



Obesity UK

Peer Support Group

Creating safety within the peer support group – **The group agreement**

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The group agreement



What is the group agreement?

The group agreement is a set of ground rules for the group on how to behave considerately and respectfully towards each other. They can be used as a guide to ensure people's needs are being met in the group.

Why do we need a group agreement?

By using a group agreement, you will hopefully:

- help people to feel safe in the group.
- avoid difficult situations in the group.
- allow people to say when things are not going well for them.

Who makes the group agreement?

The group agreement should be decided by the group in the first group session. It is important that the group agreement is made together, so that everyone in the group feels like they have choice and control over it.

Things to consider when creating the group agreement

When creating the group agreement, it may be helpful to think about the following questions taken from a resource from Mind, Mind resource:

Developing peer support in the community: a toolkit: <https://www.mind.org.uk/media-a/4247/peer-support-toolkit-final.pdf>.

- How do we make sure people feel comfortable in the group?
- Is what people discuss confidential and what does that mean?
- Who wrote the group agreement (was it created with the group?)
- Have all group members agreed to it or had a chance to talk about it?
- How will the group agreement be communicated to everyone in the group?
- How often is the group agreement discussed to make sure that it is up to date?
- What could we use to allow people to feed back without having to speak to the whole group?

The group will also need to agree on:

- who will be responsible for making sure that everyone follows the group agreement. This could be the facilitators or everybody in the group.
- What will happen if one of the ground rules is broken?
- What will happen if the ground rules don't work in practice and need to be changed?

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What could a group agreement look like?

Here are some examples of important points that could be included within the group agreement for face to face or online peer support groups. They have been recommended by both peer support group facilitators at Obesity UK and within the resource, Developing peer support in the community: a toolkit: <https://www.mind.org.uk/media-a/4247/peer-support-toolkit-final.pdf>.

1. Confidentiality

- You should only share what you feel comfortable sharing.
- Don't share personal information about others discussed within the group without permission.
- If an online session is recorded, ask everyone's permission before doing this.

2. Communication

- Try to understand the experiences and views of others in the group.
- Give everyone an opportunity to have their say.
- Try not to dominate the discussions.
- Listen carefully to what others have to say.
- Everyone should be able to share their experiences without judgement.
- Be careful with the words you use.
- Respect other people's views and don't dismiss or be negative about what they say.
- Don't talk in a disrespectful way about someone or make personal attacks.
- Humour - be careful not to offend anybody.
- Share ideas with other people.
- Try not to use abbreviations (a shortened form of a word or organisation) without explaining them.
- During an online group, mute when not speaking to reduce background noise. If you have something you want to share, raise your hand either in person or using the raise hand function on Zoom (or your chosen online meeting platform) so you don't interrupt others.
- Respect that people might want to communicate in different ways. For online groups, this might be with the camera on or off, or only using the chat box.
- Respect how everyone communicates and their different learning needs.
- Give everyone space and time to speak.
- Come up with ways that the group can leave feedback about the group anonymously (with no-one else knowing what they have said), e.g. suggestion box or online feedback form.

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3. Respect

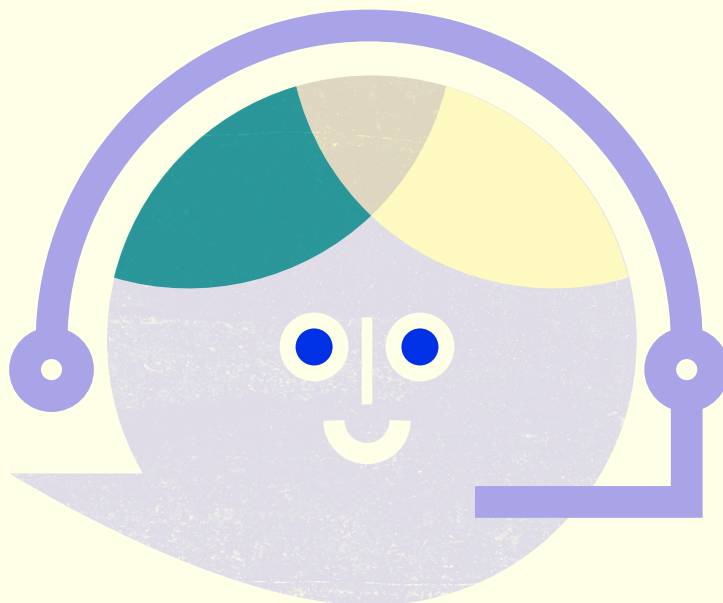
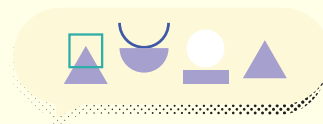
- Respect people's boundaries.
- Try to make the group feel relaxed.
- Respect that everyone is individual and that differences are good for the group.

4. Conduct

- Timekeeping - try to join on time.
- Agree if group members can arrive late or leave early.
- Agree if group members can dip in and out of the group.
- Agree if and how group members can contact each other (and facilitators) outside of group sessions.
- Turn mobile phones off or to silent.
- Do not take phone calls during sessions.
- Take time out from the session if you need it.
- Allow people to leave the group.
- Give people the choice to have a smaller group chat if there is enough space and facilitators.
- Make sure that everyone knows that any discrimination (the unfair treatment of different categories of people) is not allowed.
- Come up with ways to stop behaviour that disrupts the group.
- Come up with ways to stop any disagreement within the group.
- Agree if other people who support group members or carers can attend too. They will also need to respect the group agreement.
- Agree who will take responsibility for making decisions in the group.
- Agree what will happen when the rules are broken.

Using the group agreement

- Once you have collected all the suggestions for the group agreement from everyone, read the list back to the group.
- Briefly remind everyone of the rules before each meeting.
- You could also send the group agreement out to the group or display it at every face-to-face meeting.
- Go through the group agreement with each new member so that they are familiar with it and can have their say.
- Discuss the group agreement regularly to make sure it stays up to date.



How to get in touch

At Obesity UK we are happy to chat with you and answer any questions you may have.

We would be happy to hear your feedback and ideas for this resource.

We can also connect you with other people facilitating peer support groups for people living with obesity.

Please get in touch

Contact us: <https://obesityuk.org.uk/contact/>

Contact us on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Obesityuk>