

# The Encounter Needs **You** to keep Your Sharing Group spirit **Alive**

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How do you keep your sharing group alive and healthy? Never shy about venturing opinions, your *Matrimony* staff offers these guidelines.

**1. Meet frequently.** Meeting twice a month or more is good. When we meet less often, much of the closeness and feelings of intimacy evaporate. Each meeting becomes a new start.

**2. Set up a reliable means of communication.** Most successful sharing groups have a phone chain or tree so that no one has to call more than two or three couples. Use the phone chain to pass along reminders about meeting times, other M.E. activities and prayer requests. Make agreements about making sure the messages make it all the way through the chain. Breakdowns in the calling arrangements mean reduced attendance at meetings and other activities. *[Editor Note: This article was originally written before the home computer was so popular. But, remember an occasional personal phone call conveys more warmth than always relying on email.]*

**3. Meet regularly.** Pick your meeting dates well in advance and stick to the dates. Choose some easily remembered time like the second and fourth Wednesday of the month. In the beginning when the group is small, it is a temptation to reschedule if one or two couples can't make the meeting. While it is desirable to have everyone there, frequent rescheduling makes it impossible to put the meetings on the calendar. Couples can't plan in advance, so someone is always unable to attend so the meeting is rescheduled again. As long as two couples can attend, the meetings should be held at the regularly scheduled time.

**4. Think of your sharing group as your extended family.** Invite them to your family occasions - baptisms, graduations, baby showers, etc. If you are planning a spontaneous backyard barbecue that includes one or more couples from your sharing group pass an invitation down the calling chain for everyone to come. Think of how it affects family members to find out that a family activity has been planned and they weren't invited.

**5. Keep it focused on relationship.** This is what the sharing group is about, but it may not always be easy. It can be tempting to let the presentation and dialogue be "fun" instead of deep - and the focus of the evening becomes social. Be strong - keep the socializing for specially planned occasions, not the sharing group meeting time. There are lots of occasions to socialize, but the opportunities for real growth in our relationship are far more likely to come from sharing time rather than the "fun" time.

**6. As couples join your group, be sure they understand their obligations.** It is easy to fall away from sharing deeply when some couples don't understand the true purpose for the group. In fact, it is a good idea to review the obligations you all signed up for a couple of times a year, so you don't forget.

**That's it - "Make it frequent, keep it regular, and stay on focus."**