



Support Group Guidelines

1. What is said here stays here. Confidentiality is a *requirement*, not an *option*. This is the essential principle of confidentiality, and *must* be respected by all.
2. Raise your hand and wait your turn to be called upon. One person speaks at a time. Each person should be allowed to speak free from interruption and side conversations. Share the air – everyone who wishes to share has an opportunity to do so. No one person should monopolize group time. Please try to keep comments down to three minutes. Please try to keep a limit of two comments per person per topic so that we do not go over our two-hour time frame.
3. Differences of opinion are okay. We are *all* entitled to our own point of view.
4. We are not here to place judgment or blame, nor are we to promote one individual's ways or philosophies as superior to another's.
5. We are all equal. Accept cultural, linguistic, social, and racial differences and promote their acceptance.
6. It's everyone's responsibility to make the discussion groups a safe place to share. We respect confidentiality, treat each other with respect and kindness, and show compassion.
7. Use "I" language, that is, speak from your own experience. Because we do not participate in support groups as credentialed professionals, we do not *instruct* or *advise*. We however do share from our own personal experiences. We are unique individuals, and only we know what is best for our own health (along with our doctor's recommendations). For example: "In my experience, I have found..." Do not give advice unless asked to do so.
8. Everyone reacts differently to medications, so understand that one person's response to a medication does not necessarily tell you anything about how you will react to it.
9. You do not have to share if you do not wish to.
10. Set your cell phone ringer to vibrate, or turn it off entirely.
11. Feel free to leave the meeting at any time, but please do so quietly.
12. Please, no eating during the meeting. It is distracting to those trying to speak and share. Closed container beverages are allowed. Eating and smoking is allowed during the break.

These guidelines are designed for the safety and protection of all participants in the support group.

Introductions

Please state:

1. your first **name**
2. your **diagnosis**
3. your **mood**, here and now, on a scale of 0 to 10, where mood *higher* than 5 signifies *mania* and mood *lower* than 5 signifies *depression*.
4. a **topic** to discuss

All of the above items are optional, but please give your first name so we can address you.