

MEETING I

Engaging the Mother Within

Welcome! Congratulations on making the decision to work toward becoming the best mother you can be. This is your first step toward becoming the Amazing Mom you have inside. Your first meeting in the *Amazing Moms!* program is an introduction to what you can expect throughout your participation in the meetings. There is a discussion of the different goals of the program, and then you will have opportunities to explore your own goals for your time in the program as well as some important questions about what motherhood means to you. This meeting is meant to “set the stage” for the rest of the program.

The goals of Meeting 1 are:

1. To discuss the structure of the program.
2. To go over the group agreements and expectations.
3. To explore what motherhood means to you.
4. To commit to putting in the work to be the mother you want to be.

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Group Agreements

At the beginning of Meeting 1, your facilitator will explain some group agreements that will be maintained during each of the group meetings. Part of creating an environment of safety and trust in the program and with one another comes from each mother committing to follow these agreements. The group agreements listed here are the common ones that are recommended, but the ones in your group may differ if there are specific requirements that the facilitator needs to follow.

Safety

You agree to help create a safe space for everyone. This means physical safety, as well as a feeling of safety where each mom can share her experiences, opinions, and thoughts without fear of being shamed. You agree there will be no physical or verbal abuse. You agree to discuss any concerns for safety with the group facilitator(s).

Attendance and Participation

You agree to attend all meetings. If a conflict keeps you from being able to attend, you agree to contact the facilitator(s) ahead of time. You also commit to choosing to be on time for each meeting. You agree to participate and stretch outside our comfort zone as best you can, even if it is challenging. Also, each participant has a right to decide something is too uncomfortable to share and you agree to respect each mom's right to decide that for herself. You agree to keep focused on the topics of each meeting. You agree to help each other stay focused, including helping the facilitator(s) stay on topic.

Confidentiality

You agree to keep everything that is said in this group, in this group. You will not discuss the experiences or information shared by other moms outside this group. All participants are responsible for keeping confidentiality in the group. You understand that any limits to confidentiality on the part of the facilitator(s) will be explained to you as appropriate.

Respect

You agree to respect all participants and facilitators – their time, their experiences, and their challenges. You do not have to agree all the time, but when you disagree, you will do so while respecting the other's experience. You agree to share the time in this group, showing others respect by allowing each mom opportunities to share and participate. You agree to show respect by being honest when you choose to share as well as when you give feedback to others.

Other (feel free to write any others that your facilitator or group identifies here):

There are times in this group when you likely will feel uncomfortable or anxious. This happens to all of us at various times, especially in unfamiliar settings and with new experiences. As a woman, you were likely taught to keep these feelings to yourself. Women are often taught from a young age to avoid seeming “dramatic” or to draw too much attention to themselves for being “too emotional.” As a result, when you experience discomfort, you might not know how to deal with it in healthy ways. Throughout your time in this program, you will learn many different techniques that you can use to help you relax, calm yourself, and feel more grounded. The first two techniques (the ones you learned in Meeting 1) are listed next. There is also an Appendix at the back of this workbook where all the techniques are available for your reference later.

Box Breathing

This exercise can help you calm your body and your mind quickly and efficiently:

1. Put one hand on your chest and the other on your stomach.
2. As you take a few breaths, notice which hand is moving more. Try moving your breath deeper into your lower abdomen, so that your hand on your stomach moves more as you breathe.
3. Close your mouth and press your tongue lightly to the roof of your mouth. Let your jaw relax.
4. Take in a full breath slowly through your nose, counting to four.
5. Hold your breath, counting to four.
6. Exhale all the air through your mouth, counting to four.
7. Rest for a count of four.
8. As thoughts come up, acknowledge them, and then return your focus to your breathing and counting.
9. Go through three more rounds of this breathing on your own, slowly breathing in through your nose for four counts, holding for four counts, breathing out through your mouth for four counts, and resting for four counts.

Deep breathing can be helpful when dealing with feelings of anger, stress, fear, panic, or any other uncomfortable feelings. Plus, it is generally healthier to take controlled, deep breaths versus shallow ones. The more you practice this way of breathing, the more natural it will become for you.

Palms Up, Palms Down

This exercise can help you move aside anything that is weighing on your mind, or even any physical discomfort, to allow you to focus your mind on the present.

1. Sit up straight in your seat, with both feet on the floor and your eyes focused on your hands.
2. Hold both your arms outstretched, with your palms side by side and facing up as if someone was about to put something in your hands. Make sure you don't rest your arms on anything; they should be out in front of you in the air.
3. Visualize any thoughts, feelings, and stresses bothering you right now.
4. Now imagine placing all of your stresses, problems, troubles, and anything bothering you into your hands. These emotions and thoughts are out of your bodies and lying in your hands. Picture them there.
5. Go back inside yourself and find any remaining pain, discomfort, and stress. Then feel these sensations slowly move through your arms and into your hands.
6. Imagine the weight of holding all these problems, difficult thoughts and emotions, and physical distress in your hands. Feel the strain of carrying them and the weight pushing down on your hands.
7. Now, slowly turn your hands upside down letting your palms face the floor. Let all the problems, stresses, difficult feelings, and negativity fall to the floor. For now, drop your burdens.

All these problems have not disappeared or been resolved, but you have chosen to put them down for the time being to be able to focus on what you need to.

Consider practicing Box Breathing and Palms Up, Palms Down exercises between meetings. Like any new skill, the more you practice these exercises, the more efficient you will get at using them and the more effective they can be at helping you calm your body and your mind.

A big part of the *Amazing Moms!* program is building a vision of the mother you want to be and the ways you want to show up for your kids and as a mother. One of the first exercises is to begin thinking about what you want to get out of going through this program. Whether you have been told you need to go through this program or you are participating voluntarily, you have an opportunity to think about what you can get out of this experience to help you as a mother.

Expectations – What Do You Want to Get Out of This Group?

There may be many reasons you chose to use this workbook and participate in this program. Whatever brought you to *Amazing Moms!*, it is important to consider what you want to gain from your participation. Consider what you want to get out of your time doing this important work and how you want to use this opportunity to become the mother you want to be.

What is the work that you are here to do to become the best mother you can be?

What are some things you would like to learn through this process?

What Is Motherhood to You?

You may not have had an opportunity to think about this before. It may sound like a simple thought, but there is value in taking some time to answer the following questions:

1. What does motherhood mean to you?
2. What does being a mom mean to you?
3. What are some of the positives of being involved as a mom? Think about positives for you and positives for your children.
4. What is one of the toughest parts of being a mom?
5. What do you enjoy most about being a mom?

Commitment to Conscious Motherhood

“I commit to practicing what I learn. I will do my best to let go of wanting to do this perfectly. Instead, I will consciously practice being the best mother I can be.”

This commitment is incredibly important to your growth as a mother. It shows that you are willing to try new things with an open mind. It also means that you agree to

be kind to yourself and give yourself grace in your efforts. This is not about perfection but rather using the things you learn in a conscious way, making purposeful choices about how you show up as a mom.

Next, you will find the first Into Action and Practical & Tactical exercises from Meeting 1. These exercises appear at the end of each meeting and are meant to be completed between meetings to practice parts of what was covered. The Practical & Tactical exercises are a chance to do a deeper dive into what was discussed in each meeting.

Into Action: Values Clarification – What Is Important to You?

Part of being the best mom you can be is thinking about what you personally find important – your values – and making a conscious decision to act in ways to live by those values. Just as importantly, you will want to act in ways that align with your values in order to pass those values down to your children.

Look at the list of possible values on this page. Take a few minutes to read through all of them and pick your top 10. Number your top 10, with number 1 being the most important to you. Feel free to identify any values you hold that are not on the list, using the blank spaces provided.

Love	Wealth	Respect
Family	Morals	Stability
Success	Knowledge	Fairness
Power	Friends	Relaxation
Free time	Adventure	Peace
Variety	Calmness	Wisdom
Freedom	Fun	Creativity
Recognition	Nature	Safety
Popularity	Responsibility	Beauty
Honesty	Humor	Spirituality
Loyalty	Reason	Independence
Achievement		

Please answer the following questions:

1. The values I *would like* to live by are...

2. The values I *actually* live by are...

3. The values I would like my children to learn from me are...

4. Three things I can do to promote these values to my children are...
 - a.

 - b.

 - c.

Hopefully, you have a clearer picture of the values you find important and want to instill in your children.

Next is the first Practical & Tactical exercise. These exercises or activities are also meant to be completed between meetings. They offer opportunities to explore the topics discussed in the meetings on a deeper level to help you continue to take on the information you learned in each meeting.

Practical & Tactical

Have a conversation with your children about what you value and what is important to you. This conversation can vary based on the age of your children, but share what you learned about yourself and your values in the assignment with your children. Have this conversation with your partner, coparent, a family member, or a trusted friend as well.

Ask your children about their values. Even at a young age, teaching a child to be aware of what is important to him or her is a helpful exercise.

Summary

Congratulations on your commitment to becoming the best mother you can be!

After participating in this first meeting, you should have a better sense of what to expect from the *Amazing Moms!* program. You spent time discussing some group agreements that will help everyone create a group that is safe, open to different ideas and opinions, where you are accountable to yourself and your fellow moms, and they are accountable to you in return.

You also learned three different grounding and relaxation exercises: Box Breathing, Palms Up/Palms Down, and In With The Good Breathing. You will have many opportunities to practice these during the upcoming meetings, plus you will learn even more throughout the rest of the program. The hope is that you will continue to build your toolbox of skills to feel more confident in your ability to care for yourself in times of distress. Remember, there is a section at the back of this workbook where you can find all the exercises you will learn, so you can easily find whatever you may need.

Throughout your time in this program, you will learn many skills, be exposed to new ideas, and have many opportunities to think about and practice how you might use this new information in your life and with your children. Please keep in mind that the goal is not using everything you learn perfectly, but rather being more conscious and intentional about your choices. You will make mistakes, and it is okay. Congratulations on taking the first step toward becoming an Amazing Mom!

