Establishing Group Connections
One of the signs of a successful group is more dependency on each other and less on the facilitator and staff. Between-meeting phone calls, lunches and outings are to be encouraged. Hopefully, some good healthy friendships will develop and support will continue long after they have attended their last meeting. A secondary benefit of member interaction is the development of a sense of "group ownership" in the participants; they come to believe the group is truly theirs. Here are suggestions for encouraging connections between group members.

- Make meaningful introductions -- mention anything members have in common besides the reason they are attending, i.e. similar jobs, children the same age, same home states.
- Start a Listener Group -- composed of members or previous members who are ready to become phone listeners for new members.
- Have Listener Meetings -- to share feelings and thoughts about phone calls.
- Distribute names and numbers of current group members (with permission)
- Occasional group activities -- bake sale, picnics, manning booths at health fairs.
- Suggest, as part of the meeting, that members get together before or after the group.
- If appropriate, establish a buddy system where new members are matched up with old members.
- Ask members for suggestions to continue their connections.
- Establish a monthly or quarterly newsletter
- Establish an Alumni Association

Note
All these do not apply to both formats, but are listed so you can pick and choose depending on the appropriateness for your group.

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