



The PTSD 12-Step Recovery Fellowship

Guide for Groups

A Pathway From Fear and Anger To Peace And Love

The following is basic and intended only to provide some general suggestions. Each Group should determine what would best accommodate their purpose:

1. To establish a Group, please register the proposed Group with the Resource Center. No fees are required, and the Center will never ask a Group for funds. The Center's website will list all established Groups, including ongoing activities that those Groups would like to share.
2. Most 12-Step Programs follow some semblance of Alcoholics Anonymous's original concept of meeting rooms with simple tables and chairs for members only.
3. There are no dues or funds for participation in a meeting. Depending on the Group founders, a basket may be passed for those who want to contribute to the rent and other maintenance requirements. No funds ever need to be collected for the Resource Center. It is believed that Groups feel more comfortable knowing they are self-supporting through their own contributions.
4. The group founders can determine meeting times. A meeting is usually an hour long but can be longer, with a ten-minute break after 45 minutes.
5. Having a member serve as Secretary to keep track of funds and other members who volunteer to make coffee, provide condiments, help set up the room, and clean up after the meeting has been found to have its own rewards.
6. During the meetings, it is suggested that when a member speaks, they may follow their first name with, "I have PTSD." This is an affirmation that they accept their disability.
7. One person will be selected as the Chairperson for the meeting and may open the meeting by sharing their personal experiences with PTSD and recovery. The usual sharing time is 3 to 5 minutes, allowing as many members as possible a chance to share. How the sharing moves to each member can be decided by the Chairperson or in a manner that the Group feels to be the most democratic.

8. The meetings typically begin with a brief spiritual or positive prayer, offered in joint participation. As stated in the program's formation, the Fellowship is neither a religion nor affiliated with other established entities. But Spirituality is an essential part of recovery. Spirituality in our Program involves recognizing a feeling, sense, or belief that there is something greater than ourselves, something more to being human than sensory experience, and that the greater whole of which we are part is cosmic in nature.
9. Don't be surprised if some members of other 12-Step programs who join your Group want to incorporate some traditions they use in their other Programs. Their suggestion may be something the majority of members would find acceptable. But it should not interfere with the primary purpose of their own PTSD recovery and helping others recover.
10. The Fellowship is a non-profit organization that enables the Groups to solicit donations for local Group activities. Those donations should never be acquired in cooperation with any other organization or entity. The funds should be used as determined by the majority of the Group. The Resource Center cannot participate in the fundraising or receive any funds that the individual Groups might raise.
11. Any literature, slides, or videos that may be used during a meeting should be carefully considered. Experience has shown that they detract from the personal sharing by the individual Members. The sense of identification with one another is most important and aids in bonding the Group. The exception could be given to offer Zoom, which is very useful to many other 12-Step Groups.
12. Ideally, most Groups will be sufficiently similar in their meetings so that a visiting member from another group would feel comfortable and at home.

Important considerations and distinctions during a PTSD Group Meeting

A PTSD group primarily addresses the impact of traumatic experiences. The groups should focus on the effects and coping strategies, minimizing reliving or detailing the traumatic event, which could be re-traumatizing.

While it is usual in other recovery programs to identify as having a specific recovery issue, it is more helpful to focus on the individual's experiences and needs rather than using a stigmatizing label.

Prioritizing safety, trust, and choice is paramount in PTSD support groups. Creating a supportive environment is crucial for effective engagement.

Avoiding "therapy" in a PTSD group: Support groups facilitate sharing and mutual aid, but they are not a substitute for professional therapy and should not attempt to provide it.

Create a space that feels safe, confidential, and judgment-free. Outline boundaries and expectations for communication and interaction.

Emphasize the shared understanding of the impact of trauma, normalizing reactions, and reducing shame and isolation.

Focus on Strengths and Resilience: Encourage individuals to share coping