

Welcome to The Olive Branch

Mission (what & how): This is a women's group devoted to abuse, abuse related trauma and harmful & destructive family dynamics. There are many types, levels, and experiences within these groups however, none are acceptable and all are outside of God's love and design for us as humans.

Purpose (why): Abuse or harmful behavior of any kind can be a long, hard, confusing and a lonely road to navigate. This Women's Group is here for the hurting and that their trauma, experience or emotions are never "too big".

Vision (headed): In this group we ultimately believe that while we condemn the perpetrator's sin, we believe that scars are beautiful - that YOU are beautiful. Those scars say, I survived this and made it, and I get to choose how the story will end. That there is no shame in them because God is a God of redemption, refinement, and rebirth. "I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made..." Psalm 139:14

Core Guidelines for an Abuse Support Group

1. Leaders are not counselors nor crisis responders. We are non-professionals supporting other women.

While we encourage, sit in hard spaces, and nothing is "too big" to share, we are still not clinically trained. Should someone need additional time or help, they need to seek a professional. We can connect you to resources and/or professionals if needed. This is a supplement not in place of traditional therapy.

2. Confidentiality is essential

What is shared in this group stays here. The only exception is if someone is in immediate danger or there is a legal obligation to report harm.

3. No cross-talk or interrupting is acceptable. However, affirming and/or encouragement is acceptable as long as it does not distract from the person speaking.

Each woman has the space to share without being interrupted, corrected, or responded to directly. We listen to understand—not to fix unless they ask for advice.

4. We give our full attention to the speaker/sharer

Please turn off cell phones and refrain from side commentary

5. Share from your own experience

Use "I" statements. Avoid giving advice or telling others what they should do.

6. No pressure to share

You are always free to pass and/or just observe. Being present and listening is enough.

7. We do not fix, rescue, or (impose) give directives (re-word?)

Even with good intentions, telling someone what to do can take away their sense of control or giving the wrong advice could be harmful and hurtful. Instead, we honor each woman's ability to make her own choices.

8. Respect each person's story and pace

No comparing, minimizing, or questioning someone's experience. Healing looks different for everyone and pain is pain

9. Gentle, non-judgmental language

We avoid criticism, blame, or spiritualizing someone's pain (for example, not saying things like "everything happens for a reason").

10. Faith is shared, not imposed

This is a church-based group, but each woman's relationship with God and the church may feel complicated. We allow space for honesty—including anger, doubt, hurt, or silence.

11. Emotional safety matters

If something feels overwhelming, it's okay to step out, take a break, or ask for support.

12. Be sensitive with graphic information

While we don't want anyone to feel like they need to hold back, be sensitive to oversharing or explicit content for the wrong purpose.

13. Respect boundaries inside and outside the group

While some might really appreciate follow-ups, exchange of contact info, give hugs, or continue conversations outside the meeting, others may not be in the same spot to do so or want to - we respect where each woman is at in their journey.

14. Be mindful of how long you speak (unless presenting)

This gives everyone a chance to share and avoid some attendees from taking over the group.

15. Every person's situation is unique

While some situations are very cut and dry, other circumstances may be more complex. We ask members to avoid making assumptions or judgements about the person being discussed, as each situation is unique - treating them differently would be detrimental.

16. As a participant in this group, you attend solely in that capacity and are expected to remain impartial toward others in attendance.

Each person should feel free to share their thoughts, experiences, and emotions openly, without concern that existing relationships or outside circumstances may affect how they are heard or received. Because we are a close-knit community, participants may have family connections, current or former friendships, or other preexisting relationships with one another. It is important that these relationships remain outside the group setting so that everyone has an equal opportunity to be heard, supported, respected, and confidentiality maintained.