

Benefits of Joining a Peer Support Group

A support group is a place where people with similar life experiences can come together to share their feelings and experiences about their circumstances.

There are many types of support groups that can include, but are not limited to, illness, lifestyle, addiction and bereavement.

Many support groups meet at a regular venue like a community centre, RSL, library or a café, and consist of regular attendees as well as occasional attendees. Support groups may have guest speakers who present at each meeting, and they may attend exercise groups or other social gatherings together. Some groups provide catering whereas other groups may not. A support group gives an opportunity for members to share their experiences in a safe and supportive environment. For people who are living with an illness, a support group may help to motivate its members by providing support and knowledge.

Support groups can be valuable to your health and wellbeing by:

- Having group members understand the journey you are taking
- Allowing you to connect with people who share the same experience
- Improving your motivation
- Building you a support network
- Improving your mental and physical wellbeing

Support groups may be offered by an organisation or a hospital. They may be independent and run by patients, carers or health care professionals.

Support group structures can be presented in many ways, including face-to-face meetings – virtually or in person or via the telephone. Some groups may be run by a Group Leader or a facilitator, whereas others may be less formal with informal social meetings. They can be as formal or informal as desired.

Sources:

Mayo Clinic: <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/stress-management/in-depth/support-groups/art-20044655>

NSW Agency for Clinical Innovation: <https://www.aci.health.nsw.gov.au/resources/chronic-care/consumer-enablement/guide/how-to-support-enablement/peer-support>