



Blindness and Low Vision Support Group: June 17, 2026 Recap

Quick Overview

This month's topic was Orientation and Mobility (O&M), with guest speakers Gina di Grazia (O&M specialist) and Ricki Boden (O&M client), covering:

- How O&M evaluations build confidence and independence
- Cane types and techniques
- Practical tips like glare-reducing eyewear and previewing routes on Google/Apple Maps
- Emotional side of adjusting to a cane

Low vision lighting resources were shared at the start of the meeting, and Gina's contact info included below!

Low Vision Catalog and Lighting Resources

The meeting opened with a look at resources for low vision lighting products, including catalogs and hardware store lighting options. The LS&S catalog was also shared:

- Phone: (800) 468 - 4789

- Website: www.lssproducts.com

LS&S 2025 Catalog

What Is Orientation and Mobility?

The group first asked whether anyone had already tried O&M. A few members had — some had completed an initial evaluation and then moved into training sessions, while others had done training proactively, before it was needed, and found it changed how they moved through their daily environment.

An O&M evaluation is where a specialist talks through a person's needs and goals, and helps set the direction for training. At its core, O&M helps someone feel more comfortable knowing where they are and how to navigate environments safely and independently, at whatever level they choose. Training can evolve and shift across sessions as needs change.

Skills covered can include:

- Getting to and from specific places
- Building confidence (sometimes rebuilding it after a fall or a scare)

- Navigation planning, including transportation services and mobile apps
- Intersection and crossing analysis — a skill that transfers to many different environments
- Visual scanning techniques
- Trip planning using community travel resources

Guest Speakers: Gina and Ricki

Gina is an O&M specialist. Ricki Boden, a psychodynamic therapist and continuing education provider, joined as a guest who has gone through O&M training herself.

Ricki shared that she'd first heard about O&M years before she actually pursued it. What eventually pushed her to go was a feeling many in the group could relate to: a growing fear that was starting to limit what she did day to day, and a sense that living by that fear didn't match how she saw herself.

Her first evaluation, she said, was a turning point — it dug into her actual needs, and she felt truly seen, with both her strengths and challenges acknowledged. From there, she learned that canes come in different types and modifications depending on a person's needs (a cane built for city streets, for example, is different from one built for hiking). Over time, and with gradual practice, she became more comfortable and felt safer using her cane. She described moments during training where Gina helped her notice things about her environment she hadn't been seeing on her own — and she felt increasingly secure.

The group also discussed the use of visual and auditory scanning outdoors. A ceramic cane tip helps with auditory feedback. A sweeping motion (versus constant contact with the ground) helps with depth perception. In crowded settings, it can help to hold the cane closer in, or to use a human guide.

Tips and Takeaways

- Hats and visors can reduce glare both indoors and outdoors, cutting down on squinting
- Preview your route ahead of time using Google Maps or Apple Maps street view, to get a sense of visual landmarks and buildings before you go
- Ricki shared that she's now going to the movies more often than before
- O&M specialists pay attention to details that many people — including friends and family — don't always think to notice, which Ricki said has made a real difference

The Emotional Side of Using a Cane

Ricki spoke candidly about how her relationship with her cane, and with her O&M therapist, has changed her both emotionally and physically. Her advice: tell your O&M provider everything. She described feeling more confident and capable using the cane — noting that, while it can feel vulnerable to use one, she ultimately felt **more** vulnerable without it.

She talked about having to confront hard things directly, and the importance of trying fully rather than holding back.

On asking for help, Ricki reframed it: O&M, and using a cane, is ultimately about independence — about being able to do what you want to do. Many people genuinely want to help, and leaning into that vulnerability can actually deepen connection with others.

The group also touched on a broader idea: freedom and necessity aren't opposites. An umbrella might seem to restrict you in the moment, but if the alternative is not leaving the house at all, it actually creates more freedom, not less. The same logic can apply to a cane.

From a psychological standpoint, grief was named directly as a real and valid part of this process. Having a therapist to talk openly with about vision loss, and to build a plan around it, can help. So can peer support, like this group.

Encouraging Others to Consider O&M

A few questions that can help open the conversation with someone who may be hesitant:

- "Are there things you feel you're no longer doing in your life because of your vision?"
 - Gently checking in on whether they're feeling scared or low, since that may be part of what's holding them back
 - Meeting people where they are — some may not know what O&M even is, and the conversation can be as general or specific as they're ready for
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O&M Specialist Contact Information

Gina di Grazia (O&M specialist): (415) 855-0314

O&M Phone Number

Next Meeting Information:

Topic: Peer Discussion: Recap of Previous Topics

Date: Wednesday, July 15th, 2026

Time: 3:30 PM - 5:00 PM PST

Format: In-person meeting with an optional Zoom link to join virtually

Support Group Website

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