

New Jersey Self-Help Group Clearinghouse

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Ya Gotta "Accentuate the Positive..."

WAYS TO KEEP YOUR SELF-HELP GROUP MEETINGS UPBEAT

Here are some ideas to help your group members focus on sharing positive experiences, insights and information—and avoid the risk of having a “pity party” meeting that has people going home feeling worse than before they came.

1. Consider adding a **new group guideline** (if you don't already have it) that explains that an important purpose of your group meeting is to help all members to **recognize and share their strengths, successes and hopes**, not just their problems. Then consider having a member read this and your other group guidelines at the start of each meeting.
2. **Help your members share their good experiences** by reminding them to contribute their insights, quotes and information on helpful resources or literature they have used, or practical coping techniques that work for them. For example, you could build this into the structure of your meetings by regularly **starting your meetings with introductions and brief “go-round” that permits each member to briefly answer a questions that draws out a positive experience**, e.g. “Describe one good thing that you’ve done (or has happened to you) since the last meeting?” Or a similar question could be developed that helps peoples to share their successes and joys for which they are thankful, etc. Other examples?
3. Another way to help members share good experiences is to **consider having members set personal goals toward the end of the meeting** and then report back at the next meeting how they met that goal or (if not accomplished) what they need to meet it before the following meeting.
4. **Share good news gathered from outside the group** related to your issue or disorder, e.g. new research results, helpful magazine articles, news from national organizations and agencies that deal with your issues, etc.
5. **Encourage those who are now doing better or recovered to come back to help others who are not.** Bring your more experienced members or “veterans” back (encouraging them to “give back” and help others.

6. Make members more aware of the real **health benefits of helping others**. “One of the best ways to take your mind off your own problems is to help others with theirs” e.g., helping members to recognize how helpful it is to give other members feedback, whether it be to summarize the progress of others and the group or to give a helpful “nod of understanding” when a member is sharing

Do you have another suggestions based on your own experience? Please let us know. We would be most grateful.

- Ed Madara

