

Part 3: Leadership Skills and Attitudes

To learn about leadership skills and attitudes, you will discuss with your supporting Leader the topics on the [Checklist of Topics to Discuss in Preparation for LLL Leadership](#) (*Checklist*). You'll find it in this chapter, along with the following resources and optional exercises. You may wish to use them to increase your understanding.

- [Organizational Structure Chart](#)
- [Giving Advice Versus Offering Suggestions Chart](#)
- [Guidelines for Skillful Conversations](#)
- [Listening Exercise](#) (optional)
- [Bias Exercise](#) (optional)
- [Mixing Causes Exercise](#) (optional)

* Each item is hyperlinked. Optional exercises may be called differently in each entity.

Some Applicants like to work through the *Checklist* in the order the topics are listed, some skip around. Some like to read about the topics first in the *Leader's Handbook*, and then discuss what they've read with a Leader. Others prefer to talk first, then reinforce what they discussed by reading about the subject in the *Leader's Handbook*.

The *Leader's Handbook* is a fantastic resource, full of the information a Leader needs to do her work with confidence and pleasure. Most of us tend to pay closest attention to information that is relevant to what we are doing at the time. For instance, you might not absorb all the details about a Couples Meeting until you find yourself wanting to plan one. Having discussed the *Checklist* topics and read the book, you will know where to find more information.

As you and your supporting Leader work through the *Checklist*, let your LAD representative know if you have questions, and tell her when you've completed the entire *Checklist*.

Checklist of Topics to Discuss in Preparation for LLL Leadership

Use your experience and Leader resources (*Leader's Handbook*, *The Womanly Art of Breastfeeding*, pamphlets and information sheets, *Leader's Pre- Application Packet*, your Leader publications) to explore, discuss, and/or practice the following topics and skills, relating each to the Leader Applicant's preparation to fulfill the responsibilities of an LLL Leader. Add topics and themes you think would be helpful, and contact your LAD representative for additional suggestions.

Definition of an Active Leader

An active LLL Leader pursues the La Leche League mission through basic Leader responsibilities as defined in the Policies and Standing Rules Notebook and/or other service to LLL. An active Leader's fees are current, she keeps up to date with Leader education, and she communicates regularly with the organization.

BASIC RESPONSIBILITIES

Helping mothers one-to-one by telephone, by email, or in person

Child development/parenting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Common parenting concerns among mothers • Solids, infant and toddler nutrition • Weaning • Loving guidance • Relevant LLL philosophy • Separating LLL philosophy from apparently related ideas
Communication/helping skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helping as an informed peer • The art of listening • Gathering information • Selecting and communicating information • Working with personal biases • Identifying and overcoming obstacles to communication
Importance of respect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For individuals; information and experience each brings to a discussion or question • Confidentiality
Telephone/one-to-one helping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizing materials for phone helping • Telephone helping with young children present • Leader's log • Responding to medical and legal questions • Helping online (online etiquette, where to find "answers" to give a mother, Help Forms) • Making home visits

Planning and leading monthly Series Meetings

Preparing to lead a meeting	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finding a location (how to; where your Group meets now and why) • Publicizing the meeting • Materials to have on hand (e.g. sign-in sheet) • Setting the scene • Leader's image
Planning a meeting	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approaches, format • Series Meeting topics • Meeting ideas • Back-up topics • Different roles of Leaders and Group workers
Leading a meeting	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating a welcoming atmosphere • Announcements and disclaimer • Promoting membership • Balancing a discussion • Ensuring LLL information is presented (how to; copy of "Reference to LLL Concepts in <i>The Womanly Art</i>") • Respectful disagreement • Avoiding mixing causes • Limiting personal sharing • Encouraging participation by attendees • Ending a meeting • Common challenges to facilitating a meeting in your Group (and toddlers at meetings)

Supervising the management of the LLL Group

Group Treasury	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Record keeping • Group's bank account • Processing memberships • Sales • Fundraising
Group Library	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open or closed Libraries (and which your Group chose, and why) • <i>LLL Bibliography</i> (where to find current copy; what books are included) • Recommending books to mothers • Keeping the Library up-to-date • Ordering Library materials • Keeping track of books

Evaluation /Meetings	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When Leaders in your Group do this • How to evaluate a meeting • Importance of reporting • Shared leadership • Group workers—recruiting, evaluation • Appropriate Enrichment Meeting topics • Splitting or starting a new Group • Self-evaluation
Organizing materials	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forms (copies of ones used in your Group/Area/Affiliate) • Leader resources (on paper, in your computer) • Telephone helping materials • Using the <i>Leader's Handbook</i>
Time management	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balancing LLL responsibilities with family needs • Adding or changing LLL commitments • Delegating
Publicity	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting notices; what to include and consider, where to distribute

Keeping up-to-date on breastfeeding information

LLL support network	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local and online support Leaders (who they are, what they do, where to find contact information) • Organization of your Area, Area Network, Affiliate, LLLI (including Area Departments) • LLL's accountability to us
LLL publications	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LLLI policies (Appendices 17 "Concept Policy Statements," 18 "Applying for Leadership," 33 "WHO International Code of Marketing of Breast Milk Substitutes.") • <i>The Womanly Art of Breastfeeding, Leader's Handbook</i> • Pamphlets and tear-sheets • Leader and member publications; local publications • How to order or get on distribution list
LLL internet resources	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Web pages for mothers, Applicants, Leaders • Email lists (what is available, online etiquette, how to join a list)
Using non-LLL resources	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical reading, listening • Why to refer first to LLL resources • When a mother needs help beyond the scope of leadership

Continuing education events, workshops, conferences	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter Meetings • Workshops for Leaders and/or Leader Applicants • Area/Regional/International Conferences

Helping other mothers find out about leadership and prepare to become LLL Leaders

Identifying potential Applicants	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When to approach a mother • When a mother approaches you • When there is no Applicant in sight • Outreach
Consulting with co-Leaders	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Before approaching a mother • Before recommending accreditation at an application's completion • When Applicants or co-Leaders move
Pre-application dialogue	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resources for conducting pre-application dialogue • When there are concerns about a mother's meeting the Prerequisites to Applying for Leadership • When a mother needs financial help to pay application costs • Including necessary information in your Leader's Recommendation (copy of the form, how to find the information)
Supporting an Applicant during the application	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership Skills Criteria (your plans to help her learn about these and to evaluate her understanding) • <i>Leader's Guide to the Preview</i> and <i>Preview Evaluation</i> • Providing practice opportunities (e.g. Applicant leading an Enrichment Meeting or planning a Series Meeting) • Modeling the Leader's role • When an Applicant feels stalled, or has run into a roadblock
Transition to leadership	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicant's preferences for beginning leadership • Sharing Leader-only jobs with new Leader • Our accountability to LLL and mothers • <i>Statement of Commitment</i> • Encouraging mothers to see former Applicant as a Leader

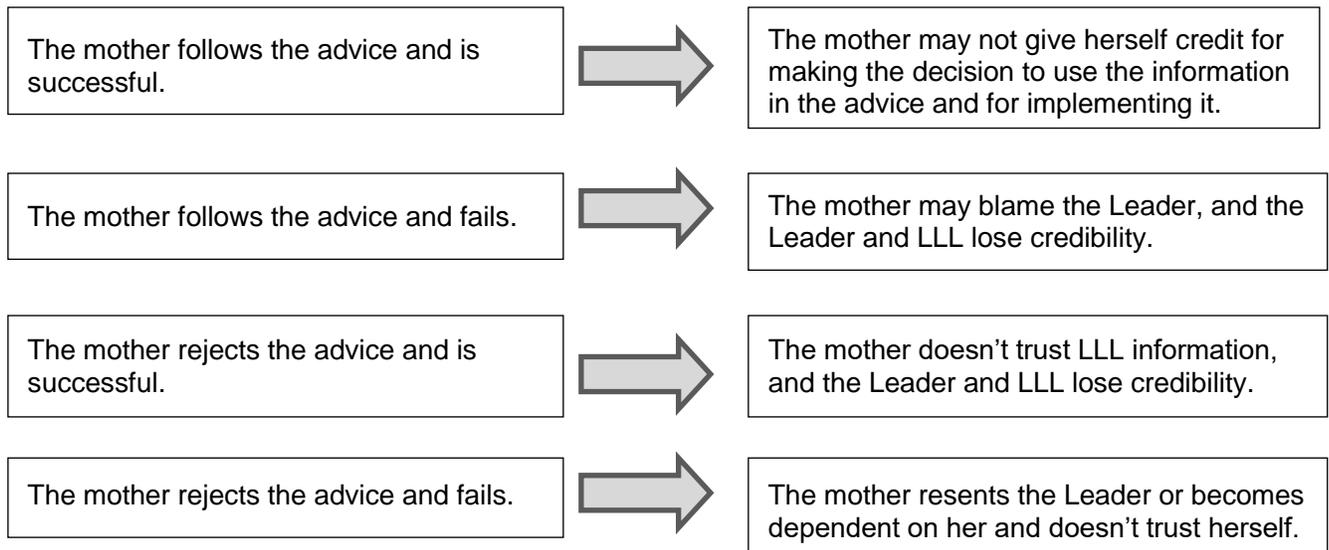
Giving Advice Versus Offering Suggestions

Giving advice often sends an unspoken message—a lack of confidence and trust. Advice usually begins with phrases such as:

- *You should . . .*
- *You ought to . . .*
- *Why don't you . . .*
- *You should have . . .*
- *Why didn't you . . .*
- *You shouldn't have . . .*

When we give advice

Possible outcome

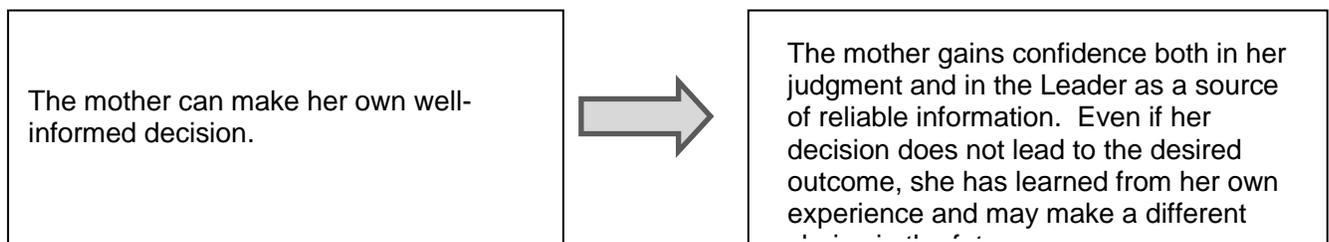


Offering information and suggestions shows respect for the other person and encourages her to choose what suits her. It can begin with phrases such as:

- *Here's what other mothers have done in similar situations . . .*
- *How would you feel about . . .*
- *Many mothers have found . . .*
- *Some babies seem to need . . .*
- *You may find that . . .*

When we offer information & suggestions

Possible outcome



Adapted from: *Leader's Handbook* Following is an exercise to explore personal bias, in order to help us keep our own strong feelings from affecting our work with mothers.

Guidelines for Skillful Conversations

- Listen and inquire for understanding
- Suspend judgement and assume good intent
- Use 'I' statements – avoid over-generalization
- Share your thinking – articulate your assumptions
- Allow self and others to be inarticulate
- Express and welcome divergent views
- Respect silence – be aware of pace
- Stick with difficult and important issues
- Maintain confidentiality
- Be responsible for your own participation
- One conversation at a time

Adapted from an article in *Leaven*, June-July 2002, Report from the Board, Trudy Hartt and Jean Moneyhon, LLLI Board of Directors

<https://www.llli.org/llleaderweb/lv/lvjunjul02p50.html>

<Optional exercise>

Listening Exercise

At the Series Meeting, you and your Leader observe. If possible, ask another Leader to be responsible for the meeting. If there is only one Leader in your Group, you could still do the exercise, or the two of you could attend another Group's meeting. You and the Leader meet within a few days for discussion:

Note what a few mothers say during the meeting, questions they ask, concerns they express, and/or some reactions to what others say.

Consider:

- What you "heard" and what the Leader "heard"
- What was the mother saying or asking or worried about?

How was the statement or question or concern received by the other people: Leader(s), experienced LLL members, other mothers? How did you react, both inside and verbally?

Consider:

- The different responses of the Leader "group" and the attending "group"
- Why the Leader reacted in a particular manner
- How this tied in with the meeting goals and with La Leche League's philosophy of helping
- The different responsibilities of the Leader, the Group helper, the Leader Applicant, and other mothers at a Series Meeting
- If you are concerned about your inner reaction, this might be a good time to look at those feelings; if you can't come to terms with them, you might place yourself in a stressful position as an LLL Leader; or you might find that at the same time as you explore your feelings, you clear away some misunderstandings about La Leche League or the Leader's role.

Discuss:

- How particular responses or reactions may or may not be helpful to a mother and why
- How some statements or reactions can be modified to become more effective.

Include, if relevant, discussion of vocabulary, body language, how Leaders can set the tone of the responses and reactions of a group.

During your discussions, you may find it helpful to refer to the *Leader's Handbook* and to Communication Skills exercises.

<Optional exercise>

Bias Exercise:
Respecting Differences

One aspect of preparing to be a La Leche League Leader is developing communication skills. To do our jobs well, Leaders have to hear what a mother is saying. "Biases" -- the things we think of as "right" -- can interfere with communication in many ways. When we hear ideas which are different from our own, we may feel threatened, challenged or disapproving. We may unwittingly send out conversation-stopping messages, or we may close our minds to new information.

For instance, it can be difficult for us to help mothers who choose to be away from their babies. We may distinguish between mothers who "want" to be employed and those who have a financial "need." We may not be able to communicate the same caring and unqualified acceptance as we offer to mothers whose choices, for whatever reasons, are more like our own. Some people are impatient with women who resist suggestions, especially if it is over a long period and there has been an investment of time and energy. Because body language and tone of voice communicate most of our message, the mother may sense our discomfort and feel turned away.

Leader's Handbook (2003), pages 40-43, offers helpful reading on this topic.

The following exercise can help us identify and feel comfortable with our biases. When we recognize that we have valid reasons for believing as we do, we are more likely to respect other people's different ideas, too. Then the feelings that strengthen us cannot weaken or interfere with our communication with others.

1. Pick a topic you feel strongly about. Some examples: home birth, vegetarianism, family bed, homeschooling, methods of discipline, staying at home.
2. Look at an opinion you hold strongly regarding this topic.
3. Identify the reasons for your belief.
4. Understand that you have a right to your opinions.
5. Think about why someone might hold a different opinion on this topic.
6. Recognize that others have a right to their beliefs, too.
7. Think about how you might help a mother with a belief different from yours.

By thinking through our own personal beliefs now, we can prevent less-than-helpful reactions when leading meetings or helping mothers over the phone. We need to remember that the Leader's goal is to empower the mother by giving her the facts she needs to make informed choices. We need to support each mother as the expert on caring for her own baby.

<Optional exercise>

Mixing Causes Exercise

The purpose of this exercise is to help you see how mixing causes might impact different mothers we help and how a Leader can avoid mixing causes. Each of the following situations has potential for mixing causes. You might think of others common to your location or specific to your own experience. Please use this exercise as a "jumping off point" to stimulate your own thoughts and/or your discussions with Leader(s).

For each situation, ask yourself:

- What mistaken impression might a mother make about what LLL believes or supports?
- How might mixing causes in this situation discourage a mother from returning to LLL?
- How would you ensure that what you say stays within LLL's guidelines for how/what Leaders say and do?
- How might you respond if a mother's question is uncomfortable for you due to your own strong personal beliefs?

Some possible situations:

1. You are a midwife and a Leader. The hospital where you work has offered you a room for LLL Series Meetings.
2. You are a nutritionist (or you have strong feelings about a particular diet), and you are planning Series Meeting 4.
3. You are the Leader of a Group meeting in the evening. In the daytime, you operate a day-care business out of your home. At your Series Meeting, a mother asks you about care for her child.
4. Your personal beliefs forbid using birth control, and a mother calls you with a question about contraception.
5. You have sacrificed a second income to stay home with your children. A mother asks you for information about pumping after she returns to work.
6. You live in a small town and everyone knows . . . (the church you attend, the political causes you support, etc.).
7. A member of your Group wants to sell . . . (slings, toys, etc.) at your meetings.
8. Another nonprofit group with similar goals asks your Group to participate in its upcoming presentation/affair.

Here are some resources you might find useful:

Exploring the New Policy: "Code of Ethics: Leaders with Personal, Professional or Commercial Interests" *Leaven*, Jul-Feb-Mar 07

<http://www.llli.org/llleaderWeb/lv/lvjanfebmar07p22.html>

"Mixing Causes" *Leaven*, Feb-Mar 03

<http://www.lalecheleague.org/llleaderWeb/LV/LVFebMar03p18.html>

Political and religious beliefs

"Mixing Causes or Not?" *Leaven*, Jun-Jul 99

<http://www.lalecheleague.org/llleaderWeb/LV/LVJunJul99p69.html>

Involvement with other non-profits; personal businesses

"When a Leader's Beliefs Become Mixing Causes" *Leaven*, Apr-May 99

<http://lalecheleague.org/llleaderWeb/LV/LVAprMay99p30.html>