

Peer Group Agreement/Ground-rules

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WHO WE ARE

This peer group was founded in XXXX by First Person Plural but has not been affiliated with the charity since XXXX.

While we chose to book our venue under the title "XXXXXXXX" rather than an individual's name, "XXXXXXXX" is not a legal entity. We are merely a group of individuals diagnosed with a complex dissociative disorder (OSDD, DID) who choose to meet for one two-hour session per month for the sole purpose of providing each other mutual peer support.

The below ground rules are reviewed periodically and changes are made by consensus.

IMPORTANT SAFETY ADVICE

Shared experiences can make us feel a closeness and bond with our peers very quickly, even before we know each other well. We ask that you aim to build relationships in the context of group slowly, be mindful of each other's boundaries and take your time to establish a mutual sense of trust and respect. BE AWARE that just because a person you meet for the first time shares similar experiences to you this does not automatically mean they are a safe person for you.

Please use the same common sense precautions you might take when meeting any stranger for the first time.

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SELF AND SYSTEM RESPONSIBILITY

We are each responsible for our own individual and system-wide, behaviour and emotional & 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 will not be discussed or passed on to anyone who wasn't present when the person originally spoke

Even amongst those originally present, personal information should not be further commented on or discussed outside the presence of the person who shared it.

Confidentiality applies both during the meeting and after we leave.

BEHAVIOUR

It is okay to do anything you like – leave the room, walk around, fall asleep etc. - as long as it is within these guidelines and does not interfere with the enjoyment of others. Behave responsibly, with consideration for others, just as you would want others to behave.

Any part participating in group needs to have understood and agreed to these ground rules and have the appropriate mental level to abide by them and ensure their system's safety. (e.g. if present at the end of group they need to be able to leave the venue promptly and make their way home without assistance from their peers).

The group is not a place for vulnerable parts to take an active role. There will be times when parts are triggered out and this will be handled appropriately and sensitively by yourself and the group members. If this becomes a problem you will be expected to take the appropriate action, it might be for a time the group is not helpful to you.

PARTICIPATION and INCLUSION

The more you participate, the more you will gain from the meeting. However, this should not feel like a pressure. It is fine for people to 'pass' on getting involved in conversations and discussions or on any activity offered. Being present, just listening to others, is participation enough.

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 to join the conversation and raise topics of their own.

We have a total of two hours available to us per session. Please endeavour to share time fairly.

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RESPECT & 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 of the people all of 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. Please be mindful that there only be one speaker and one conversation at a time.

ACCESS & COMFORT

Speak up about any particular access needs you may have. For instance, if you need people to speak slower, softer, louder; or to avoid turning away from you when speaking.

It is important to share any practicalities that are causing you a problem and for the whole group to discuss if these need to be considered and dealt with if possible. E.g. room too hot

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 several group members might share a therapist or have different levels of contact with the Pottergate Centre and/or other caring agencies. 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. Sharing is kept to principles rather than specific input and actions. E.g. a principle might be to talk about holding in therapy, you might say that after a lot of discussion with your therapists 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. Please bear in mind that every therapeutic relationship is unique and deeply personal.

Adapted from the First Person Plural (FPP) Peer Group Ground Rules with permission.

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SUPPORTERS

Your supporter or therapist cannot join group sessions, even in a passive role. Sessions are for peers only. There is a seating area in the foyer of our venue where supporters may wait during sessions. If you are unable to attend without a supporter in the room it might be for a time the group is not helpful to you.

GROUP MAILING LIST

In order to distribute reminders of upcoming group dates and notify any changes or cancellations, '*insert contact person's email address*' maintains a group mailing list containing email contacts for participating current group members.

Email addresses in the list will be visible to participating current group members in mailings so that everybody may "reply to all" when discussing group related topics (e.g. change of date/availability). Please bear this in mind when choosing which if any email address to share for this purpose.

Your email address will be retained for the duration of your active membership in group. You may request to be removed at any time.

ATTENDANCE

We ask that you inform other group members as soon as possible when you become aware you will be unable to attend a group session.

As we are self-funded prolonged absences mean that those of us who do attend may need to make a larger contribution towards room bookings (attendance fee, see below).

This is why we may ask you to consider if group is still right for you at this time if you are unable to attend for a prolonged period.

ATTENDANCE FEE

A non-refundable GBP 5.00 fee per person is payable at the beginning of each group session. This fee will be used to pay for the cost of the venue. Any fees collected in excess of the venue cost will be collected in a group savings jar.

As we are no longer associated with a charity, we are unable to offer any concessions to this mandatory fee. If you are unable to pay the attendance fee you will be asked to leave the session.

GROUP SAVINGS JAR

Group fees collected in excess of venue hire costs will be retained in a "group savings jar".

Should money in the group savings jar exceed funds required to cover advance bookings for the venue, the group may decide to use excess funds towards a group related activity (e.g. day out) or donate to a chosen charity. Group savings jar money will not be used for any purpose other than venue costs without prior discussion in group.

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WAITING LIST

If we are unable to offer you a space in group right away, you may request to be added to our waiting list. One of our members will contact you when a space becomes available and you may then confirm if you would like to pursue joining the group at this time. An introductory meeting can then be arranged.

Your contact details will be retained while you are on the waiting list. You may request to be removed at any time.