



PAUL NEFF

Building Support Groups

I have been in two men's groups and for over 25 years and we have walked together and supported one another. It's taken a lot of time and sacrifice to sustain them, but I have come to appreciate the brotherhood, wisdom and strength that we've shared as we've grown together.

Here are a few tips that have helped us to stand and remain together over the years:

Clearly Define the Group Goal

Take time to define your objectives, motivations and reasons for being together. Share ideas, write them down, re-write them until you agree. Doing this helps maintain the energy and focus; and allows you to weather through the slower seasons. Define your boundaries now and stick to them.

Shared Values

For both my groups and accountability partners, we have common foundations, common understanding and common values. This has worked extremely well for us and has formed the basis especially for difficult decisions and conversations.

Group Size

Try and keep it small so that everyone has a chance to get involved and not be left out. One of my groups has 5 men and the other 3. This gives us sufficient time to talk and get to know each other well. In a small group, 'your antenna' is up and you're always observing for the betterment of each other.

Commitment

All my groups meet once a week and that's worked well for us. Every other week could work for some, but I don't think any further apart would be beneficial. When I was travelling, I would try call in for the bulk of the meetings. Keeping it regular and remaining present builds the necessary rhythm for growth.

Confidentiality

It's important to build trust and keep confidential topics shared at the table – at the table.

Don't Quit

Issues will arise and quitting will be the easiest thing. I have wanted to exit both my men's groups on multiple occasions. However, accountability groups are not about being perfect –without being frustrated. You can't find that in a marriage; and you certainly won't find that with a group. People and issues will irritate you, but when you feel you have one foot out the door, that's the time you should lean in – don't exit.