



## THE SOUTH AFRICAN DEPRESSION AND ANXIETY GROUP

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## SADAG Support Group Leader Training Frequently Asked Q&A

**How much does the training cost?** It is free of charge

**How do I register?** Click here to register online <https://bit.ly/SGLT2024Part1>

**Who can attend the training?** The training is open to anyone who is keen and willing to start a Support Group. However, prior to becoming a SADAG Support Group Leader, you will need to complete an assessment questionnaire to evaluate if you are able to start a SADAG Support Group.

**What if I am unable to attend the training sessions?** We strongly recommend that you attend our live webinar sessions rather than watch the recordings as these sessions are interactive.

However, if you are unable to do so we can send you the links after each session. **Please note that you will still need to register for the webinar**, and you will need to complete the assessments prior to the following week Monday at 5pm to be sent the following recordings and activities.

**What is a Support Group:** A Support Group is a gathering of people with similar experiences, concerns and life problems who meet to provide emotional and moral support for one another. They encourage a sense of community and a source of empathetic understanding in an environment that is safe and non-judgmental.

Mental Illness can make a person feel misunderstood, lonely, alone, and isolated, even more so due to stigma and misconceptions surrounding it. Support Groups can help break the stigma and shame associated with Mental Illness. Being part of a Support Group provides people with a space where they feel they belong, are heard, and understood. It also teaches them skills that they can use to manage better with everyday life.

Members of Support Groups often share their thoughts and feelings and learn from other people's sharing and life experiences. In a SADAG Support Group environment, everyone is seen as an expert of their own life experiences. Rather than a teacher/pupil relationship, where the Support Group Leader is seen as an expert/teacher, and the Support Group Members are seen as pupils, in a Support Group environment everyone, including the Support Group Leader, plays the role of both the expert and the student.

**Is a Support Group the same as (Group) Therapy?:** Support Groups and Group Therapy share many common characteristics. They both involve people coming together to share their experiences in a non-judgmental environment. However, the main difference between Group Therapy and a Support Group lies in the fact that Group Therapy is run by a professional who is trained and accredited with the ability to conduct psychotherapy, while a Support Group is for a community with similar problems coming together to share them.

While the majority of SADAG's Support Group Leaders are patients or ex-patients themselves who have experienced difficulties with their own Mental Health or the Mental Health of a loved one, we do have Support Groups that are run by Mental Health practitioners. These Mental Health practitioners do not run their groups in the capacity of Mental Health practitioners.

**Do I need to be a Mental Health Practitioner registered with the HPCSA to run a Support Group:** It is not necessary for Support Group Leaders to be Mental Health practitioners, because Support Groups are not therapy, they cannot replace therapy, nor are they the first line of Mental Health treatment/intervention. The majority of our Support Group Leaders are people with lived experience who have themselves been diagnosed and received treatment for a mental health issue. They have their own experience and are keen to create a safe space for others to connect, network and learn from each other.

**Who is SADAG?** The South African Depression and Anxiety Group, one of the country's leading Mental Health advocacy groups, runs a 28+ helpline call center. Which receives over 2600 calls per day from people around the country seeking help, information and resources for their mental health issue.

Some of the resources that SADAG offers to callers who have received treatment, is to join a free Support Group. This is a way to help our callers to connect with others who have had similar experiences or challenges, to share helpful resources and self-help tips. It allows them to network and feel more connected to others who truly understand what it is like to live with mental illness.

**Will I get paid for running a Support Group?** No, SADAG Support Groups are run voluntarily.

**I want you to start a Mental Health Support Group in my area, will you provide me / my community / my organization with a Support Group Leader?** Unfortunately, we do not have the resources to do this - you or someone in your community would need to volunteer themselves as a Support Group Leader, thereafter we can assist in their training. We can help empower, support and train you to be a Support Group Leader so you never have to do it alone and we can help you step-by-step.

**I want to start a Support Group at/for my company, what's next?:** Typically, from past experience and learnings, Support Groups run for employees are poorly attended as members don't want to share their diagnosis or problems with their co-workers. We do have groups for 'Mental Health in the Workplace' that do work, but they are run independently and are open to anyone struggling in the workplace. But if you are keen to start a Support Group at your company, please reach out and let's discuss some possible ideas that could work.

Kind regards,

Amber-leigh Schoeman

SADAG Support Group Co-Ordinator

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