



WHAT IS A CAREGIVER SUPPORT GROUP?

A caregiver support group is a group of people who share a common experience of caring for an adult family member or friend at home or in a care facility who is frail/elderly, chronically/terminally ill, or has a disability causing dependency; get together to share information and offer each other emotional support and practical information based on experience.

Some Group Rules:

1. **CONFIDENTIALITY** - whatever is said about a situation, a family member or friend, a facility or health service, or personal details is NOT to be repeated outside of the meeting.
2. **EVERYONE HAS A CHANCE TO SPEAK** - sometimes going around the room giving each person an opportunity (if they want) to share with the others how they have been doing and feeling since the last time the group met is an effective way to ensure each person some time. There will be times when a support group member needs more time to “share” than usual.
3. **SILENCES ARE O.K....**
4. **TEARS ARE O.K....**
5. **AVOID SIDE CONVERSATION** - it is important for everyone to listen when someone in the group is speaking: that is where the support comes from - knowing that people care to listen.
6. **AVOID GIVING UNSOLICITED ADVICE** - the last thing a caregiver needs is someone telling them what they “should” do. Remember that caregivers come to a support group for an empathetic ear. If they want advice, they'll ask for it.
7. **THE GROUP BELONGS TO THE PARTICIPANTS, NOT THE “LEADER” OR THE “FACILITATOR”** - often times the “leader” or “facilitator” is a caregiver themselves so help share the responsibility of the group meetings.

LEADER: One who guides the group discussion in a specific direction chosen by her/him.

FACILITATOR: One who makes it easier for the group to go in the direction chosen by the group members.

Adapted from the Victoria Alzheimer Resource Centre “What is a caregiver support group?”