



# December 2014 Newsletter

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## Nine Complete FIT Orientation in Jacksonville

On November 15 nine individuals completed the FIT training at The Springs Church in Orange Park, FL. The training was sponsored by the Bread of Life organization and The Springs Church.

The November training was the first to use the updated 2014 Facilitator Training course format. In it, participants practiced expanded group sessions using FIT's new *Practical Parenting* course (October, 2014), *Insight*, and *Anger Dynamics*. These books were selected for more in-depth study based on the FIT mission and the most common requests currently made by the courts and penal institutions.

Five people from the First Baptist Church of Savanna drove down from Savanna, GA. This included Associate Pastor Danny V. Ray (upper left), Gary Schofill (center) and Senior Pastor C. Stanley Luke (upper right). Anne Gaskins (left) and Stacia Turner (right) also accompanied them. From the local Jacksonville area were Jesse Gines (second from left) and his ministry partner Marcos Bressanutti (second from right). In the front row are Cindy Brown (second from left) and Dawn Schull (third from left).

Jesse Gines (second from left) commented "I really see that this FIT program is not only for others, it is effective for myself first, then others. We are looking forward to using this curriculum at the Clay County Jail and as at a new half-way house we hope to start". Dawn Schull (third from left) gave an inspiring testimony of how she had turned from an eating addiction acquired due to being an abused victim to where she is today. Jesse and the folks at The Springs Church had a large part in making her feel welcome and worthwhile. Dawn has lost 170 of her original 357 pounds.

# *New Guidelines for Effective Facilitating* Emphasized in the new FIT Training Course

*Our Curriculum* has been carefully designed to be an effective tool in guiding clients to constructive ways of thinking and developing their personal life skills. This is done through a combination of Bible study and application of best practices from the fields of education and social work. The Bible is mostly about how to live a godly life and that basically is summed up in the Golden Rule: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you". Being a godly person also doubles as being a good member of society.

*For this approach to work*, facilitators will need to do less "preaching" and do more "listening". They will need to learn group dynamics by working with master facilitators. They will also need to stay focused on each lesson, keep religious discussion on the "main things", and use the supplied questions as the center of instruction. Since this mode of learning is different from what most people are familiar with, the following pointers from our revised training manual are especially important:

## **COMMON 'BLOOPERS' THAT FACILITATORS SHOULD AVOID**

**Do not "preach".** Preaching is not conducive to leading small group discussion. It stifles individual contributions and group processes that make the small group setting so effective.

**Do not do most of the talking.** Your purpose is to "lead the orchestra", not "play all the instruments" for them. If you are talking more than 50% of the time, you are talking too much.

**Do not use the class to tell your story.** It is their story that they are most interested in. Let them tell it. Listen to them.

**Do not answer your own questions.** The purpose of the course is to get group members to do their own thinking and solve their own problems.

**Do not break confidentiality.** Agree that all people are to be shown respect and that no sensitive material will be shared outside the group without permission.

**Do not let one or two persons dominate the group.** Simply ask someone else to speak now or say something non-threatening like "We would like to have another point of view" or "It is time to move on to the next item". Do not seat the "talker" directly across from you because this will only reinforce his or her need to talk.

**Do not rush to the next item because there is silence.** Some of the big questions we ask require thought and this may be the first time much thought has been given to them. Some of our biggest breakthroughs have occurred when facilitators were prepared for this awkward "wait time" experience and patiently gave the group a long enough time in which to respond.

**Do not allow disrespect to be shown for any individual answer.** This can happen when one person opens up for the first time and is finally ready to talk after a lifetime of hiding it and another person comments that a person should "get over" talking about it and move ahead. Remind participants that all thoughts are welcome and respected and that this is not a debate session.

**Do not offer advice.** This is not your role. Your role is to keep things on track, to listen and to get the group to do their own thinking and provide their own examples. A strength of our program is its focus on the needs expressed by the group, not on the facilitator.

**Do not judge your success based on the first lesson.** Trust has to be built up before some people will open up. Our lesson progression gives people time to adjust. You may be surprised at the progress that people make by the third or fourth lesson - progress that was not evident at first.