



What Support Groups Do

1. Gives you a voice and helps you to take control:
 - A Support Group provides a place of stability and security, a place in which you can feel respected, nurtured and cared for, and above all it provides a "listening place".
2. Creates a culture of equality:
 - A Support Group is the first place you can go where everyone understands and no one judges.
3. Builds a common identity:
 - You will realise by being with others who share your symptoms that you are not alone; there is an immediate feeling of acceptance and belonging.
 - Being with others who are experiencing the same situations as you, and are successfully getting on with life despite their problems, can be the best encouragement of all.
4. Non-judgmental:
 - There is a code of confidentiality within the Group, and each Member's privacy and dignity are respected.
5. Works against isolation:
 - Being around those who have walked in similar shoes can give you hope – "I've been where you are, it will get better."
 - It's a wonderful experience, when you're in a terrible place, to get a check-in from a caring Group Member who is reaching out just to see how you're doing and to say "I'm here if you need me". It's equally gratifying to reach out to someone in distress and be able to help them.
 - Joining is voluntary with no commitments or forced discussions.
6. Allows the sharing of pain:
 - Knowing that someone else truly understands by virtue of having "been there" brings a sense of relief; you are no longer alone with your pain.
 - Everyone is given the freedom to draw on the strength of the Group as needed and to extend strength to others when possible.
7. Provides information and referrals:
 - When people discuss their "illness", a great deal of information and education is gained.
 - Helps to share coping tips and methods that haven't only come from books.

The Power of Groups

One of the great advantages Groups is the ability to harness the power of Group dynamics.

- Collective action often creates more power to advocate for changes in policies, relationships, resource allocation, access, and so on.
- Collective action can help bring to life inactive procedures and systems that are supportive of healthy communities.
- Combined resources can be stronger and more effective than uncoordinated individual resources.
- Collective action builds community members' awareness that they are not alone in their concern about and experience with Mental Illness.
- Participation in supportive Groups may reduce Stress and even prevent problems by reducing feelings of social isolation and by increasing social connectedness factors that are believed to contribute to a strengthened immune system.
- Group experiences can create conditions for new Leaders to emerge and for Leaders and other Group Members to practice new skills.
- Individual Members' skills can be complemented and enhanced by the skills and abilities of other Group members.
- Working with existing Groups may strengthen their capacity to effectively address regional health issues.
- Newly established Groups may evolve into local organisations or institutions that continue to work on Mental Health issues after training.