



Starting and Organizing an MDHL Chapter

In order to begin an MDHL Chapter in your area you must:

- Hold regular meetings open to members of the community who define themselves as MDHL.
- Register with MDHL Online (<http://www.mdhlonline.com>) and provide meeting times, location information, and contact information for your group.
- Agree to the Statement of Principles found at the MDHL website.
- Only use officially sanctioned MDHL patches, logos, and materials for your group.
- Have two Co-Directors of opposite genders, representing either side of the slash.

With respect to organizing your chapter, and holding monthly meetings, we recommend the following organizing principles:

- MDHL chapters are about building community, as such, the driving force behind each MDHL chapter and the content with which they deal, should be the members of that chapter.
- MDHL chapters should be moderated and/or facilitated by no fewer than two individuals representing each side of the dynamic (one male, one female) as Co-Directors. Whether or not the chapter moderator/facilitators are a couple or in a dynamic together is up to the individual chapter. For the sake of workload and redundancy, we recommend having a group of no fewer than four -- two male and two female Co-Directors. Note that an individual (male or female) can apply to the national organization for chapter recognition, but meetings should not be held until there is a Co-Director (of the opposite gender) on board.
- MDHL meetings should take place once per month, in a place where open and frank discussion is possible for the group. The structure of these monthly meetings should revolve. In Los Angeles, we have four formats, so, in the course of the year, each format will be used three times. Some of these formats require splitting the group according to gender. The four formats are: FISHBOWL, UNCONFERENCE, FREEFORM and SPELLBOUND. They are described below in detail.
- The structure of individual chapter meetings is up to the chapter. The LA Chapter meetings are structured as follows (120 minute meetings):
 - Welcome, old and new business - 15 minutes
 - Meeting format (rotating throughout the year) - 90 minutes
 - Socializing and snacks! - 15 minutes





- MDHL Meeting Formats (rotating monthly, each format used 3x per year):
 - **FISHBOWL** - Men and women write down discussion questions on small pieces of paper, and put them in one of two fishbowls. The fishbowl marked 'men' is where the MEN put their questions (geared toward women), and the fishbowl marked 'women' is where the WOMEN put their questions (geared toward men). What follows is two 45 minute gender bifurcated discussion groups. For the sake of discussion, let's say the women go first. The women gather in a circle (no men in the circle), and proceed to have a discussion group based on the questions/points in the fishbowl marked MEN. They have this discussion as though the men are not present, and with no participation from the men. The men, however, sit in a circle AROUND the women, and are able to watch/listen to this discussion group... After the women have their 45 minutes, it's the men's turn.
 - **UNCONFERENCE** – In this format the MDHL members set the meeting agenda. At the front of the meeting room there is a white board with two sections. *Section 1:* Things about which I would like to learn. Any member can post something in this section. *Section 2:* Things about which I can teach. This section is reserved for members to either (a) select things from Section 1 about which they have knowledge (that someone has said they'd like to learn), and offer to share that knowledge with the group OR (b) post something about which they can teach (regardless of whether or not anyone has specifically posted in section 1 that they would like to learn about this topic). Ideally, most everything in section 1 will be moved to section 2 as members offer to share their knowledge. As with all MDHL formats, participants should enter this knowing that what will be shared are the experiences of laypersons, and should be taken as anecdotal. No preparation is necessary (or should be done) for this format style. Once the posting is complete, the moderators should select 4 – 6 topics from Section 2 to start with, and those 'teachers' take up a portion of the meeting room to 'present' on their topic, for however long is deemed necessary by the subject. Once any information grouping has finished their 'topic', that group can be absorbed into other groups, or the 'teachers' of the next round of topics can begin their presentations. The whole meeting should have an informal feeling, with as little moderation as possible.
 - **FREEFORM** – As the name indicates, this format is dictated by the members, and meant to be a free-flowing discussion on any topic or number of topics pertinent to the community at the time. Members are encouraged to come to the meeting with a topic or two they would like to discuss, and partake in lively conversation with their fellow MDHLers. The principle behind this format is that all members are participating in one discussion/conversation, loosely moderated by the Co-Directors.
 - **SPELLBOUND** – Modeled after the Moth Radio Hour, this format involves MDHL members telling their personal stories...true, live and without notes. The month prior to this format being used, the Co-Directors will ask for volunteers to tell their stories at the next meeting. The stories are centered on a selected theme (for instance the theme Gotta Have It: Stories About Compulsion has been used). Each volunteer storyteller gets a maximum of 15 minutes to tell their story (the minimum length is 5 minutes). The story told must be of a first-hand experience (not something that happened to a friend, but about the storyteller's personal experience). No notes can be used. At the conclusion of each story, the rest of the members have a few minutes to discuss what that story evoked for them (the discussion is not a criticism of the story told, or the storyteller's style, no such criticism is allowed). Moderators should anticipate 6 – 8 storytellers for an average meeting.

