

Policy Concerning Disruptive Participants

Background

Thousands of women are drawing closer to Christ through Walking with Purpose each year. We are so grateful to the Lord for His blessing upon the hearts that have been mended, the relationships restored, and faith renewed through our studies and the fellowship of other women at our parish-based programs.

Women come to WWP from various stages of spiritual development and different paths on life's journeys. Many are drawn to participate out of a desire to develop a closer relationship to Christ through studying Scripture. Others come to us searching for healing in some way.

As coordinators, we strive to model fearless positivity in all our interactions within our parish-based programs. We gracefully reach out to the woman on the periphery, to the participant that seems a little distant, to the daughter of God who needs a little extra love. While we are pouring in to these women, however, we also balance the need to create a WWP experience that is uplifting, authentic, and inspiring for all participants.

There is always the potential for WWP to draw in a participant whose needs exceed what we can offer. As your study evolves, you may encounter a participant whose behavior challenges our honor code. A participant may attempt to dominate conversations with a political agenda. Frequent outbursts due to personal trauma or severe mental illness can halt discussions. A woman may continually act disrespectfully toward other participants. As coordinators, it is our responsibility to be on the alert for these women and to support our small group leaders as they attempt to resolve issues. We should be prepared to confidently yet lovingly pull aside a woman who has continuously disrupted sessions.

Policy Statement

- We gently counsel the woman who cannot or will not embrace our philosophy that professional intervention, spiritual direction, or another ministry may better serve her needs.
- We affirm that Walking with Purpose is not the only path that can lead women closer to Christ; there are many ways in which we can develop a stronger relationship with Him.
- There will be times when it is necessary to ask a woman to no longer participate in Walking with Purpose. When this is the case, we encourage coordinators to involve their pastor in finding the best way to love a woman to something better suited to her needs.

See following page for suggestions on how to implement WWP policy

*"Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love."
Ephesians 4:15–16*



Implementing WWP Policy Concerning Disruptive Participants

Follow the principles of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #2478, “to avoid rash judgment everyone should be careful to interpret insofar as possible his neighbor’s thoughts, words and deeds in a favorable way.”

Seek to apply the rest of the CCC #2478, to “ask how the other understands” the situation, giving her an opportunity to share her perspective and describe her concern.

Revisit the WWP Honor Code each week and during a lesson when behavior contrary to the Honor Code is repeated.

If the behavior continues, then the small group leader should try to resolve the conflict as described in Matthew 18:15–16, contacting the participant directly on her own. She calls the participant and tries to arrange a face-to-face meeting, or if the participant refuses to meet, then over the phone, when the small group leader:

- shares that the participant’s words have made other women uncomfortable and felt unsafe in sharing with the group; this is contrary to the WWP Honor Code that we communicate respectfully, not offering unrequested advice.
- shares that all participants also committed to maintain a positive spirit when they joined the parish program. This impacts the way that we communicate, because negativity is very destructive in a group setting.
- kindly but firmly states that she cannot allow this behavior to continue as it is negatively impacting the small group experience and format of WWP.
- offers two choices, asking either for her thoughts (if resolution can be made) or expressing to her that WWP is not for everyone, and that the small group leader doesn’t think that our program is a good fit for her right now.

If the participant says she wants to leave, then offer to refund her registration fee. If the participant says she wants to stay, then she must commit to the small group leader to uphold the WWP Honor Code each week and present examples.

If the disruptive participant refuses to follow our Honor Code and refuses to leave, then you (the coordinator) and the small group leader should address the participant, following Jesus’ example in Matthew 18:16.

If the behavior still does not change or the disruptive participant refuses to leave, then you will need to take the next step as described in Matthew 18:17. It is at this point that you should contact your DRE, DFF, or your pastor to describe the situation, explain how you have been trying to resolve it, and ask for their support.

Affirm to your small group leader that by holding all participants accountable to our Honor Code, she is protecting the hearts of all her small group participants.

“To avoid rash judgment, everyone should be careful to interpret insofar as possible his neighbor’s thoughts, words and deeds in a favorable way; every good Christian ought to be ready to give a favorable interpretation to another’s statement than to condemn it. But if he cannot do so, let him ask how the other understands it. And if the latter understands it badly, let the former correct him with love...”

Catechism of the Catholic Church #2478

“If your brother sins [against you], go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have won over your brother. If he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, so that ‘every fact may be established on the testimony of two or three witnesses.’ If he refuses to listen to them, tell the church.”

Matthew 18:15–17