



## STARTING A SUPPORT GROUP

### Conceive

Starting a group can place demands on your time, family and social life, and possibly your finances. You may also need a degree of resilience to deal with other people's concerns. So before you start a group, think of the year ahead and be clear about how much time you have available to commit yourself to starting a group and consider the issue at hand.

### Research

Before starting a Self Help or Support Group, it is ideal to find out more about the options that may already be available for the issue of concern. Check to see if there are any existing groups. If so, you may want to combine resources instead.

Talk to other Support Groups to get an idea of the road taken to get to where they are.

Endeavour to find like minded people with the same concerns.

### Develop

Start slowly and learn to share the load.

Hold an 'expressions of interest' meeting or place an ad in the community paper for expressions of interest. This may gauge relevance of support needed for the issue locally.

Commence development of possible agendas for meetings. Define your mission, vision and values to better understand the direction and intent of the group.

### Implement

Set a date for your first group meeting, book a venue where it will be held and promote the meeting.





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### Why Start a Support Group?

- ◆ Meet other people in similar situations where you can share information, personal experience and coping strategies.
- ◆ Reduce isolation which people can experience as a result of their situation.
- ◆ Those within the group gain support from people who understand their feelings.
- ◆ Start slowly and share the load!  
Take your time, check out all your options and be sure of where you are heading. In order to reduce the pressure of organising the group, roles and responsibilities should ideally be shared.



Training



Advocacy



### Things to Research and Consider

- ◆ A cost-free/donated premises for where the meeting can be held, proximity to public transport. Secure and accessible.
- ◆ Take into consideration results of expressions of interest from advertising in local community paper or holding an expressions of interest meeting.
- ◆ Promotion and advertising the established group at minimal cost.
- ◆ Consider meeting activities and member requirements.
- ◆ Understand membership, ie, who is eligible to join the group, reason for group, age appropriate and possible group size.



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There are several factors that contribute to the shape or dynamics of a group. While it is important to consider these factors prior to starting your group, you may find they require ongoing assessment. It is important to eventually seek input from new members and invite them to share their thoughts and ideas as this creates a sense of ownership and encourages people to take an active role in the group.

### Establishment of the following should be refined:

- ◆ Membership eligibility and guidelines for persons who would ideally attend the group. Consider age bracket and carers.
- ◆ Group size based on the facilities and amenities, and for the topic at hand.
- ◆ Assess the need of a possible gold coin donation after the first meeting in order to cover minimal costs.
- ◆ Establish and check premises to hold the meeting. Consider security, public transport, lighted secure parking, disabled access, allergies.
- ◆ Development of a meeting agenda. This can be reconsidered and tailored later down the track with the input of new members.
- ◆ Promotion of the first meeting through advertising, social media, word of mouth or using other complimentary services as a springboard.
- ◆ Consider engaging a promotional guest speaker for the first meeting to inform and engage interest of attendees.





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## IMPLEMENTATION CHECKLIST

### Pre Meeting

- ◆ Date and time confirmed
- ◆ Meeting room booked and confirmed
- ◆ Agenda set for first meeting
- ◆ Drinks and biscuits organised
- ◆ Attendance confirmed if applicable
- ◆ Donation box ready
- ◆ Attendance sheet ready
- ◆ Vision/Mission statement ready
- ◆ Guiding principles ready
- ◆ Safety and Courtesy Guidelines established
- ◆ Confirm Guest Speakers are organised

### Post Meeting

- ◆ Evaluate the premises
- ◆ Evaluate attendance - How many? How far?
- ◆ Consider team facilitators roles
- ◆ Assess facilities and amenities
- ◆ Re-book venue if suitable for next meeting and continuance
- ◆ Confirmation of success of group and meeting sequence
- ◆ Be aware of any developments that relate to your group
- ◆ Evaluate obstacles to adjust for the next meeting
- ◆ Develop a bridge of open communication between attendees



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