

Tips for First-Time Conference Goers

Welcome to Circles of Life! This is a wonderful opportunity for you to connect with other families, information and people and resources available in your community. Here are a few tips to maximize your opportunities and increase your comfort while here:

- Dress in layers. Some rooms may feel chilly, while others are over-heated.
- Wear comfortable, broken-in shoes. You will be doing a lot of walking. This is a casual conference. Sneakers and blue jeans are fine.
- Bring a large tote or backpack with file folders or a binder to keep handouts and give-aways from the exhibitor section.
- Bring cash or checks: many exhibitors have useful materials for sale. You may want to buy raffle tickets for the auction and items from vendors.
- Bring mailing labels for raffle tickets and other informational pieces that require complete contact information.
- Bring a pen or pencil, a highlighter, sticky notes and/or a note pad. Some participants bring a clip board to make it easy to make notations on presenter hand-outs.
- Before the conference, write down questions you'd like answered, or goals you'd like to accomplish, or people you'd like to talk to while at the conference.
- Scan the brochure ahead of time to identify break-out sessions of interest to you; use a highlighter to mark them. Ask other conference-goers if they have heard a speaker before, to see if the content is what you are expecting.
- Plan a meeting spot to connect with friends during meals and other fun events.
- Bring a neighbor, friend, or family member to hang out with your kids while you attend the conference sessions or network with people you meet.
- Take advantage of all aspects of the conference: visit exhibitors during breaks and meals. Plan to come back after dinner for the entertainment and auction. The final slide-show and prize give-away on Friday is always both moving and fun.
- Bring a water bottle you can refill to keep hydrated during the busy day. You might also want to carry a few snacks with you: granola bars, an apple, or crackers.
- Only register for the parts of the conference you can attend. If you must leave early, note that. It is both expensive and wasteful for the conference to throw away multiple meals on the final day because people leave early.
- Fill out the evaluations after each section. Your feedback is used in developing the conference for next year. Your suggestions for speakers and content is valuable in developing useful and interesting sessions and a better overall-conference.
- Use the personalized business cards in your packet to network and exchange contact information with other parents and presenters.
- If you have children at Sibs Shop or the Gathering of Youth, do not call them or stop by until their session is over. It is difficult for both the children/youth and the adult facilitators to face constant interruptions.
- Have fun and get away from it all! This is your two days to focus on learning, growing, sharing and relaxing. Go for it!