

Where can I learn more about support

The Mayo Clinic

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/support-groups/MH00002>

The American Cancer Society

<http://www.cancer.org/treatment/treatmentsandsideeffects/complementaryandalternativemedicine/mindbodyandspirit/support-groups-cam>

Emory University

<http://www.cancerquest.org/complementary-alternative-medicine-support-groups.html>

Please consult with your healthcare provider before starting any complementary therapy.

Support Groups

An Overview



Prepared by



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What are support groups?

Support groups provide an opportunity for participants to learn from and support one another. Although often led by trained professionals, including nurses, social workers, and counselors, support groups may also be led by a peer or community facilitator.

Support groups use discussion and group communication to identify resources, provide emotional and social encouragement to improve the quality of life of persons affected by a chronic illness.

Why should I use support groups?

Researchers have been studying the benefits of support groups for over four decades. **Benefits include:**

- **Reduced incidence of depression**
- **Improved mood and optimism,**
- **Improved coping and coping resources,**
- **Increased social support and a broader social network, and**
- **Better understanding of illness processes, possible treatments and complications, available resources, and methods to improve overall wellbeing during cancer treatment and survivorship**

Many people participating in support groups have reported feeling more supported, cared for, connected to their community and others, and helpful to others. In addition, they report that support groups encourage optimism, a sense of purpose and power, and confidence in directing their treatment decisions.

Support groups are also helpful for caregivers who report improved mood, increased social support, increased knowledge about resources and assistance, improved coping skills, and reduced stress when participating in support groups.

Are support groups right for me?

Most support groups are available at little to no cost to participants, and may be held in a variety of locations such as hospitals, school classrooms, and community centers. Depending on the fit of the group with the individual's needs, benefits may be seen with the first group meeting, and may increase as bonds strengthen between a person and other members of the group. Support groups may be found with a quick internet search, through a local hospital, or one of the national databases.

How do I choose a support group?

Finding a meeting time and location may be one of the most important factors in deciding which support group to attend. If meeting in person does not fit an individual's needs, he or she may wish to find one of the groups that are available over the internet or the phone. However, one must be careful with online support groups, as these may not be properly moderated and may not protect a participant's privacy.

One must keep in mind that the subjects of these groups range from general cancer to specific cancer types. Another consideration in choosing a support group may include how long the group has been running. **A more established group may indicate cohesiveness within the group and therefore, a greater capacity to provide the support one may be looking for.** However, it is important to note that recently formed groups may be just as effective. **One must also consider whether the individual would prefer to attend a group led by a lay person who is dealing with the same type of cancer, or if they would rather a group facilitated by a trained professional, such as a social worker.**