

WHAT IS A SELF-HELP SUPPORT GROUP?

A self-help support group is comprised of individuals experiencing a common problem or life situation who gather on a regular basis to share their experiences and strengths to help each other overcome or cope with their problem. Mutual help – members helping members – is the core strategy. These groups are generally free, although they may “pass the hat” to cover their operating expenses. Self-help support groups are not professionally-run therapy groups, but can be a beneficial supplement to professional services.

WHO BELONGS TO SELF-HELP GROUPS?

There are self-help groups for just about any kind of problem or situation that affects the well-being of an individual. Members include people from all walks of life and cultures and may range in age from pre-school to senior citizen. Probably the most common reason that people attend is because groups provide a place to talk with others who truly understand what they are going through because they, too, share similar experiences. Realizing that you are “not alone” can be a great source of comfort. Moreover, people in a support group learn to develop their own solutions, create new ways of coping and find new reasons for hoping by listening to how others have learned to cope.

ARE OTHER TYPES OF SUPPORT GROUPS AVAILABLE?

Besides the community face-to-face groups, there are groups that meet online through Facebook, websites, chat rooms, Listservs and other Internet venues. Some groups also meet over the telephone or through email or “snail mail” correspondence between members.

HOW DO I FIND A SUPPORT GROUP?

That’s why we’re here! The Clearinghouse maintains a database of over 8,600 support group meetings throughout New Jersey dealing with a vast range of topics. We also have contact information for over 1,000 national group headquarters, networks, online and telephone groups. Call us toll-free and we will do our best to help you find an appropriate group.

WHAT IF THERE IS NO GROUP IN MY AREA?

Don’t despair! If there is no local group, we can often refer to a national group that may provide information, support and networking.

Are you interested in starting a new local group? The Clearinghouse offers free assistance in getting groups off the ground. Services include ongoing telephone consultation, free workshops and helpful literature about starting groups.

COULD YOUR GROUP BENEFIT FROM ONGOING CONSULTATION?

For existing support groups, the Clearinghouse offers free consultation to help groups through difficult or unfamiliar situations, as well as free workshops statewide on running groups.

HOW DO SELF-HELP GROUPS MESH WITH PROFESSIONAL HELP?

Self-help groups are not meant to replace needed professional services. Rather, they serve to complement them and sometimes reduce the need for them. Professionals have become increasingly aware of the value of self-help groups and often refer clients and patients to them. Many professionals even contribute their own services to groups as speakers or advisors.

WHO JUDGES GROUP EFFECTIVENESS?

Evaluation of a self-help group is determined by those who attend it. The group’s survival depends on the continued attendance of people who have found it helpful. Whether choosing a group for yourself, or as a referral for a client, you are the ultimate judge in deciding whether the group is appropriate for your needs. Prospective members can contact the group or visit its website (if available) to review any group materials. Self-help means more control, choices and more responsibility in your hands.

Staff of the Clearinghouse does not evaluate or rate individual support groups. We include self-help groups in our listings based on their own reports of no fees, member control and above all, mutual aid: people helping each other. Our referral to a group does not constitute an endorsement of that group, nor does omission of a group from our listings signify disapproval. A few groups may have escaped our attention.

HOW DOES STAYING INVOLVED CONTRIBUTE TO GROUP EFFECTIVENESS?

If you receive help in a support group, please consider staying for a while to assist others. Self-help groups depend upon the volunteer efforts of members to keep them alive and running. Many members stay for the friends they make and to be part of the community. As people who have learned to cope with the issue being addressed in the group, they are uniquely qualified to give support to newer members. Similarly, those starting new groups often say they want to start a new group so that others don’t have to go through the “the hell” they had to go through alone. Either way, participating will most likely benefit both your physical and emotional well-being.

The **NEW JERSEY SELF-HELP GROUP CLEARINGHOUSE** was started in 1981 as the first such statewide operation of its kind in the country. We offer the following services:

- **INFORMATION ON GROUPS** – We maintain a database of over 8,600 self-help group meetings statewide, and over 1,000 national self-help group headquarters, online and telephone groups. Information on these groups can also be found on our website.
- **SUGGESTIONS ON DEVELOPING GROUPS** – Many new groups are started each year with the assistance of the Clearinghouse. Our staff can help you with ideas over the phone and through email or “snail mail”. We also have a vast library of how-tos on starting and running groups.
- **TRAINING** – We offer periodic workshops throughout the state on topics of interest to those starting, running and maintaining support groups.
- **PRESENTATIONS ON SUPPORT GROUPS** – We provide free presentations on the availability and benefits of self-help support groups and how they can assist your clients, customers, congregants, families and friends.
- **WEBSITE** – We include information on support groups in New Jersey on our website at www.NJGroups.org

Funded through the New Jersey Division of Mental Health and Addictions and provided by the



EXAMPLES OF GROUPS AVAILABLE

ADDICTIONS AND COMPULSIONS

Alcoholism, drug dependency, dual diagnosis, gambling, overspending, smoking, adult children of alcoholics, codependency, sex and love, gambling, overspending, overeating, families of addicted

EMOTIONAL AND MENTAL HEALTH

Anxiety, depression, phobias, bipolar, post-partum, mental health consumers, schizophrenia, suicidal ideation, families of persons with mental illness, eating disorders, obsessive compulsive, trauma survivors, general mental health, anger

BEREAVEMENT

Miscarriage, infant death, loss of a child, suicide of a loved one, loss to addiction, widows and widowers, homicide, general grief

CHRONIC ILLNESS & HEALTH ISSUES

Alzheimer's, cancer, cardiac, chronic fatigue, Lyme disease, chronic pain, lupus, respiratory, multiple sclerosis, kidney, Parkinson's, over 400 rare illnesses

DISABILITIES

Physical disabilities, attention deficit disorder, amputation, developmental disabilities, hearing impaired, visual impairments, brain injury, parents of children with disabilities, autism, cerebral palsy

FAMILY AND PARENTING ISSUES

Childbirth, parenting, adoption, single parents, stepparents, grandparents raising grandchildren, parents of multiples, divorce and separation, infidelity, marriage, fostering, parenting of teens

OTHER STRESSFUL LIFE SITUATIONS

Caregivers, men, women, gender issues, gays and lesbians, crime victims, child abuse, sexual assault, unemployment, youth, veterans, short stature

NEW JERSEY SELF-HELP GROUP CLEARINGHOUSE

*Helping People Help One Another
Through Mutual Aid Support Groups*



To Find or Form a Support Group

1-800-367-6274

That's 1-800-FOR-M.A.S.H.

(Mutual Aid Self-Help)

973-571-4100 (outside NJ)

