

Guidelines for Online Group Meetings

Give some thought prior to the meet up about what you want to get from it, what feels OK to share, and whether you can share this within the safe boundaries provided by these Guidelines which you must agree to as part of registering for these mutual support groups.

STICK TO THE TOPIC & PURPOSE OF MEETING

These meetings are specifically to offer an opportunity for mutual support around challenges, coping and celebrations of achievements in your current everyday life as someone living with complex dissociation. This includes those specific to the COVID-19 pandemic and related restrictions.

SELF AND SYSTEM RESPONSIBILITY

We are each responsible for our own individual and, if applicable, system-wide, behaviour and emotional and physical safety.

The same standards of behaviour and responsibility apply to each of us, whether we have an integrated sense of self or are living as a system of dissociated or multiple identities. Systems of identities will be collectively responsible for their whole system and for each individual system member who comes out during the meeting.

CONFIDENTIALITY

“Nothing about me, without me”

Personal information shared during this meeting should not be discussed or passed on to anyone who wasn't present.

Confidentiality applies both during the meeting and after we leave.

The above confidentiality guidelines apply to hosts as well as other mutual support group participants. However, you should be aware that to provide support for those hosting the meetings and as an element of evaluating how the mutual support groups are functioning there will be peer supervision zoom meetings solely for hosts after each week of mutual support group meetings. (This applies to the first year only). No identifying details of *who said what* will be shared between hosts or with anyone else during peer supervision meetings or at any other time. However, the general content and focus of the mutual support groups each host has 'led' may be shared.

The only exceptions to these confidentiality guidelines would be if FPP is required by law to share something that has been shared in confidence. Such exceptions are rare but one example would be for reasons of safeguarding. E.g., if something a participant has shared causes reasonable concern that a child or other vulnerable person is at risk of harm in the present day **and** we have any identifying information about this that might help prevent that harm. Even in these circumstances we would attempt to contact the individual participant before we made the decision to disclose to any outside agency.

BEHAVIOUR

It is okay to leave the meeting at any time. If for some reason you accidentally log out it is also alright to re-join.

The group is a place for the adults or whichever parts take responsibility for daily living to attend. It is not a place for small/young vulnerable parts to be out and taking an active role. There will be times when parts are triggered out and this will be handled appropriately and sensitively by you and the group members. If this becomes a problem you will be expected to take appropriate action; it might be you leave the meeting.

As a group becomes more established and trust and confidence grows there may be a need to talk about how each of you want other group members to respond if a switch occurs. This could be welcoming the part, allowing them a few minutes but then the person involved would be expected to work towards the adult part returning. This will be different for each person; it may be that person sitting quietly working with the insiders, or they leave the meeting for rest or part of it. Each person will need to work out how they want to manage, what is right for them. This is a place for the whole of you to be but represented by the adult or older parts.

PARTICIPATION AND INCLUSION - The more you participate, the more you will get out of the meeting. However, you should not feel pressurised to contribute. It is fine for people to 'pass' on getting involved in conversations and discussions.

We all need to help each other to participate. In particular, people who are more confident about speaking and being involved should remember to hold back at times to give others a chance. If necessary, this will be managed by the meeting host.

RESPECT AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

We all have a complex dissociative condition that gives us some shared experiences and perspectives to speak from. However, we also acknowledge and respect that there are differences between us – including our backgrounds, knowledge, opinions, and wider life experiences. Whatever differences or disagreements arise, we should treat each other respectfully as individuals. It is okay to respectfully disagree but we should avoid personal attacks and commonly recognised offensive or unfairly discriminatory language and behaviour. This particularly applies across the differences of gender, ethnic groups, survivorship experience etc.

Even if you feel strongly about an issue, think before you speak, choose your language with care. Any language or behaviour which is personally offensive to you can be pointed out, in the spirit of education, not criticism. However, it should be accepted that it may not be possible to please all people all the time e.g. some are offended by being referred to as 'multiple' but equally others present might be offended by the alternative 'dissociative'.

Be mindful of others' potential vulnerabilities as survivors but do not patronise through over-censoring your own respectful views to protect others. Remember we are each responsible for our own emotional safety.

Listen without interruption when others speak.

ACCESS AND COMFORT

Speak up about any needs you may have; e.g. you may need people to speak slower, softer, louder; or to avoid turning away when speaking.

If you have not used Zoom before please make sure you feel as comfortable with the process as possible to ensure the time is used to its full. IT hitches may happen and will be managed as well as possible.

SPEAKING ABOUT ABUSE

NO GRAPHIC OR DETAILED DESCRIPTIONS should be given of individual incidents or types of abuse.

The same applies when speaking about self-harm or other particularly distressing effects of abuse and dissociation.

THERAPY AND THERAPISTS

It is essential that everyone is aware that because several group members might share a therapist or have different levels of contact with other caring agencies, the name of your therapist is not for others information. Sharing is kept to principles rather than specific input and actions. As the field of working with dissociation is relatively small it is very likely that this could potentially cause problems for many in a system e.g. a principle might be to talk about holding in therapy, you might say that after a lot of discussion with your therapist you do use holding. An action might be 'Sue my therapist always holds my hand when I talk about trauma'. This might be hard at first but it is possible to share and get the support you would like without being explicit.