

# Support Group Guidelines

A Support Group is a safe place for people who need support and healing and who may be in personal crisis; to share and be heard when telling about experiences, feelings, and perceptions; in a chemically free atmosphere of mutual respect, confidentiality, and self responsibility. The group will be conducted within the guidelines of the following mission statement:

***“The mission of The Men’s Center Support Groups is to create a safe place, in these times of personal and social challenge, for any men, women or any gender to receive and to give support to one another and share feelings and experiences to facilitate SELF-ACCEPTANCE and PERSONAL GROWTH.”***

- **Support Groups begin promptly as scheduled and continue for 2 hours or until concluded.** Please be prompt. Late arrivals and early departures are disrespectful to others. If no one shows up by 15 minutes after the start time, the facilitator may end early.
- **Support Groups are Not Therapy Groups.** There is often a fine line between SUPPORT and THERAPY, but we are not here to change or “FIX” anyone. Not that we could. Nor do we give advice. We support members efforts to change and improve.
- **Support Groups are Chemically-Free.** Members who arrive intoxicated, from legal or illegal drugs, will be asked to leave.
- **Support Groups are Smoke-Free.** If you need to smoke, please step outside the building. Exit and return to the group in a non-disruptive/respectful manner.
- **Support Groups are Safe and Confidential.** When you attend a TCMC support group, you agree to keep all you hear to yourself. This includes names of other participants. We require that no notes be taken. Carry away only your own growth material, in your heart and in your mind. **Confidentiality is of Utmost Importance.**
- **Support Groups are Free from Sexual and Discriminatory Harassment.** If you engage in inappropriate remarks or behavior, we will ask that you excuse yourself. Discriminatory comments are not allowed.
- **Support Groups Encourage the Language of Feelings.** Your story is very important; your feelings are paramount. Feelings are neither good nor bad; they just exist. Feelings do not need to be logical.
- **Support is not the same as Approval.** You can support someone’s efforts even if you don’t approve of their behaviors.

**CHECK-IN:** At this time,

- **Check-in is personal, uninterrupted time.** Do not high-jack a check-in. A quick, clarifying question or comment is okay, but if you are talking about yourself, you have high-jacked a check-in.
- **Wait until check-in completion is signaled before providing feedback.** Feedback is positive and supportive and related to the check-in. It is not an opportunity to extend your own check-in.

**CHECK-IN Options:**

- **SUPPORT GROUP ISSUES DISCUSSION:** Discussion is related to group topic. Use this time to discuss the general topic, not as an extension of your personal check-in.
- **Each member takes 5-15 minutes for a personal check-in.** Those with pressing needs may use more time. Feedback and interaction may follow. Each member is given time to check-in.
- **Give your Name;** tell us a little about how you Feel and where you are at, a few words about how you are doing... ask for additional time if needed.
- **Stay on a feelings level** as much as possible; your story is very important; your feelings are paramount.
- **Ask for the time you need,** and seeing to it that you get it.
- **Try not to theorize or philosophize;** use “I” statements as much as possible. When you use “you” or “we,” you are inappropriately speaking for everyone else in the group.
- **Challenge, not confront,** each other in a respectful, positive and supportive manner.
- **Do not give advice,** even if it is requested. Use non-judgmental language at all times. Focus on feelings and consequences.

**FEEDBACK:**

- **Be positive, supportive and be direct**, related to the member's check-in.
- **Do not start talking about your** similar experiences.
- **Do not tell group members how you would solve his/ her problem**; why it is never a problem for you; or how you think he or she should avoid the problem in the future.
- **Do not use feedback to add** to your own check-in.

**CHECK-OUT:** at approximately 9:20 PM, is a time for closure to the evening group.

- Again without interruption, you have about 1 minute to state how you how feel, whether or not your needs were met, and departing salutations.

**CONTRIBUTIONS** will be solicited during check-out and an attendance report will be passed (*you do not need to put your real full name on this log*). Please remember that the Men's Center needs your financial support to continue our operation. It is suggested that a sliding scale of \$3 to \$10 be considered. No one will be turned away due to a lack of monetary funds.