

GROUPS: BASIC INFORMATION AND SUGGESTIONS

If you are new to therapy and support groups we welcome you to this part of your journey. Joining a group can be a very big step for many people and often brings up several different and sometimes conflicting feelings. This is very normal and is something you can bring up with your group, your group facilitator, or your individual therapist. All of these people will understand your feelings and will be happy to talk with you about some ways to make your group experience work best for you.

In addition, here are some pointers and suggestions that other group members have benefited from throughout the years of DBT groups. Because each new group member is in a different place in her or his healing process, not all of the following ideas may be applicable, so please feel free to use the ones that work for you:

- Plan on coming to group at least three or four times in a row after you start. The first meeting is often anxiety provoking or overwhelming to new group members. This can be because they have never been in a group before, because they don't know the group structure, because it is the first time they have publicly acknowledged a painful part of their lives, or because there are awkward or difficult group dynamics happening for a variety of reasons. By coming back a few times in a row you will become more comfortable with the group and the group will become more comfortable with you. Thus you will be able to make a better decision about whether the group is right for you or not.
- Be honest about what you are feeling or thinking when you are talking during the group. This is your time to really share what you are feeling and thinking. If you are scared, nervous, uncomfortable, excited, or anything else you can share these feelings and thoughts with your group. Chances are high that other group members have felt or thought whatever it is you are feeling or thinking and will appreciate you for sharing.
- Consider getting an individual therapist. Your group experience is a great way to support you in your healing, but it can also stir things up. This is a healthy and normal experience for many group members because the group topics often deal with things that group members have pushed away for a long time. When this happens it is good to have extra support readily available with your individual therapist so you can continue working with the difficult material rather than having to push it down or avoid it.
- Be gentle with yourself.
- Get to group early so that you have time to do things like park, go to the bathroom, and settle in. Being early also helps many people feel more comfortable because they have a seat and don't have to disrupt the group by looking for a seat after group has started.
- Remember, you don't have to talk. You can always choose to pass and you can also choose to simply listen to others for a while until you feel more comfortable.
- Feel free to ask questions about how the group does things. Knowing the expectations and structure of the group can increase your comfort with the group.