47 Lawrence Ave West, Toronto, ON M5M 1A3
When: As soon as possible after the incident

Program Policies

If a member ever pushes back on a policy and you need assistance or more information, please contact the Office Manager, Christina Fairhurst at officemanager@mumnet.ca

Professional Activity (PA) Day Policy

On PA days, children of group members who would otherwise be in school may attend the childcare rooms if space permits. Groups must still adhere to the caregiver/child ratios and may not exceed room capacity numbers. MumNet will not provide extra caregivers on PA days.

Leaders' children will be given priority to ensure that the weekly program is not disrupted and any remaining childcare spaces will be distributed by a lottery system to be conducted by the group leaders.

Any children who do not attend MumNet on a regular basis must be signed in and out on a separate attendance sheet. The sheet must indicate both the child's name and the mother's name. A copy of the regular attendance sheet may be used.

Snow Day Policy

Only the executive director can modify the schedule/calendar for groups. Leaders have no authority to cancel or postpone weeks during a session.

MumNet will operate as usual unless the TDSB and/or the TCDSB have closed schools due to inclement weather. It is the responsibility of the leaders, members, fitness instructors and caregivers to check the television weather reports, news websites or school board websites.

No workers will receive payment for a cancelled week, but every attempt will be made to reschedule the missed week. The organization is under no obligation to reschedule a missed week, and will not issue a refund if a replacement week cannot be arranged.

Group Guidelines / Ground Rule Suggestions

(For discussion only)

It's helpful to share some ground rules on the first day to ensure everyone's on the same page. Preventing issues is often easier than dealing with them later when they become a problem. Revisit any rules as needed throughout the session.

1. Have fun, connect with other women and support one another in our roles as mothers and women.
2. Everyone agrees to start the main program on time. Members are encouraged to wear their name tags.
3. Members will sign their child in and out of the childcare rooms each day. Children will remain in childcare and not in the program as much as possible (nursing babies can obviously join the group to nurse as needed). Members will discuss concerns regarding childcare with the caregivers or with the childcare rep. Members will also be aware that the type of childcare provided at MumNet is babysitting.
4. Members will participate in and be supportive of the program including the directed discussion and the volunteer duties (including snack). MumNet programming is meant to foster interactions among the members in order to build a strong network of support for them.
5. Listen attentively to others, respect individual opinions and honour confidentiality of personal information shared within our discussions.
6. Everyone agrees to be respectful of the group leaders and member programmers and provide feedback in a respectful and thoughtful way. Give feedback to the leaders and admin team regarding the programs, guest speakers, socials and how the group is functioning. Suggestions are always welcome.
7. Share community resource information, home business literature, classified ads, etc. with the group, with advanced consultation with the leaders.
8. Email distribution lists are exclusive to members and not for outside distribution. They are also not to be used for personal marketing purposes once sessions are over.
9. If you need to answer your cell phone or a text message, please quietly leave the room and return when you are done.

Getting Started: Tips for a Great Term!

- Use name tags throughout the entire session and have an attendance sheet near the snack where members can check off their name.
- Have childcare rep review childcare policies
- Have snack rep (if you have one) review snack routine. Assign new members to team up with “seasoned” members to do a walk-through
- Remind members to pitch in with clean up at the end of the program (snack and chairs)
- Ask for a volunteer back-up finance rep (if you do not already have one).
- Integrate new members. It can feel a bit overwhelming/isolating to join a group where many of the members are already friends. Choose “getting to know” you programs for the first few weeks and encourage old members to mingle with/sit with new members.
- Send out a weekly email. This can include a list of upcoming programs, reminders for socials, etc. It keeps members connected between sessions.
- Encourage your group to plan spontaneous socials. A last-minute pub night can be a hit!
- Ask members to follow us on our social channels: FB, IG & Twitter to receive news and updates from MumNet.



Leader's Corner – www.mumnet.ca/leaders

Our online Leader's Corner is a resource that was created to help make your role as easy as possible. Log on to find the following:

- Opener and closer ideas
- Program ideas
- Guest speaker ideas
- Background resources to help you manage / facilitate your group
- Group social ideas
- MumNet contact information
- All admin rep background information and forms

Did you run an awesome program this session? If so, we want to hear about it! We'd love for you to email any program plans you felt your group loved to our team so we can upload it to our Leader's Corner and share it with other leaders. Send plans to Dominica Larkin at dlarkin@mumnet.ca

Program Ideas – Quick Reference

Games / Getting to know you

- Candy GameSpeed dating
- Two Truths and Lie
- Draw a Penny
- What's in a Name?
- Pass the Parcel
- Bingo

Guest Speakers

(See website for full list / contact)

- Postpartum nurse / specialist
- Another Story Book Store
- Mastermind Toys
- Kiddie Proofer
- Toronto Fire Services
- Dianne D'Accord – fashion and styling
- Eva from Insight Health (nutrition)
- Doone Etsey – parenting network
- Joan Marsman – Marriage and Sex Therapist
- Sprout Rite

Group & Small Group Discussions

- Hardest part of becoming a new mom, best part of becoming a new mom
- Confessions – everyone writes a confession down (in secret). One person reveals each confession to the group and group discusses (can be both very funny and emotional)
- Sleep – break into smaller groups based on current situations (infant versus preschooler, etc.). Discuss routines, strategies, challenges, successes

- Holiday traditions (based on next major holiday)
- Recipe exchanges
- Family dinners
- Food - break into smaller groups based on current situations
- Toronto's "Best" for Moms
- Neighborhood "bests"
- Vacation and stay-cation ideas. Tips for travel.
- Date night ideas – keeping the romance alive
- Tiger Mom – article or book review
- Bringing up bebe – article or book review
- 5 Love Languages – article for book review
- New Year's resolutions, goals for mat leave, bucket list
- Favourite things

Activities

- Cupcake decorating
- Canvas painting
- Dirty Santa / Kris Kringle
- Garage sale (*could be a good fundraiser*)
- Spice rubs
- Soup to take home
- Book / dvd exchange
- Wreath decorating

Programming Template

Sitting down with your co-leader to lay out the session programs at the start of each term is a great way to feel prepared and organized. Below is an example of a template our group leaders have used in the past for program planning. Remember to include an opener and closer!

Program Planning Example

Week	Suggested Programming	Actions / Supplies
1.	<p>Theme: Getting to know you and getting to know MumNet - Introductions Main Topic: Introductions</p> <p>a) Each member to create a name tag</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Place a group list and a pen beside the name tags so members can check off their names to confirm attendance <p>b) Mix and mingle (multiple times)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What's your favourite thing about being a mom? <p>c) Overview of MumNet (logistics, organization, etc.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rep intros & role outline (childcare, fundraising, finance, etc.) Call for volunteers if any roles outstanding <p>d) Introductions around the room</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Name, kids' names and ages, something interesting about you, why you came to MumNet and what you're hoping to get from it <p>e) Closer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask if there are any topics the group is interested in exploring Wrap up with any questions from the group <p>Post session follow up: (ongoing)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Send email to the group with any highlights from session, shout outs, reminders for following week Remind group to share feedback about their interests – guest speakers they know about, topics they would like to address, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attendance list and pen Blank labels (or masking tape) and marker for name tags Notebook to document suggestions from group re: what they want from MumNet (for ideas)
2.	<p>Theme: Getting to know you & making connections Main Topic: What's in a name?</p> <p>a) Opener: Candy game</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each person chooses 2-3 jellybeans from the bag; don't eat the candy! Ask members to answer the questions according to which colour beans they chose (see website for game template) <p>b) Announcements (socials, fundraising, etc.)</p> <p>c) The Name Game</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each member should say their full name and tell something interesting about their name (e.g., Why are you named "Anne"? Why is your child named "John"?) <p>d) Closer: Introduce "getting to know the neighbourhood" theme and ask members to think about their favourite spots.</p>	<p>Opener:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Candy game questions on a piece of paper (2 copies) Bag of jelly beans from bulk store
3.	<p>Theme: Getting to know the neighbourhood Main Topic: Neighbourhood/city favourites</p> <p>a) Opener : Something marvelous</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Print of neighbourhood best worksheet to help facilitate discussion



Week	Suggested Programming	Actions / Supplies
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask the members of the group to share something marvelous that happened to them this week. b) Announcements (socials, fundraising, etc.) c) Neighbourhood 'bests' <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leader to facilitate discussion, use worksheet as guide (see website) • Brainstorm ideas with the group – send out reminder the week in advance & if anyone is interested in typing up group responses d) Closer: Gather parenting topics group wishes to discuss 	<p>NOTE: If someone is willing, you could also ask someone to type out everyone's answers on their phone or tablet. You can then email the document to the group. It's a great ongoing mommy resource!</p>
4.	<p>Theme: Making life a little easier Main Topic: Favourite Things – Show & Tell</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Opener: When I grow up I want to... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Go around the circle. Ask everyone to complete the sentence. It can mean whatever they want it to mean. i.e. I want to go back to school, be a stay at home mom, run a marathon, etc. b) Announcements (socials, fundraising, etc.) c) Favourite things: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everyone sits in a big circle. Members take turns sharing their favourite things and explaining why they are special. • Members should be challenged to come up with items that are NOT related to technology and if willing, bring them in to share. Could be a kitchen tool, baby toy, piece of clothing, make-up or book. d) Closer: What are your favourite smartphone apps? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Send out reminder a week in advance and again the day before to think about and/or bring in favourite objects.



Delivering the MumNet Experience

As a group leader, you often get asked questions about our programs, how they work and why we have certain policies in place. We've provided below some quick, bulleted answers to make answering questions (and promoting our program!) as easy as possible. Feel free to reach out to our team if you need any additional support.

Talking Points about the benefits of MumNet

How the MumNet framework supports the building of group culture

The MumNet organization manages all program "infrastructure". We rent your space, hire the childcare and fitness workers, and incent two leaders financially to lead the group. We also incent four more "helpers" for each group (with a guaranteed spot in the group) to assist the leaders with the "admin" work the organization needs, so that the leaders can focus on group dynamics and programming.

Here's how the framework can work for you!

- I. Attend full 2 ½ hours of the program
 - a. Bond as group
 - b. Mothers benefit from all aspects of program (fitness, snack, social, break from kids, etc.)
 - c. Fitness has obvious benefits plus helps with bonding – moms have mutual experience, something to laugh about, complain about # of sit-ups, etc.

It is important to encourage all members to participate in fitness as it's where many relationships start and it's what makes our program unique when compared to other "mother" groups.

2. Take advantage of the childcare
 - a. Have a break from your own kids
 - b. Opportunity to focus on yourself, me time
 - c. Opportunity to really get to know other women with similar experiences (rather than having one eye/ear on a child while making conversation)
 - d. Benefit for other women in the room who may really need a break from children even if you don't mind having yours around all the time
 - e. Allows moms to speak freely without worrying about who is listening (older children)
 - f. Sessions are not interrupted/distracted by toddlers/babies crawling around, moms cooing over each other's babies

Babies who are nursing are more than welcome to be fed in the meeting room, but then they should be returned to their childcare room. Children who just don't like the childcare room should be encouraged to stay in the childcare room.

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3. Only two speakers per term/one postpartum speaker per year
 - a. Sitting and listening to a speaker week after week does not allow for as much conversation/bonding between women. Harder to get to know people. Our format ensures maximum networking and connection time with women in your community.
 - b. An introductory postpartum focused session is always good for the new moms to hear in case they are otherwise unaware of the signs to watch out for – brings it out in the open rather than keeping it one of those issues you ‘just don’t talk about’.

4. Warm up/Main/Closer format
 - a. Gives a sense of completeness to the sessions
 - b. Women know what to expect, and this carries through into other parts of MumNet (workshops!)
 - c. Brings everyone back together at the end of the session
 - d. Gets everyone on the same page at the beginning of the session

5. Regular Socials
 - a. Gives women a chance to get to know each other in a different environment – generally different things are talked about when you’re out for the evening
 - b. Gets moms out of the house!
 - c. Allows leaders and admin team a chance to hang out a bit and have fun which they don’t always get to do on the session days (helps close the gap between the leaders/admin and the other members)
 - d. Helps establish more regular contact between members/contact outside of MumNet

Understanding Group Dynamics

There's a science to the way people interact and form a cohesive group. We've included below some background about why it's important to nurture the formation of your group, the different stages in this process and how you can help.

I. Fostering a New MumNet Group

"MumNet is the essence of community building, where a culture of inclusion, participation and ownership develops within each group."

It is our job as group leaders to build these communities.

A "new group" forms every term at each location of MumNet. It is important to recognize that your group is "new" – not new members being added to a portion of last year's group, but new – nobody should be trying to "fit" but rather the new group is taking on its' shape.

When new members are taken on in subsequent terms (or part way through a term), leaders need to focus on integrating these new members into their already formed groups. Recognizing the sequential stages of group culture will help leaders address the unique needs of their group.

Inclusion

- Separate individuals arrive at MumNet, unique in their life experience and personal complex of diverse needs and expectations.
- As leaders, we are "facilitators" – one who makes this experience "easy" for the individuals.
- In the beginning of each term, leaders should be providing opportunities for members to introduce themselves to the group, not just at the surface level – and to be acknowledged by the group as having been heard, appreciated, and welcomed.
- Adequate recognition of each individual will assist with participation and commitment to the group.
- Leaders should not underestimate the importance of name tags, seating arrangements (get people to move and take another view of the room), socials, inclusionary openers, and use of small groups to reduce anxiety and increase participation. These activities will avoid isolation of members, and will build trust between the members. **Building trust is the most valuable commitment a group can make.** The first three weeks of term should focus on get-to-know you activities. And these types of activities should be repeated during the term as needed.

Influence

- During this stage, members are taking more initiative, speaking up, making suggestions, questioning. There is an increase in participation by the members. There might be observed a new restlessness as members feel able to assert their individuality in the group.
- To the extent that each person does not feel important, commitment and motivation will decrease
- Leaders need to focus on ideas being put forth without judgment, respecting differences and exhibiting a shared leadership responsibility.
- During this stage resentful feelings may emerge and people may feel excluded if a small group of members opt out of the fitness and have their own social time before the meeting. Leaders can get people participating by educating their members about the uniqueness of MumNet's offering: the fitness component plus the programming. MumNet meets the needs of the whole individual in terms of physical and mental balance. It is important to get the members motivated to be there for the entire two hours. This not only gets the members to interact more but it also keeps the disruption to a minimum for the children.
- Leaders can reach out to absent members. The follow-up phone call is a great way to keep track of members. Also sending out a short wrap-up email to all members summarizing the most recent meeting will help members who missed a week feel connected.
- During this stage, leaders need to be flexible with programming. They should observe the group and notice what gets the group interested and energized. This will be the individual culture of their group.

Community

- This is the stage we are aiming towards – where the individuals feel a strong commitment to the mission of the group.
- Leaders can foster this sense of ownership by delegating as much as possible, i.e. tidying up, snack, volunteering during fundraising events. Recognizing the achievements of the individuals, and the group as a whole, will continue to build a sense of community.

2. Stages of Group Development

The four stages of group development: forming, norming, storming and (that ever elusive goal) performing, how can you tell which stage your group is at?

In this discussion we will focus on diagnosing your stage of group development by what you can observe about the members' and group's behaviour.

Forming Stage

If you see members who are:

- Quiet
- polite with one another
- nervous
- aloof or apparently indifferent,
- mostly leader-dependent (always looking to you for direction)

...your group is at the **Forming** stage. This is often seen in the first few meetings of a new year and at the beginning of each new term, especially if new members have joined.

Norming Stage

If you see members who:

- accept each other and enjoy listening to each other's ideas
- participate in discussions freely and enthusiastically, with greater sharing of self
- rely less on leaders for direction and more on each other
- may begin to participate in program planning.
- The group develops a sense of 'us' and develops its own norms; either stated or unstated codes of behaviour

...your group is at the **Norming** stage. This stage usually occurs when the group has been together a number of weeks, but there is much variation from group to group. While some manage to reach this stage early, others require more than one term to achieve norming, especially if the group is large and member turnover is evident. Also, it is important to point out that many groups for a number of reasons do not go beyond the norming stage, and that belonging to a norming group can still be a wonderful and supportive experience.

Storming Stage

If you see members who are:

- resisting and challenging leaders
- complaining (especially behind your back!) without proposing alternatives
- uncooperative with group tasks, volunteering or fundraising activities
- cliquy and resistant to connecting with new members
- not participating in the program or carrying on side conversations
- a general unwillingness to share and a lack of commitment to the group.

...your group is at the **Storming** stage. Keep your cool. This is a healthy stage of development (like the terrible twos) that often happens early on in the year after the initial politeness of the forming stage and before proper norming is established. This stage may reappear through-out the year if changes in the group happen faster than they can be accommodated, for instance with changes in leadership or major turnovers in membership, or in response to problems which might arise in other areas of group functioning (childcare, fitness, or fundraising)

Performing Stage:

If you see members that:

- have a very high commitment to the group, to each other and to the goals of the program
- take on much more responsibility for the group and individual members
- take on leader functions like programming, encouraging quieter members, and controlling talkative ones
- feel secure enough to try out new behaviours (e.g. taking initiative or doing something new),
- debate differing opinions and points of view, share very personal feelings and tackle high-risk topics.

...your group is at the **Performing** stage. This happens late in the cycle of the group, when membership has been quite stable over a long period of time. It may appear briefly, as a deepening of the norming stage, or not at all. Members vary in their readiness and ability to 'perform' on this level and leaders need to be comfortable with truly sharing power with the group.

Starting Your Group on the Right Foot

Actions to take to move your group through the 'Forming' stage

When do you see this stage?

- First few meetings (3-4 or more) of a new year.
- First few meetings of a new term (even if it is all returning members).
- When new members join few weeks into a term.
- Short time at the start of each meeting.

Leaders' role in moving past the forming stage – actions for the first few weeks:

- 1. Welcome and meet all members** to help put them at ease.
 - Make an effort to have both co-leaders connect with all new members.
 - Make a point of doing this for the first few weeks as this is a critical time for everyone to begin to feel comfortable and secure.
 - Remember to also provide this extra welcome for new members joining after the first few weeks.
- 2. Ensure the getting to know each other process.**
 - At coffee time make sure no one is standing alone.
 - Introduce members to each other to help break the ice.
 - Consider setting up a buddy system by pairing old and new members together at coffee time or for the warm-up.
- 3. Establish your admin team with a meeting in the first two weeks**
 - Have team members meet each other, clarify their roles and responsibilities and where they may need to work together (e.g. finance and fundraising).
 - Ask for some input on your programming ideas for the first term as this will help build a sense of team.
 - Ask this team to help with the getting to know each other at coffee time.
 - Having an informed and cohesive team will allow you as leaders to relax and focus on the group.
- 4. Keep Attendance weekly and call absent members to check in**
 - A quick call to those who did not make it just to check in and see if they are okay can be so important. Many women have commented on how much they appreciate this. It makes members feel that they are important and an integral part of the group.

- 5. Discuss the purpose of MumNet, provide some background info, and introduce the admin team in the first session to orient members and give the group structure.**
- Read the mission statement of MumNet

Mission Statement

Helping women face the challenges of motherhood by fostering their emotional, mental, and physical well-being in a mutually supportive, community-based group environment.

- Introduce the admin team and their position.
 - You may want to wait until the second week to have the admin team members discuss their responsibilities to avoid info overload. First and second week you can also recruit for any vacant admin spots as well as snack rep if still needed.
- 6. Use the tried and true program structure of: warm-up, main body and closing.**
- This structure works!
 - Establish it from the beginning and it creates a sense of comfort and security for all.
 - Use programs that are conducive to getting to know each other - programs that allow members to discuss things without having to reveal too much too soon.
 - Warm-up's such as Common Ground, Mad Hatters Tea Party, and Becoming a Mother Has Been ... (for full description check the website www.mumnet.ca/leaders) can often turn into the main program which is fantastic as it fits the mandate of getting to know everyone. Save your main body program for another week!

Group Facilitation 101

Facilitating group development and in particular group discussion is about overseeing **how** a group evolves, and in particular **how** it discusses a topic. How group discussion evolves sets the tone in many ways for how the group evolves overall. The topic for discussion may be selected by the leaders with previous input from the group, but the actual content of the discussion is determined by the group through their individual contributions of ideas, opinions, feelings, and information gained from reading, watching, listening, surfing the web etc. Facilitators guide the discussion - not control it.

Think of your group as a lovely tossed, green salad. The salad bowl and the serving utensils would be the facilitators – the bowl being the vessel that holds all the ingredients in place and the utensils are what toss all the ingredients together. The ingredients that make-up the salad are the thoughts, opinions, feelings etc. expressed by all the members of the group. These ingredients are rich and full of zest but they need a container to hold them all together and tongs to stir them up!

Facilitating lively, healthy discussion programs is one of the main ways that MumNet leaders contribute to the overall growth and development of the group. The group's development will become apparent over time by more involvement outside of group (e.g. social nights, book clubs, etc.), more participation and co-operation from members during group time, and more comfort with differences of opinion being expressed, accepted and debated in a healthy, respectful way.

Facilitation is a lot easier and more effective when there are two facilitators. You can divide up the roles/tasks and accomplish so much more simultaneously. For example one leader can be leading/guiding the discussion while the other leader is observing the group and making sure that quiet members do not get missed, etc.

Helpful Phrases/Facilitation Tips

A general tip: start your large group discussion with a brief intro to the topic being discussed, and then have a series of questions ready to ask the group to keep the discussion moving forward.

“Just a reminder before we begin about some of our ground rules: first, confidentiality, and secondly, all views are welcomed and encouraged. We don’t have to agree with everyone but we do need to be respectful of others’ views, opinions and feelings.”

When?

- At the beginning of each term (in a slightly expanded format, written format).
- Prior to a more in-depth topic.
- Mid-point of a discussion if you feel the discussion is getting off the rails (disrespect of differing perspectives)

Why?

- Creates a safe and trusting environment
 - Lack of respect for others’ views or of confidentiality can have a very detrimental effect on group development.
 - Nurtures participation by everyone in the group.
-

A. “Does anyone who has not had a chance to speak want to add anything?”

B. “Alice, you look like you might have something to say. Would you like to jump in?”

When?

- A. Early in the Forming/Norming stage, before you’ve had a chance to connect with everyone and get to know them.
- B. Fully normed group.

Why?

- Nurtures participation; shows your commitment to encouraging participation by all.
 - Gives some “air time” to introverts, who often may need more time to process what they are going to say; also sends signal to extroverts that it is time for them to listen.
 - Use the non-facilitating co-leader to observe that everyone is participating.
-

“I really appreciate your thoughts on this subject” and “thank you for sharing your personal experience with me (or us).”

When?

Anytime anyone has shared something with you or the group.

Why?

- Encourages participation by all
- Models appreciation for members’ contribution in discussion.

- Can use as a way to redirect the discussion away from the chatty or monopolizing member (followed by “does anyone else who hasn’t had a chance to speak want to add anything?”)
 - Helps recognize competence, something important to some members
-

A. “You seem really annoyed and frustrated by _____”

B. “You seem really passionate about this issue. Does anyone want to respond to this?”

When?

Use active listening anytime anyone shares any strong feelings (negative or positive) either within a group discussion or outside of it.

Why?

A.

- To demonstrate and model empathy to your members.
- Helps people feel understood
- Creates a safe environment for members to express stronger feelings.

B.

- Chatty members may be so passionate about a topic that they may not realize they are taking over.
 - Once they feel understood, their need to make their point lessens, especially if you’ve taken the time to clarify and summarize their perspective: “so let me see if I get what you are saying. When such and such happens, it seems like (blank) to you and you feel (fill in the blanks)” Give them a chance to respond yes or no, then ask how others think/feel.
-

“So Alice strongly feels that exclusively feeding her baby breastmilk (for example) for the first year of life is the right choice for her, but others may have a differing opinion on the subject.”

When?

- When members state an opinion as if it were a fact, and the only way of looking at an issue.
- When other members are getting turned off by someone’s enthusiasm on a subject.

Why?

- To clarify the difference between fact and opinion.
 - To help the discussion stay open and healthy.
 - Members who have opposing perspectives feel safe to express them.
 - Models active listening.
 - Can be used after a guest speaker has left (at the next meeting or in email) if the speaker has committed the same omission.
-

“Alice’s point echoes what Betty mentioned earlier about cloth diapers (for example)”

When?

Anytime members are so immersed in their discussion they don't realize that they are restating something mentioned earlier.

Why?

- Keeps the discussion moving forward.
 - Helps members bond with each other, especially if they are not aware of similarities
 - Builds a sense of cohesiveness, especially useful if the group is going through storming.
-

“Another way of looking at this would be...”

When?

Whenever you as a leader would like to add your personal perspective on a subject.

Why?

- Preferable to saying “I think that...” because as a leader your opinions carry more “weight” or significance, especially earlier on in the year when the members are so leader-dependent, which makes it harder for a member to openly disagree with you.
- Other helpful phrasing if you do wish to openly express your views:
 - “I may be wrong on this but...”
 - “This is just my opinion...”
 - “In my personal experience...”
 - “Please feel free to disagree with me on this...”