

CONFIDENTIALITY

CELEBRATE RECOVERY MODULE #1

COMPETENCY: Keep the group safe and confidential

Opening Question: We talk about confidentiality a lot in recovery and it's even one of our 5 guidelines. Take a moment and ask yourself, Why is confidentiality so important to a recovery ministry?

Verse: Proverbs 11:13

ASSIGNMENTS

Assignment 1: Read, *The Importance of Confidentiality in Recovery*, and answer questions.

ASSIGNMENT 1

The Importance of Confidentiality in Recovery

Confidentiality is defined as “the state of being kept secret or private.” It is a promise that sensitive information will be handled discretely. In a doctor’s office, HIPPA ensures each patient’s privacy will be protected. But it’s just as important in a support group setting, or even a conversation between two people.

Until I took part in Celebrate Recovery Meetings (and Overeaters Anonymous, too), I hadn’t thought that much about confidentiality. But just read how the Celebrate Recovery Small Group Guidelines and Agreements highlight its importance:

- Safe Environment - To create a safe place where people can be heard and feel loved (no quick answers, snap judgments, or simple fixes)
- Be Confidential - To keep anything that is shared strictly confidential and within the group
- Conflict Resolution - To avoid gossip and to immediately resolve any concerns

Why Confidentiality Is Important

During the recovery process, many deep issues are bound to be discussed. The idea of sharing personal thoughts and feelings with others can be very scary. I know it was for me early on. Even though I knew bringing my issues and faults to light was healthy, my natural reflex was still to keep things hidden. Just like in any other context, I needed to feel a certain level of trust in the other group members before I was willing to step out and talk.

I know some in my group worried that what they shared would be made public to the church at large. They feared having their past mistakes exposed, which might lead to a damaged reputation. Luckily, our small group members quickly learned to respect each other’s privacy. We offered that safe environment to share struggles and victories.

The Challenge of Confidentiality

Hearing the details of other people’s lives and responding correctly can be tricky. For a while, I felt unequipped to handle things I was learning. But I had to realize that it wasn’t my place to figure anything out or help fix anyone. As confidants, our main job is to lend a compassionate ear, or to be a sounding board. Knowing that took the pressure off and helped me grow more comfortable being there for others.

Interestingly, as I’ve grown in this area, more people have confided in me both in and beyond the group. I feel humbled when someone puts their trust in me, and I want to handle what they tell me in a responsible way. So I follow the Celebrate Recovery principles: I focus in on what that person is saying, stay neutral about what they share, give them support and hold the information close.

NOTE: On a couple of occasions, information about illegal activity or abuse has come my way. In those cases, I’ve had to suspend confidentiality. It was necessary to contact the right authority, either within my church or in the community. I never want to offend someone who’s confided in me, but in those cases it’s part of being responsible.

Tips For Being a Good Confidant

If you're part of a support group or find yourself in the role of being someone's confidant, here are a few pointers that can help you be the best support you can be for someone in recovery.

1. Be wise: Don't gossip (and don't listen to anyone else's gossip, either).
2. Be patient: Don't offer input right away, but wait to be asked first.
3. Be mature: Don't overreact, but calmly listen before giving a response or taking any action.

Early on in my recovery journey, I was blessed to find people who I felt safe working through memories and doing my personal inventory with. Knowing that what I shared would remain confidential gave me the courage and confidence to continue on in the process. Now that I've experienced the healing and growth that comes from a trusted listener, I try to be the same kind of blessing for others in their walk in recovery.

1. What stood out to you the most and why?
2. What challenged you the most?
3. What questions did this article raise for you?
4. What opportunities for growth did this article highlight for you?
5. What accountability questions would you like for me to ask you next time we meet?