

e) Handy tips

- **Keep your meetings positive and encouraging.** The number one reason people give for not wanting to go to a support group is the perception that it's just a bunch of people getting together to whine and complain. Whilst members need to be able to bring up difficult issues, make sure you bring the focus back to finding solutions and listening to one another. Try not to allow the meeting to degenerate into an anger or self-pity session.
- **Be a better listener than you are a talker.** People need to be able to share their problems with someone who understands what they're going through.
- **Remember that you set the tone for the meeting.** We all have bad days and bad moods, but try not to let yours show in front of the group. Whilst you might acknowledge that it's been a rough day, put on a smile and go ahead with the meeting. If you come across as discouraging, the rest of the group will soon follow your mood.
- **Connect with other Support Group Leaders.** Whether you meet in person, talk on the phone or via email, it's good to troubleshoot problems and encourage one another when you are going through one of those challenging times as a group leader. We will share your contact details with other Group Leaders if you wish.
- **Connect with The IBS Network team.** You will have a Support Group Leaders folder, packed with everything you need to know, but sometimes you may want to pick up the phone and talk to the team. Alternatively, don't forget you can email us on info@theibsnetwork.org We are here to help.
- **Set limits and stick to them.** It can be easy to have your life hijacked by a few group members who want to be in touch with you at all times. Only use the support group email to contact them, do not give out your personal details or phone number. Let the group know that if they do email you, you will answer emails on particular days or within a specific time period. Manage their expectations.
- **Be on the lookout for other potential Support Group Leaders.** When you find a group member who you think has leadership qualities, consider them for a role as an assistant to spread the responsibility and in case you are unable to attend a meeting at short notice. Alternatively, if they wish to start another support group, perhaps nearer their home, tell them to look out for further training dates on The IBS Network website or contact us at the office.