

Facilitator Interview

The need to give back and help others through their journey of grief is often expressed by members of BFO-MR. Questions about how to get started and what it looks like can sometimes hold people back from taking the training. The following interview is designed to address some of the questions that people typically have and hopefully will make people more comfortable with taking the next step. If you have more questions or want to talk to someone about the facilitator training please call the office at 519-603-0196 or email support@bfomidwest.org.

1. **Name:** Marnie Gerster
2. **How long have you been a member of BFO?** 10 years
3. **How long have you been a facilitator?** I took the facilitator training in 2003 but due to multiple pregnancies for the next 7 years, I didn't facilitate a group until Spring 2010.
4. **What group do you facilitate?** Infant Loss Group
5. **What made you want to become a facilitator?** I am a trained teacher so I felt naturally drawn to the facilitator role. I wanted to become a facilitator so I could help others while honouring my son. 3 years after Owen died I felt that there had been profound lessons I had to learn through grief that transformed how I now look at life. I felt a strong need to offer my skills as a facilitator so I could share those lessons with others and help them through their journey.
6. **Before taking the training course for facilitators did you have any concerns, were you worried about how you would support the bereaved?** I did wonder if being a facilitator would bring my feelings of grief to the surface to the extent that would have made me unfit to lead a group. I wondered how I was going to personally manage digging up feelings again while facilitating others and how those feelings would impact me and my day to day life now that I am at a different stage in the grief journey.

7. **How have those worries been addressed/changed? Were they?** My recent experience facilitating has only been affirming for me. Looking back, I feel like I had nothing to worry about. The week where we shared our stories was intensely emotional for everyone including me but that was ok, we all were sharing in an authentic and intimate way that brought the group a new cohesiveness.

8. **What are the challenges that you have found being a facilitator?** The biggest challenge that I have found is letting go at the end of group. You witness such growth in the group and know that they don't want it to end. I felt like a momma bird watching her babies leave the nest. You are sad that they are leaving but you know that they can and will continue to grow and heal without you.

9. **What are the rewards that you have found being a facilitator?** There were many rewards for me. I ran this group in a particularly stressful period in my life and the weekly meetings were very grounding for me. They allowed me to let go of a layer of stress that had accumulated during the day and bring myself into a space where we were just speaking about the stuff of life that really mattered. It brought things into focus again. Witnessing the growth of the grieving parents as they began to see the glimmer of hope was tremendously satisfying. To come to a group where people started off barely able to talk and ended up bringing in treats and laughing out loud was really affirming for me.

10. **What would you say to someone who is thinking about becoming a facilitator but isn't sure yet?** I would remind them that taking the training doesn't mean that you have to run a group right away. It took 7 years for the time to be right for me to run a group. If you are curious about facilitating, I would encourage you to take the training and then you can sit with it until you are ready

