Establishing Ground Rules
Ground rules for support groups are important. These may be drawn up before the first meeting, but it is important that they be discussed and agreed upon by all participants at the first meeting and all subsequent meetings. Members should be able to suggest modifications or additions. This process not only establishes ground rules for the group; it also promotes ownership in the group by members and aids in the reestablishment of personal control.

Some Suggested Ground Rules...

- The purpose of the group is to: Provide information, hope, and to share successes and hardships.
- Provide a safe place to express feelings openly in a non-judgmental environment.
- To learn from each other.
- Everyone will have a chance to speak, but will not be under obligation to do so. Everyone agrees that any and all information disclosed in this group is private and totally confidential.
- All expressions of feeling, including laughing and crying, are allowed with the exception of physical violence.
- Full names of non-participants should not be mentioned, as this may unfairly undermine a current relationship between a group member and that individual, i.e. doctor, hospital, social service organization, etc.
- No information from will be released by this group to any outside agency or individual without the written consent of the member.
- Participants should feel free to get up and move around during the course of the meeting should they feel the need to do so.
- Participants are encouraged to exchange phone numbers and call each other between meetings.
- THIS IS YOUR GROUP! If any member has any suggestions or criticisms they are encouraged to voice them to the group facilitator or staff.

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