

Group Guidelines

The Group Guidelines tell us how we are going to care for each other in the group. They provide the mutual consideration, acceptance and protection that are often hard to find in the real world. We will follow these guidelines at each meeting to create the sanctuary and safe place we need.

1. Start and stop on time
2. Time limit for Check In
3. Absolute confidentiality
4. Be respectful
5. Be mindful of others; no monopolizing or cross talk
6. Let's keep it in the here and now
7. Empathize with each other's situation

Principles of Support

The Principles of Support represent what we are striving for as we struggle to come to terms with mental illness. This is our belief system regarding universal, necessary truths that guide and strengthen us when life deals us this particular challenge.

1. We will see the individual first, not the illness
2. We recognize that mental illnesses are medical illnesses that may have environmental triggers
3. We understand that mental illnesses are traumatic events
4. We aim for better coping skills
5. We find strength in sharing experiences
6. We reject stigma and do not tolerate discrimination
7. We won't judge anyone's pain as less than our own
8. We forgive ourselves and reject guilt
9. We embrace humor as healthy
10. We accept we cannot solve all problems
11. We expect a better future in a realistic way
12. We will never give up hope

Predictable Stages of Emotional Reactions

I. Dealing with the Catastrophic Event

Crisis/Chaos/Shock

Denial; “normalizing”

Hoping against hope

Needs: Support
Empathy for confusion
Early intervention
Empathy for pain

Comfort
Help finding resources
Prognosis
NAMI

II. Learning to Cope

Anger/Guilt/Resentment

Recognition

Grief

Needs: Vent feelings
Education
Networking
Letting go
Keep hope

Self-care
Skill training
Co-operation from
system
NAMI

III. Moving into Advocacy

Understanding

Acceptance

Advocacy/Action

Needs: Restoring balance in life
Responsiveness from system

Activism
NAMI