

NEW JERSEY SELF-HELP GROUP CLEARINGHOUSE

375 East McFarlan St., Dover, NJ 07801 * 1-800-367-6274 or 973-989-1122 * www.njgroups.org

Sample Group Guidelines or "Ground Rules"

Here's a list of most of the basic guidelines used by groups (with a description below each one). Choose or adapt any of these that you want for your group, and add others if you feel the need. To insure that all members are familiar with the rules (and they also can help the group to abide by them), some groups have members briefly read the rules at the start of each meeting, or have handouts available for new members.

- **We start & end our meetings on time.**

We try to arrive on time, because people arriving late can sometimes be disruptive.
We also need to be respectful of people's time and also end the meeting on time.

- **We keep confidential all personal information shared in the group**

What we share about our personal lives and experiences is to be kept absolutely confidential by all members. So, "what is said in the group stays in the group."

- **No interrupting or side conversations.**

It is important that we actively listen when someone is talking and avoid interruptions or side conversations (so no "crosstalk").

- **We use "I" statements.**

We encourage all members to speak in the first person, using "I" statements, because we know that we learn when each of us shares our different experiences.

- **We don't give advice.**

We do not prescribe, diagnose, judge, or give advice. Rather we respect each member's right to reach and make their own personal decisions. So we listen, speak as to what has worked for us in similar circumstances, and help members to recognize and explore their options.

- **We always share what helps us.**

While we present the problems we face, we all make a special effort to always share our successes, coping skills, insights, strengths, and hopes - no matter how small.

- **We don't monopolize the group's time.**

We don't talk for excessively long periods of time or by talking too frequently, we are respectful of the need for all members to participate.

- **We have the right not to speak.**

In our group discussions, each person has the right to pass on any question that he or she prefers not to answer.

- **We treat each other with respect.**

So there's no loud or abusive language, "put-downs," or other inappropriate behavior that disrespects the basic human dignity of each and every member.