

# THE BIG AMNESTY SKILL SHARE



## HEALTHY GROUPS 5

# KEEPING NEW MEMBERS

Put yourself in the shoes of the person who walks into your group meeting for the first time. We are often so busy thinking about the agenda we might not notice the new person or think about how they're feeling in those first important minutes. You don't get a second chance to make the right impression, so make sure you get off to an engaging start with them.

### IMAGINE THIS...

You see this ad for Amnesty and decide to go along to your local group meeting for the first time.

You find the building, but it's not clear which room to go to. You open the door and there are about eight people talking to each other.

It will only take a few seconds to form an opinion of this group...

**What would you like to happen when you walk in?  
What would you like to feel when you go home?  
And importantly, what would make you come back next time?**



## WHAT WOULD ANY OF US WANT TO FEEL AT OUR FIRST MEETING?

I've been invited to join them at their market stall next week and we're watching a video on forced evictions in Kenya at the next meeting

I have found a group that shares my passion for human rights

I wrote to the Chinese government about Internet repression

There's a lot of good stuff going on and I think I have something to offer

I felt welcomed, everyone smiled, quite a mix of people but they seemed really friendly

# HEALTHY GROUPS

**SO, STARTING FROM WHAT THE NEW PERSON NEEDS, MAKE SURE YOU DO THESE THINGS – NONE OF THEM ARE HARD!**

- 1** Make it clear on all your publicity where your meeting is and that newcomers are very welcome.



- 2** If the new person has called or emailed the group, make sure they receive a friendly response. Have a list of useful things to say.

- 1) What are you interested in?**
- 2) Come along to our talk on....**
- 3) I'll meet you at...**

- 3** Have a 'meeter and greeter' at your meetings. Any new person needs a friendly welcome from someone who takes an interest in them, and who will be positive about the group and its activities.



# HEALTHY GROUPS

## HERE ARE SOME TIPS FROM OTHER GROUPS AND THE BIG AMNESTY SKILL SHARE WEEKENDS...

Produce an up-to-date short leaflet about your group's successes and activities, listing things a new person can do and who to contact.

Evaluate your meetings from time to time, keep them lively and inclusive.

Have a scrap book with press coverage and photos for new people to browse through.

Keep in touch about future meetings and events, send the new member some campaigning information, and make sure someone gives them a call before the next meeting.

Avoid jargon. Explain what's being discussed tonight.

Introduce them to at least two more people who might share their interests.

Think of ways of pairing up a new person with more experienced members on a task – don't thrust a vacant position on them, or rush things. Give them space to make a sensible decision about what they want to **DO** rather than what **ROLE** they should take on.

Make sure it's clear what will happen at the meeting – which agenda items are quick report back ones and which are open discussions.

Make sure you do the monthly action or sign a letter during the meeting.

Explain some of the activities they could get involved in and make a note of any expression of interest, or introduce them to a relevant person.

Make sure everyone is introduced at the beginning of the meeting.

Ask new members what brought them to the meeting and what sort of things interest them, **before** you launch into the Amnesty spiel!

Break into small groups or pairs for part of a discussion so less experienced people can try out a point of view.

(Later) ask them what their first impressions of the group were – what was good and what needs improving? Their views are crucial.



## KEEPING NEW MEMBERS QUIZ – A CHECKLIST

### 1. Someone has seen your poster in the library and tells you they might be interested in joining, Do you:

- A. Give them a broad smile and describe a couple of great things about the group?
- B. Ask about their interests?
- C. Tell them about the group's next meeting, get their details and say you will call them a couple of days beforehand?
- D. Say that the details of the next group meeting should have been on the poster, but hardly anyone goes?

### 2. A new member walks through the door of your meeting. What happens?

- A. A meeter and greeter spots them, smiles and welcomes them, then explains what will take place
- B. Everyone is introduced by name
- C. They are given a short leaflet describing some of the groups activities and successes
- D. Everyone carries on as normal

### 3. In the course of your meeting they experience:

- A. Doing the monthly action together
- B. A discussion on an important human rights theme
- C. The opportunity to give their point of view during a small group task
- D. A bad tempered discussion about the ISP, the ICM and the UA network

### 4. At the coffee break the new member:

- A. Is asked about their interests and abilities and meets at least two new people with something in common
- B. Looks at the group's scrap book with another member
- C. Is asked for their contact details
- D. What coffee break?

### 5. After the meeting:

- A. They are given an action to take home and complete
- B. They are told about future events and the next few meetings
- C. They are invited to join the small group organising a music and human rights event
- D. You and your friends go to the pub, you don't know what the others do

### 6. Before the next meeting the new member:

- A. Has been called to see if they are able to come along and asked if they have any more questions about Amnesty
- B. Feels fairly confident about joining a more experienced person on a task
- C. Has been sent a note about future group activities and campaigns
- D. Never wants to come back again

**ANSWERS: All of the above, EXCEPT Ds!**