

Resources / Table Leaders

Role

The role of a resource/table leader is one of most interesting and rewarding on the TEC weekend. It is also a **very important** one in the TEC plan and process.

The person who fills this role is:

- the recipient of all the grace, witness, and community that surround the candidates
- able to witness intimately the transformation that is at work in the candidates in the unfolding of the process; this person becomes bonded to the candidates spiritually, emotionally, and in physical closeness

Persons who occupy this position must bring to it:

- an openness to and love for youth.
- their Christian witness; the manner of their presence challenges the youth to grow spiritually.

Teen Resources / Table Leaders

Those who serve in this role are not just members of the team; they:

- are youth ministers in the finest sense of that title.
- are assisting and guiding the opening of hearts of the candidates to Gospel love and joy.
- are in a position of privileged intimacy in which the candidates are prone to be open and vulnerable in sharing their hearts' wishes and frustrations.
- have a sacred task – to a great extent, what the TEC experience becomes in the minds and hearts of the candidates will be determined by how well the resource/table leader invites and encourages the candidates to full openness to the Paschal Mystery in their lives, both its pain and joy.
- are called to be of one mind and heart with the entire TEC team.
- recognize their communal witness is as important as their individual witness.
 - The candidates, observing the bond that exists between team members, do not miss the message.
 - If a warm and caring relationship is perceived, this will do much to help generate the same type of relationship among themselves.

Eligibility

Young adult's:

- prior experience should include serving on at least one Wheat team after their own TEC weekend.
 - This does not assure automatic eligibility.
- maturity both in nature and grace to fill this role.

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Adult Resources / Table Leaders

This role is filled with an adult preferably 22 years or older.

When the adult and teen work in close harmony, they tend to complement one another. What the **teen** brings to the dialogue in terms of being in touch with the flow of youth culture, the **adult** supplements in terms of life experiences and insights gleaned from coaching youth to maturity.

Qualities

The qualities of those serving as resources/table leaders should be the same as those set down in the section of the Manual about those invited to be part of the TEC adult faith community (Building an Adult Faith Community, VIII-8-9).

Each resource/table leader should:

- have achieved a good level of **maturity**, be in control of his/her life, and be willing to assume responsibility for others.
- be **genuine** and feel good about his/her own life; such a person will tend to have positive relationships with others; exhibits a consistent attitude of gratitude for life.
- be able to sustain **trust**; the knowledge about the lives of the persons one works with is sacred; involves professional confidentiality.
- be **flexible**; while he/she is expected to have good principles and strong life values, the person must be capable of open and honest dialogue with other adults and youth to enable him/her to explore and reflect on personal motivations and convictions.
- be an individual of **authentic prayer and piety**.
- a **pastoral person** who has demonstrated a willingness to engage in sharing his/her life and love with others, especially young people.
- be capable of **listening to life deeply** and willing to share the message with others.
- have a **desire to grow in knowledge of the TEC** process.

Preference should be given to those persons who are faithful members of the TEC community, since they, over time, should be best prepared both spiritually and with knowledge of the TEC process.

Mentoring at the Tables

The resource/table leader's **general role** on the TEC weekend is their Christian witness and their availability to the entire community of candidates by their presence.

It is wise to have a variety of personalities on the weekend to allow the candidates to seek out the resource/table leader with whom they feel most comfortable and confident.

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The **specific role** of the resource/table leader is primarily done as a table facilitator.

- Their first task is to **create a warm sense of community** among the small group with whom they are meshed.
- It has been said that community is something that needs more to be **revealed** than created. **Strive to become friends** with each person at the table, being conscious of the uniqueness and great potential lying deep inside each person.
- Through an **honest and sincere attitude of friendship**, an atmosphere is generated that will be the source of bonding, which will eventually emerge.
- This person is filled with **honesty, caring and courage**, leading the community as a **servant leader**. Let the candidates be themselves. Youth are quick to sense and admire authenticity and honesty in others.

Facilitator Rather Than Group Leader

- The resource/table leader **must be careful** never to step out of their role as facilitator into the role of group leader, dominating the table.
- The candidates are all too familiar with others assuming leadership in groups and possibly not allowing full participation. By not assuming the traditional leadership role, this **creates in the candidates a sense of ownership** for the dialogue in which the group engages.
- When the group looks to the resource/table leader for answers, he/she **should gently direct the questions back** to the candidates. This discussion is a sensitive one and demands patience and understanding.
- Young persons need adult presence, yet this presence cannot be forced or artificial. Each resource/table leader must **show a sense of trust and respect for the honest opinions** of the candidates. Trust begets trust, and respect begets respect. Feeling trusted and affirmed, the candidates are moved to become their best selves in the task in which they are engaged.
- At the same time, it is important for the candidates to experience adult sharing on the subject at hand. Whenever the resource/table leader is asked for an honest opinion, he/she should not hesitate to give it, with due respect and sensitivity.
- Each resource/table leader should be **faithful in taking notes** during the reflections. If they do so, the candidates will follow.
- Since journaling is an important aspect of the teaching method in the TEC process, usually the discussion will be much enriched and flow more easily if it is drawn from the insights recorded.
- **To initiate discussion, it might be wise** for the resource/table leader to suggest a question or two from his/her own journal concerning the reflection.
- Every effort should be made to draw **all members** of the table into the discussion, those who are quiet and talkative.
- The discussion should never be rushed; periods of silence are necessary and important for good discussion.
 - The patience of the resource/table leader under these circumstances is eloquent.
 - Youth do not generally miss the efforts to draw everyone together, even though they may be reluctant to join in.

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Insights

- If someone **monopolizes the conversation**, quietly move the discussion by asking the opinion of the other members of the group.
- If someone **exhibits an attitude** that is very much **contrary** to the flow of the message of TEC, or even constantly argues against what has been presented in the reflections, treat the candidate with respect and kindness.
 - There are times in which we must die to ourselves so that we can authenticate the selfless love of Christ for others. Experience teaches us that when others have deep hurts in their lives, or have had bad religious experiences, a contrary/argumentative conduct is the way in which they articulate their frustration.
 - Trust that the Lord's love will eventually triumph.
 - Be prepared to accept that it's possible a hurt is so deep that he/she cannot accept the love being offered.
 - Pray for that person.
 - Advise the leadership of this situation.

There is a story to the effect that a candidate on a TEC weekend once strongly protested within his small group during the entire weekend that he was an atheist. At the conclusion of the TEC, the Director saw him speed away down the entrance drive of the retreat house and then suddenly turn around and come back. He rolled down the window of his car and said, "There IS someone there I found, but I do not yet know his name." He is today an excellent adult Catholic layman. Patient love enabled him to overcome his faith and personal crisis.

- When the table group is asked to present its **summary or poster**:
 - Do not assume the role of leader. In a low-key way, take part as a **member** of the group.
Exception- the first poster may require you to demonstrate how this process works.
 - Through quiet coaching, strive to make the poster the product of the **whole group** and the summary a true consensus of the group's reflection.
- When **recreation periods** are held:
 - Participate fully as a member of the community.
 - Under all circumstances, get involved in what is happening in the present moment; relax and be yourself.
 - It has been said if we play together well, we are more apt to pray together well.
- **Be available** outside the formal sessions as well as during them.
 - Sometimes youth have personal problems on their mind but may lack the courage to bring them up in the group.
 - Sharing quiet moments with a candidate away from the activities of the group might provide them with the opportunity to open up.
 - What is shared under these circumstances must be guarded with special care and professional confidence.
 - Be aware of "safe environment" and never go off on your own without advising leadership of your intentions.

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The Uniqueness of Each Person

No two persons, on any given TEC, arrive at the same point in their surrender to Gospel love at the same time.

God's time is not our own. Refrain from judging and analyzing the candidates during the weekend.

- The full impact of the TEC message may not come home to some candidates until weeks after their TEC experience.
- Respect the uniqueness of the personalities and abilities to respond.
- Persons who sometimes seem to rise quickly may never have lived through the death experience.

TEC does not strive to produce either an emotional or psychological high. Rather it seeks to generate the profound personal joy of discovering how much God loves each of us unconditionally.

Qualified Guides

- No member of the team is to do counseling, in the sense of striving to give specific answers to unique personal problems.
- That is neither the role nor the purpose of TEC.
- The members of the team are not trained as professional counselors.
- Team members must be careful to not allow themselves to be drawn into the role of counselor because of the intimate rapport they have established with the candidates.
- If special or extended care is needed for a candidate – such as discovery of a serious psychological problem or abuse - advise leadership immediately.

Everything learned in the course of the TEC weekend must be kept in strict confidence, with due respect and reverence for the persons involved. (Exception: when leadership needs to become involved.)

The purpose of TEC is:

- **not to solve** all personal problems, but:
- to **provide the candidates with a vision of life** which offers a framework within which they may find the solution to most problems.
 - **Jesus** did not come to explain away suffering or remove it. He came to fill it with his presence.

Since the resource/table leader is in the privileged position of becoming closest to the candidates over the three days of TEC, they must strive to be qualified guides:

- They determine to a large degree the level of conversion effected in the TEC process.
- Most of the values of a personal life are communicated in **non-verbal as well as verbal** exchanges. The very way in which the resource/table leader responds to the reflections and liturgies says much about where they are with their relationship to God.

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- Normally, the communal perception and commitment within the individual group will not rise above the level of the resource/table leader's realization of the truths lived and shared in their **own** lives.

Other Expectations

The resource/table leader is expected to:

- attend all pre-TEC meetings.
- mingle in a casual way with the candidates when they first arrive at the TEC Center.
- strive to keep their table and conference room tidy during the weekend.
- prepare personalized Wheat letters for the members of their table, and letters for all other candidates.
- if something is explained and it appears unclear – such as how the Reconciliation process will work – ask qualifying questions so the candidates feel more confident in what they are being asked to do, think about, reflect on, etc.
- during Reconciliation, encourage the candidates to participate, reflect or pray.
- during the chapel visit followed by the Christian Life reflection (Day Two), pray a spontaneous prayer after the speaker has finished if no response has been evoked from the candidates; this should serve as a stimulus/example.
- participate fully and graciously in all para-liturgies.
- at the Hoot, strive to draw all candidates into the activities, especially those who are “loners” or who do not have family/friends attending the Hoot.
- help facilitate the Affirmation ceremony (Day Three).
- strive to keep in contact with table members for **at least six months** following TEC.
- strive to attend the TEC community gatherings following the weekend.
- continue to enhance your/their knowledge of TEC and its spirituality through other servant opportunities.

May Christ reign in your heart and mind, and may you patiently and gently have the joy of drawing the candidates at your table into the loving arms of Christ!