Hope + Me

Support. Recovery. Community.

Guidelines for Virtual Peer Support Groups

Our peer support groups complement a participant's professional and/or medical treatment, if any, but are not a form of medical treatment.

Our Peer Facilitators are trained to facilitate our peer support groups. They are not medical professionals and are not trained or authorized to provide medical advice and/or recommend treatment. Please respect that our facilitators' roles are dedicated solely to maintaining safety and flow in our peer support groups.

Confidentiality and Privacy

- As a participant, you are required to join from a private and quiet space where you are alone.
- No recording and/or screen shots of any session and its participants is permitted.
- To ensure safety and support for your connection, you are required to keep your device's camera set on and active during the initial check-in. After check-in, you may turn off your camera if you choose.
- While on screen, to ensure your privacy, use only your first name and the first initial of your last name; or your preferred single name.
- If you need to step away during the session, you are required to notify your facilitator even if your camera is off.
- During peer sessions, do not share or request personal contact information such as phone numbers, e-mail addresses, home addresses, or social media information at any time.

Respectful Participation

- You are expected to arrive on time. Punctuality supports group connection and flow. Late arrival means you may not have time or opportunity to share with the group.
- New participants are welcome to listen and observe if they so choose. You may choose to pass when indicated it is your turn to speak.
- We require you to use inclusive language and respect all names and pronouns.

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- Only individuals with lived experience relevant to the group may attend. Family or caregivers of those with lived experience may not attend the peer support group. We offer family support groups and encourage you to request information about them.

Sharing and Communication

- Focus on sharing your own experience using 'I statements' such as "I found that..." or "I feel that …". Do not offer or provide advice to others.
- When you wish to speak , use the 'Raise Hand' feature or raise your hand on camera. Microphones may be muted if you are not speaking at the time.
- Keep shares and feedback brief. This ensures all participants have the opportunity to be heard.
- Active listening is a vital part of support. Avoid back-and-forth dialogue.
- Before sharing external resources, ask your facilitators for permission. This ensures the space stays focused and safe. We note that reference to external resources including websites, without limitation, is not deemed to be an endorsement by Hope and Me. We are not responsible for the content of these external sites.

Social Media Engagement

- Facilitators and other individuals affiliated with Hope and Me are not permitted to and will not participate in or engage with our participants or participant groups by using social media.
- With regard to Hope and Me programs, participants are expected to refrain from communicating with each other through social media either within or outside the group. This maintains confidentiality and privacy as well as the overall integrity of the programs we offer.

Sensitive Content

- Before mentioning sensitive topics such as suicide or any kind of trauma, you must provide a warning to facilitators and the group. Please keep focus on your emotions rather than any graphic detail of an event.
- If you require additional support, please request one-on-one peer support in a private room. During the session ,you can request a private room for extra support.
- If needed, facilitators will provide contacts for distress centres.

Inclusivity and Safety

- You are required to avoid use of offensive language. If used, you may be asked to leave the session.
- Discrimination and stereotyping are not tolerated. Such conduct may lead to your removal from the session and possibly removal from the group.
- If speaking about world events, religion or politics, focus on the personal emotional impact to you rather than quoting religious texts or debating political perspectives.

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Substance Use and Medical Treatment

- We welcome participants from all experiences, but we ask that you are not under the influence of substances when attending a group. This ensures a safe and respectful environment for everyone.
- Be mindful when sharing experiences involving substance use; or providing details of their use.
- Refer to medications and treatments by name only. It is expected that you do not share dosages or recommend specific treatments. Consult a medical professional for all medical advice.

Group Guidelines Agreement

- **Shared Responsibility:** All participants agree to follow these guidelines and to respect the facilitators' role in maintaining group safety and well-being.
- **Safety Measures:** Facilitators may pause sessions or ask a participant to leave to ensure the well-being of the group.
- **Active Consent:** We confirm our agreement to these guidelines at the start of each session using a 'thumbs up' and/or verbal confirmation.

If you have questions or feedback about a group, a facilitator, a participant, or your own experience, please contact us at **experience@hopeandme.ca**. We value your input and ensure we respond promptly and respectfully.

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