



Support Group Impact



What is a Support Group?

- A meeting of members who provide help and support to one another.
- Comprised of people who have been through the same issue.
- Comfort in sharing experiences with others in similar situations.
- Sharing experiences can result in feeling less isolated and alone.
- Support groups can also be referred to as group therapy.

Types of Support Groups

Member-only/self-help/peer support group

- Support groups organized and managed by members only.
- No professionals facilitate the group aside from the members.
- Comfort in all are experienced in the issue at hand.
- Can reportedly decrease embarrassment.

Types of Support Group, con't.

Professionally-facilitated support groups

- Organized and facilitated by professionals who do not share the members issues.
- Professionals can be mental health practitioners, psychologists, social workers, religious officials, and others.
- Most common in hospitals and other institutions.
- Beneficial for a third party to manage the group dynamics, rules and standards, encouraging turns to talk and avoiding criticism or degradation of other's experiences.

Types of Support Groups, con't.

Online support groups

- Newest type of support group
- Takes on many different forms such as chat rooms, e-mails, blogs, etc.
- Benefit is anonymity-you cannot be seen, if you choose not to, and you can receive anonymous feedback.
- Risk of this type of support group can be misinformation, and unmonitored feedback.
- Reported verbal abuse, unsecure, and anyone can join.
- Most challenging of all types of support groups.

Bariatric Support Groups @ SMH

- General support group occurs the 1st Monday of the month
- Nutrition support group occurs the 2nd Monday of the month
- Relapse and Prevention support group occurs the 3rd Monday
- Regular attendance consistent at both Nutrition and Relapse and Prevention support group.

Support Group Rules and Format

- Only one person talks at a time.
- All mobile phone and pagers are turned off.
- What is said in the group stays in the group.
- Silence is acceptable.
- Group is supportive not judgmental.
- Group is safe to share feelings and obtain support, information, reassurance, and encouragement.
- Attendance at the group does not replace individual therapy.
- No one is allowed to dominate the conversation.
- Meetings begin and end on time.

Introductions at General Support Group

- Introduce myself, disclose I have not had a bariatric procedure, but have struggled with maintaining a healthy weight.
- Attendees are invited to bring a family member to support group.
- Introductions include first name, report out regarding procedure waiting to have, or recent procedure.
- Some may report amount of weight loss.
- Some may report issues experienced since surgery for discussion in the group following introductions.
- General support group can be up to 25-people.

Topics for General Support Group

- Address topics in introduction
- Setting realistic goals
- Manage emotional eating
- Address issues of loss and grieving
- Portion control
- Journaling food/feelings
- Mindfulness
- Positive self-talk vs. negative self-talk
- Identify “success” habits of the weight loss surgery patient
- Exercise choose something
- Achieve a goal

Topics for Relapse and Prevention Group

- Smaller group typically 6-10 individuals
- Regular attendance provides a safe environment
- Topics identified in the General Support Group
- Brainstorming individual goals, homework for next month
- Back to basics (when eating habits are out of control)
- Identify triggers (address what needs to change)
- Motivation for change
- Barriers to change (family, work, psychosocial stressors, anxiety, depression)
- Patients who present depressed appearing change in appearance, affect, etc. require immediate intervention.

Benefits of change

- Weight loss surgery is life changing
- Results are dependent on dietary changes, and lifestyle changes
- Accepting a healthy future is within their control
- Keeping weight loss goals realistic 20-pounds can help eliminate the need for diabetic medication and others, discontinued use of C-pap, etc.
- Stay connected, come to group, members find other's "just like them"
- Weight loss is a new beginning post surgery, embrace the new you!

Group Support

- Regularity, talking helps!
- Facilitated by a medical professional
- Create an environment of openness (manage group dynamics)
- Positive/supportive conversations
- Support outside group activities (walking, cooking, invitations to members other community activities)
- End group discussing what each member learned.
- Validate feelings, support efforts, encourage regular attendance