

SUPPORT GROUP



GUIDELINES

*A guide for creating
safe, respectful and
supportive group
spaces*

Support groups work best when everyone feels **safe, respected**, and able to **share openly**. These guidelines help create a supportive environment where participants can listen, share experiences, and learn from one another.

The purpose of a support group is not to provide therapy or professional advice. Instead, it offers **a space where people with shared experiences can support each other** through listening, understanding, and connection.



1. CONFIDENTIALITY

What is shared in the group should remain confidential.

Participants may speak about what they learned from the group, but **should not share personal stories** or **identifying details** about other members outside the group.

Confidentiality helps **build trust** and allows people to **speak openly**.

2. RESPECT DIFFERENT EXPERIENCES

Everyone's experiences and perspectives are different.

Participants may respond to challenges in different ways, and there is **no single "right" way to feel or cope**. Respecting these differences helps create an **inclusive** and **supportive** environment.

3. LISTEN WITHOUT JUDGEMENT

Listening is one of the most valuable forms of support.

Try to listen with **curiosity** and **compassion**, without interrupting or judging someone's experiences. Allow others the **time** and **space** they need to share.



4. AVOID GIVING **UNSOLICITED** ADVICE

Support groups focus on sharing experiences rather than fixing problems.

Instead of telling someone what they should do, you might share what has **helped you personally**. This allows people to **explore options** without feeling pressured.

5. GIVE EVERYONE **SPACE TO SPEAK**

Some people may want to share a lot, while others may prefer to listen.

Allow space for **different levels of participation** and try not to dominate the conversation so that everyone who wishes to speak has the opportunity.

6. PARTICIPATION IS **VOLUNTARY**

Participants are always free to choose how much they share.

It is okay to **pass on a question** or **simply listen**. Being present in the group can be just as valuable as speaking.



7. BE MINDFUL OF **EMOTIONAL WELLBEING**

Discussions in support groups can sometimes bring up strong emotions.

If at any point someone feels overwhelmed, they are encouraged to take a **break** or **step away if needed**. Facilitators may also help signpost **additional support** where appropriate.

8. RESPECT **GROUP** **BOUNDARIES**

Support groups are a shared space.

Maintaining **respectful communication**, allowing others time to speak, and following the agreed guidelines helps ensure the group remains safe and supportive for everyone.

9. THE ROLE OF THE **FACILITATOR**

The facilitator helps guide the conversation, maintain group safety, and ensure that everyone has the opportunity to participate.

Facilitators are not there to provide therapy, but to **support respectful discussion** and **connection** between participants.