



A global volunteer organization that improves the lives of women and girls through programs leading to social and economic empowerment.

SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL OF THE AMERICAS

Being Flexible: It's better to bend than to break

For all of us, Soroptimist is an important part of our life. We are passionate about improving the lives of women and girls and working together with like-minded women.

However, at times, the world outside of our Soroptimist club can demand our attention: an ailing mother, a child's first violin concert, an important work deadline, or even a much needed massage for our own well-being and to regenerate.

With all of the demands in our life, and despite our best intentions, we can stretch ourselves too thin. As women, we feel we need to "do it all." We have so much enthusiasm for life, social issues, our families, etc. that often there just are not enough hours in the day. And then, something has got to give.

But it doesn't need to be Soroptimist especially if your club does one thing: BE FLEXIBLE.

Because time is valuable, offering flexible ways to be involved in your club may just be the key to keeping members who are on the fence about renewing their membership. Consider these areas where your club can be more accommodating:

- **Meetings:** Try a different meeting venue or time of day when the majority of members are able to meet. Consider using an online service to host a business meeting and/or hold a meeting where members can use a conference call system to participate.
- **Programs & Events:** When planning, provide options for different levels of time commitment for members to participate. (i.e., mailing invitations – less time – compared to putting together raffle baskets – more time). Members should be appreciated for any amounts of time they can offer rather than be made to feel like their contributions are less valuable.
- **Communications:** Use social media to keep members who miss a meeting informed and up-to-date about the club. For example, send out meeting minutes as soon as possible along with next meeting agenda.
- **Finances:** Offer payment options (like monthly or quarterly payments) for club dues. You may be surprised which members take you up on this option. Look for ways to reduce meal costs if meetings are held at restaurants. Consider alternative ways of accepting payments besides cash and check, for example like Venmo (a mobile payment service). Many members, especially younger members, rarely carry cash these days.
- **Personal Circumstances:** Realize that a member's ability to participate may change over time – she may be able to give less periodically, but at times she may be able to give more. Perhaps she's had a change in job responsibilities or is caring for a sick family member. Don't make assumptions – find out why this may be and offer support.

- Survey: Conduct a survey to find out any underlying issues where the club can be more considerate– try using the [Club Assessment Tools](#) to find out where improvements can be made.

Being flexible aligns with the lifestyles of today's active women and will increase member satisfaction. Our clubs will run more harmoniously when flexibility is practiced and everyone:

1. accepts that members can be involved at varied levels of engagement,
2. recognizes each member gives what she can, and
3. avoids casting negativity when someone cannot provide as much time, talent, and treasure as others.

Let's practice being more accommodating today. After all, that which does not bend ... breaks!