

TIPS

FOR NEW SUPPORT GROUPS

There are no fixed rules about how a group should operate. This is something that members will have to discuss and decide. The group should determine their purpose, how it will work and how decisions are made.

Some groups prefer to keep their roles relatively informal, with members taking on various responsibilities as they arise. Other groups may wish to be more formal in structure by assigning specific roles for each task to a different group member.

Everyone should have an opportunity to speak without interruption, and talking over people should be discouraged. Instead, ensure that all voices are valued and heard.

Everyone should feel safe to express emotions. Unfortunately, a lot of people stop themselves from showing emotion in public. All group members need to know – and understand – that it is normal to experience emotion in many forms. It is acceptable to show emotions within the group.

Members should have the opportunity to share personal experiences. When a member shares their experience, others should listen attentively and with an open mind.

Sometimes, people feel that they should follow some type of “normal” recovery progression. Experience suggests that people develop their own time frame for healing and recovery. Expecting someone with lived experience to meet someone else’s time frame may lead to unnecessary pressure and problems.

The facilitator should remain impartial and allow discussion to flow as much as possible. However, a facilitator may intervene if there are factual mistakes, if group principles or rules have been violated or if disagreements become disruptive.

