

THE BEGINNING EXPERIENCE TEAM

The *Beginning Experience* team **includes everyone who regularly works on behalf of the ministry**. The ministry focuses on the grief process, which has a beginning and, eventually, an end. The programs are based on the effectiveness of peer-to-peer ministry, the extraordinary and life-giving healing that occurs when hurting people share their experiences to help others. *Beginning Experience* peer ministers are in various places on the journey through grief, from newly hurting to nearly healed. As “wounded healers,” they reach out from their own place in the journey to those who are newer to it. Participation by those in EACH stage is needed for a healthy team. Eventually, each person’s journey is complete and moving to a new path in life is called for.

It is the woundedness of the team member that is of value in peer-to-peer ministry. To this end, **all weekend participants are potential team members** and, with rare exception, should be invited to explore what it means to be on team by attending an Orientation Session, and invited to further training for talk writing and facilitating training if they feel called to do so.

Team membership is a **mutual invitation process**. The team invites potential members to complete training for the level of service to which they feel called. In return, potential members invite the team’s acceptance of their woundedness as the Holy Spirit’s instrument for reaching others. Team membership is conveyed through the ongoing mutual agreement between those willing to serve and the approval of the Local Board to accept their service. At any time, a team member may choose to move on, or in accordance with *Beginning Experience* policies and guidelines, the local board may require a team member to move on for the good of the ministry.




This document presents the *Beginning Experience* team membership process. It reinforces the importance of the peer relationship in *Beginning Experience* programs, and recognizes and affirms the important contribution of those team members who provide support services rather than direct peer-to-peer ministry. These support services are described in the charts on the following page.

To qualify for team, an individual:

- Has experienced separation, divorce or widowhood and has begun reflecting on the pain of that loss
- Is familiar with the elements of a *Beginning Experience* weekend by participating in the weekend program
- Has been invited to and participates in an Orientation session
- Commits to further training in facilitation skills and talk writing, or to providing support services
- Understands and agrees to be faithful to the vision and mission of the *Beginning Experience* ministry
- Agrees to maintain and uphold the integrity of the weekend process
- Believes that the power to change comes from God, not from team members
- Realizes that the role of the peer minister is to enable others to find their own answers in their own ways
- Contributes to an atmosphere of loving care and concern
- Has qualities which enable him or her to:
 - ◆ Communicate with others
 - ◆ Reach out to others in pain
- Respects the feelings of others
- Is open to experiencing the ministry’s worldwide nature through attending conferences or conventions
- Has been approved by the local board or, in the case of emerging teams, by the person in authority appointed by the International Ministry Center (or, if appropriate, the Asia Pacific Regional Board or Regional Board of Great Britain and Ireland)

A team member participating in the ministry:

- Attends team meetings and team renewals in accordance with local team guidelines
- Is included on the team membership list submitted to the International Ministry Center and/or the Asia Pacific Regional Board or Great Britain and Ireland Regional Board
- Receives communication from the International Ministry Center and/or Asia Pacific Regional Board or Great Britain and Ireland Regional Board
- Is asked to attend Regional Conferences and International Conventions in order to experience and understand the ministry’s worldwide nature.

TRAINING	LEVEL OF SERVICE AND COMMITMENT
<p style="text-align: right;"></p> <p><u>1. Orientation Session</u></p> <p>Includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “The Vision of Beginning Experience” parts I and II (“Overview of Team Membership”) ● History of the ministry, including local history ● World wide nature and organizational structure of the ministry ● Local team bylaws and guidelines, including dating and respectful ministry environment policies ● An awareness of the <i>Policy Manual for Beginning Experience Teams</i> and other ministry resources 	<p><u>A. After completing the Orientation Session, the team member:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Commits to such support activities as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Program set up and pack up ✓ Greeting ✓ Fundraising ✓ Mailings ✓ Organizing socials ✓ Newsletters ✓ Kitchen duty ✓ Publicity, community outreach, etc. ● Attends the portion of the program for which his or her support service is required ● May vote for members of the board
<p style="text-align: right;"></p> <p><u>2. Plus Facilitator Training</u></p> <p>In addition to the Orientation session, prepares for presenting peer-to-peer ministry using approved program manuals and training materials, <u>issued under signed contract</u>, which cover:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Psychology and theology of the ministry ● Program structure and process ● Writing, critiquing and updating talks ● Basic and ongoing facilitation skills ● Additional related training <p>Becomes familiar with the content of the <i>Policy Manual for Beginning Experience Teams</i> and other ministry resources.</p>	<p><u>B. In addition to the above, and completing initial Facilitator Training, the presenting team member:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Commits to facilitating small groups, and writing, <u>rewriting</u> and presenting talks in <i>Beginning Experience</i> programs ● Attends the entire program for which a commitment has been made ● Attends on-going team training ● May serve on the local board ● May serve as program coordinator ● May serve as committee chair ● May serve as screener ● May serve as/assist team trainer
<p style="text-align: right;"></p> <p><u>3. Moving On</u></p> <p>Team members who have served in presenting the ministry’s peer-to-peer programs but are no longer peer in the grief journey (i.e., no longer feel the pain of their own grief and are no longer engaged in their personal grief journey) should be invited to participate in a moving on ceremony.</p> <p>This ceremony should recognize and honor the person’s contribution to the ministry, and offer an opportunity to say goodbye and express what the ministry has meant in his or her life.</p>	<p><u>C. At this level, the former team member, including the re-married:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● May, at the request of the local board, assist with support activities listed in Section A above under “Level of Service and Commitment” ● May financially support the ministry ● May participate in a local Alumni chapter ● May, at the request of the local board and with the specific approval of the International Ministry Center, Asia Pacific Regional Board or Regional Board of Britain and Ireland, assist on a temporary basis with selected activities listed in Section B above ● May not present talks or facilitate ● May not vote for members of the board ● May move into <i>Beginning Experience</i> youth ministry ● May move into Beyond <i>Beginning Experience</i> ministry

Note that in this team membership process there is no place for a “probationary period,” “team-in-training,” requirement for making a second weekend, making Continued Beginnings or other barriers to service. Nor is it the intention that those who make the weekend “might be ready in six months” or “ready in a year.” **It is their woundedness NOW that makes them effective as peer ministers.**

How then, are teams to be certain that the people they invite to team will be good team members? There is no such certainty. The team must:

- Weigh the insights of the facilitators, team trainers and local board who, in accordance with *Beginning Experience* policies and guidelines, evaluate:
 - The person’s willingness to serve
 - Grasp of the mission and vision
 - Understanding of the requirements for service, and
 - Reasons for offering to serve
- Trust in the wisdom of the Holy Spirit
- Trust in the *Beginning Experience* healing process, which is ongoing throughout training and team service
- Realize that even with many restrictions, there are no problem-free guarantees
- Remember that you have your team’s Conflict Resolution Procedure, *The Policy Manual for Beginning Experience Teams*, and the International Ministry Center and International or Regional Board representatives to rely on if difficulties arise.

With the above criteria in mind, some participants should not be invited to an Orientation session. Such participants include:

- A person with **significant** mental or emotional problems (other than those resulting from the grief experience)
- A person with a history of violence or abuse
- A committed atheist, or person unwilling to work within the Catholic/Christian framework of the ministry
- An active alcoholic or user of illegal drugs

Questions that arise about the team membership process may be directed to the International Ministry Center, or Asia Pacific Regional Board, Great Britain and Ireland Regional Board or International Board representative for clarification.

Adopted by the International Board of Directors
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