



**BWGI Ministries**  
**Head to Heart Discipleship Program**

Interviewing Applicants

A best practice is to interview each applicant prior to formally accepting them into the Head-to-Heart group. The reasons for this are two-fold; 1) to give the applicant information that enables them to make an more informed decision regarding whether they want to make a commitment to take Head-to-Heart and abide by its Group Expectations, and 2) to give you, the Ministry Leader, enough knowledge about the individual to help place them in gender-specific small groups, as well as determine whether they should be asked to not participate in Head-to-Heart at this time.

The manner in which you approach the interview depends a lot upon your cultural context and your own personality. We encourage you to adapt our suggestions in ways that are comfortable for you. Below are tips and some suggested questions to use in your interview process. These should be used as a means for opening up a dialogue, so you should follow-up with additional questions that might be raised by the applicant's initial response.

- It's good to start by telling the applicant just a little about yourself if they don't know you well. Especially relevant would be to share the impact of Head-to-Heart on you. What you share can set an atmosphere of openness and warmth.
- Ask them to briefly tell you about their upbringing.
- Ask them to briefly tell you about their spiritual journey.
- Ask them how they heard about Head-to-Heart and why they are interested in participating in the group, what they hope to gain from it.
- Share with them the Group Expectations. Use the Facilitator's Manual to explain these Expectations in sufficient detail so they understand more fully their implications. Let them know that they need to commit to following these Group Expectations in order to take the class, because they are designed to create a safe environment in the small groups.
- Ask them if they currently have any struggles in their life that would be helpful for their facilitators to know, e.g. depression, unhealthy relationships, addictions, spiritual struggles, etc.
- Ask them if they would like further details about the class, and in response you can share a summary that is drawn from Session 1, especially the first section of that lesson on "Key Elements of Head to Heart" (p. 7-9 in the Head to Heart Workbook). For a very brief summary of the class, it would be good to have almost memorized the first paragraph in this first section. Share with them a summary of the structure for each meeting (i.e. teaching followed by gender-specific groups), and the schedule for the 22 meetings.
- Be sure to ask them prior to concluding the interview if they have additional questions or concerns.

As was mentioned above, one purpose for this interview is to determine if an applicant should be told not to participate in Head-to-Heart at this time. The Ministry Leader should be "screening" for two types of people: 1) people who have sufficiently deep psychological problems and behavioral patterns that would negatively impact their small group, and 2) people who believe they are sufficiently mature as Christians that they are taking the class in order to "help" others rather than for the purpose of their own continued spiritual growth.

It's of course a judgment call on whether a person's psychological problems are of such a nature that they should be asked to not take the class at this time. The guiding principle for saying "No" should be that their behavior in the small group will negatively impact the experience of the other people in the group. Your role as the Ministry Leader is to "protect" the rest of the group from not being able to gain nearly as much from the class because of the disruptions that the applicant is likely to cause. The reasons for denying someone can range from something like a deep neediness that make it impossible for them to NOT monopolize the small group discussion to something like a psychological problem that should be treated by a professional counselor prior to taking the class.

The second type of person that should be screened out is the person who is taking the class only to help others because they make it difficult for other people in a small group to feel safe and be vulnerable in sharing their difficulties. They will be focused on trying to teach and fix other people in their small group rather than focusing on their own life and issues. And if they see little need for their own continued spiritual growth, frankly, Head to Heart is not the class for them.

Of course it is difficult for most Ministry Leaders to tell somebody that they shouldn't take the class, especially when that person is eager to do so. If you aren't sure that you should tell an applicant "No" during the interview, we suggest that you indicate to them that you do have concerns about their impact on others and that you would like to think and pray more about it. If you are sure that you should say "No," it would be best to do so in this initial interview and tell them why. This is a time for truth and grace. For people you are not sure about by the end of the first interview, two things you can do after the interview would be to talk to other people who have been with the applicant in a small group setting and to consult with another person whose judgment you respect in such matters. For those people who you end up declining to take them into the class, you can suggest steps they might take so that in the future you would be willing to reconsider their application, e.g. go to a professional counselor.

One question that might arise is whether married couples should take Head to Heart together. In most cases we encourage couples to take the class together. However, you should alert couples to two concerns: 1) they should not give special attention to their spouse during the class but instead interact readily with other people in the class; it's helpful for couples to sit at different tables, especially because they are not then in the same Table Group discussions during the teaching time; and 2) if the couple is having severe marital difficulties, they must not let their interpersonal problems affect the way they treat one another during the class. A benefit of a couple taking Head to Heart together is that they can help process the material with one another, although for this to be beneficial requires that they have healthy communication skills.

As we said at the outset of this section, it is a best practice to interview every applicant. And remember that this is one of the Ministry Leader's responsibilities that you can delegate to some of your facilitators (especially if they are experienced). However, if it proves difficult to interview every applicant (especially when there is a rush of candidates shortly before the first meeting), we then suggest that you interview only the applicants that neither you nor any of the facilitators know well, i.e. for applicants well-known to your leadership group you rely upon your prior knowledge rather than interview them. This approach can greatly ease the time constraints without unduly sacrificing the quality of the small groups.