



## Online Support Meeting Guidelines

*Welcome! We are here to bring together a group that is helpful, respectful, nonjudgmental, and kind.*

1. Confidentiality: What is shared in group, should stay within the group.

- If you have them available, please wear headphones/earbuds to keep others in the room from hearing what's being shared. If there is activity around you that is distracting to the group, the facilitator may temporarily mute your mic/turn off your video. They'll then try to communicate with you directly to provide guidance, and you're welcome to rejoin when you can.
- During an online meeting, do not invite others to the group or take any screenshots for any reason.

An exception: if a facilitator has reasonable indication that you or someone else is at immediate risk of lethal harm, we'll take available steps to access help. Sharing worries about suicidal thoughts are common and welcomed in support groups, however; this peer-to-peer group is not a qualified crisis service. If you're experiencing a crisis, **please access these available resources: call 1-800-273-8255, 614-276-2273, or text 741-741.**

2. Respect, non-judgment, compassion: It's everyone's responsibility to make the group a safe place to share. We listen to each other with respect, non-judgment and compassion because we each have different values, lifestyles and experiences. You may hear things different from your worldview—**but we are here to pay attention to the feelings behind what someone is saying because feelings are often most relatable.** When sharing your thoughts and feelings, please stay focused on what's relevant to the group's purpose (which is identified in the name of the group, e.g., "Depression").

3. Listen without interruption: We listen quietly and respectfully to each person without interruption or comment. **Listening and being present are the most important things we can do for each other.** Silences are okay! They give us time to process, build up nerve to speak, unmute ourselves, and just be together.

4. This is not professional group therapy. This is a peer-to-peer support group. Immediate clinical concerns must be addressed by a health care professional, not the facilitator(s) or other group members.

*This document is the property of MHAOhio and can only be used by other entities with written permission.*

5. Advice-free space: Although well-meaning, advice can often be heard as implying judgment or criticism. If someone really wants advice, they may ask for it and discuss it **after opening check-in**. Our primary goal is to be empathetic, not to bombard or try to “fix” one another.

6. Emotions are welcome: Laughter and tears are welcome. We trust every person’s ability to navigate their feelings. Feelings are neither right nor wrong. It is okay to express anger at situations but not toward the group. If you feel strong emotions stay with them, breathe and take your time. (If you feel concerned or upset by something that happened during group and don’t know how to contact the facilitator directly, call Becca Alexander at 614-315-8989 or email [balexander@mhaohio.org](mailto:balexander@mhaohio.org).)

7. Share the air: The group is on a fixed amount of time. Facilitators need to ensure everyone has an opportunity to speak. Please do not take it personally if you are asked to wrap up. If the group is large, you may see the facilitator hold up a bright piece of paper as a way to ask you to wrap up soon.

8. Self-care: Please take care of yourself while you are with us. If you need to leave the room or move around for a moment, consider turning off your video/audio until you’re ready again. We all know what is best for our own selves, and carry the primary responsibility for our well-being during the group.

**Participants who disregard any of the above guidelines may be removed from the group.**