

Support Groups

+ Speaker Notes +

What is a support group?

- ❖ **It is an informal, self-managed, self-help group.**
 - NOT A THERAPY GROUP OR 12-STEP PROGRAM
 - IT IS RUN BY AND FOR PEOPLE WHO HAVE A HEALTH CONCERN OR WHO HAVE A FAMILY MEMBER OR FRIEND WITH A HEALTH CONCERN.
- ❖ **It is a place where people feel welcome and accepted.**
 - IT IS FOR PEOPLE WILLING TO OPENLY TALK AND EXCHANGE IDEAS ABOUT THE CHALLENGE OF LIVING WITH THEIR HEALTH CONCERN.
- ❖ **It is a group that offers sources of information and practical suggestions about a health concern**
 - IT IS NOT A SUBSTITUTE FOR MEDICAL TREATMENT OR OTHER PROFESSIONAL HELP.
- ❖ **It is a group of friends who will listen.**
 - IT IS A PLACE TO TALK, LAUGH AND CRY ABOUT LIFE WITH A COMMON HEALTH RELATED PROBLEM.
- ❖ **The focus of a support group is making the most of what the group has to offer its member at any given time.**
 - THE INTERESTS AND CAPABILITIES OF SUPPORT GROUP MEMBERS VARY AND CHANGE OVER TIME.

What are some essential elements for starting a support group?

- ❖ **Hold meetings at a neutral location.**
 - THE FOLLOWING VIDEO BRIEFLY DESCRIBES HOW SOME MEMBERS MIGHT VIEW A MEETING LOCATION.
- ❖ **Does the meeting place provide essential accommodations for group members?**
 - CHAIRS AND TABLES?
 - BATHROOMS NEARBY?
 - CAN REFRESHMENTS AND BEVERAGES BE SERVED?
 - HOW MANY STEPS ARE INVOLVED – INSIDE AND OUTSIDE?
 - IS THERE A TELEPHONE ACCESSIBLE AT ALL TIMES?
 - IS PARKING SAFE AND CONVIENT?
- ❖ **Make name tags for everyone.**
 - MOST OF US HAVE TROUBLE REMEMBERING NAMES.
 - NAME TAGS WILL LESSEN THE EMBARRASSMENT OF ASKING SOMEONE'S NAME SEVERAL TIMES.
- ❖ **Arrange chairs for maximum eye contact.**
 - USUALLY A CIRCLE IS PREFERABLE IF POSSIBLE.
- ❖ **Introduce yourself.**
 - SHARE WHY YOU STARTED THE SUPPORT GROUP.

- ❖ **Put people at ease.**
 - STATE AT THE BEGINNING OF EACH MEETING THAT CONFIDENTIALITY IS A REQUIREMENT FOR ALL MEMBERS. THE IDENTITY AND INFORMATION SHARED BY MEMBERS IS NOT TO LEAVE THE ROOM.
- ❖ **Set the rules.**
 - USING FEEDBACK FROM THE MEMBERS PUT THE RULES IN WRITING AND MAKE SURE EACH MEMBER GETS A COPY
- ❖ **Ask everyone to introduce themselves.**
 - AND TELL WHY THEY DECIDED TO ATTEND
 - BE AWARE THAT SOME PEOPLE NEED MORE TIME TO BE COMFORTABLE.
- ❖ **Set future meeting times and locations.**
 - AFTER DISCUSSING PREFERENCES WITH MEMBERS.
- ❖ **Make a list of topics for future meetings.**
 - SUCH AS:
 - HOW DO I FEEL ABOUT MY HEALTH PROBLEM
 - DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT
 - NUTRITION AS RELATED TO THE GROUPS HEALTH CONCERN.
 - COPING WITH THE HEALTH CONCERN
 - RELAXATION TECHNIQUES
- ❖ **Complete a roster before everyone leaves.**
 - NAME AND MAILING ADDRESS
 - EMAIL
 - TELEPHONE NUMBER
 - EACH MEMBER MUST GIVE WRITTEN PERMISSION TO BE LISTED.
 - THE LIST CANNOT BE SHARED OUTSIDE THE GROUP REGARDLESS OF CIRCUMSTANCES.
- ❖ **Market the support group.**
 - DISCUSS WITH THE MEMBERS HOW TO PUBLICIZE THE LOCATION AND DATES OF MEETINGS.
- ❖ **Divide responsibilities.**
 - BE AWARE THAT THE LEADER OF THE GROUP MAY EXPERIENCE BURN-OUT IF HE/SHE DOES EVERYTHING
 - YOU MIGHT WANT TO ESTABLISH:
 - CO- LEADERS
 - CORRESPONDENCE SECRETARY
 - NOTES SECRETARY
 - REFRESHMENT COMMITTEE
 - PEOPLE TO CONTACT MEMBERS ABOUT FUTURE MEETINGS.
 - MARKETING AND PUBLICITY COMMITTEE
- ❖ **Communicate with potential speakers for the support group.**
 - CONFIRM TIME, DATE LOCATION AND TOPIC IN WRITING AS SOON AS THE SPEAKER AGREES TO MAKE THE PRESENTATION.
 - SEND A REMINDER NOTE TO THE SPEAKER.
 - PROVIDE SPEAKER INFORMATION ABOUT THE GROUP SUCH AS SIZE AND AGE RANGE.
 - WILL THE SPEAKER NEED IF THEY WILL NEED EQUIPMENT?
 - PROVIDE A LIST OF FIVE TO TEN QUESTIONS TO BE ADDRESSED