

Getting the Most from an Online Mental Health Support Group



You can find support by visiting an online support group if you have depression, anxiety, or another mental health problem. Support groups can also help family members.

Mental health support groups offer support, understanding, and helpful information to people struggling with depression, anxiety, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and other conditions.

Many communities have face-to-face support groups. People who don't live near such meetings have another choice. They can visit online support groups, chat rooms, and message boards.

The following ideas can help you find an online support group if you're interested in joining one.

Questions to ask

It's important to find an online self-help group that meets your needs. Asking the following questions can help you find one that does:

- Are there recent postings by a number of different people? The online group should have postings from more than a few people.
- Are people truly helping one another? Questions and requests for help are best answered by members who can share their positive experiences, strengths, and hopes.
- Are the members caring? Postings should be friendly and positive. There should be rules against abusive language.
- Can you relate to the group? Different online groups have different intentions and levels of feeling. Try another if a group isn't on your wavelength.
- Is the site advertising a product as a cure? Be wary of those that do.

Resources

- **Anxiety and Depression Association of America (ADAA).** ADAA focuses on improving quality of life for people with anxiety, depression, PTSD, and related disorders.
- **National Mental Health Consumers' Self-Help Clearinghouse.** This is a peer-run online resource center that fosters recovery, self-determination, and community inclusion.
- **Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance (DBSA).** DBSA offers support for people with depressive and bipolar illness.
- **National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI).** This is a peer-led group for family members, caregivers, and loved ones of people with mental illness.

Online support groups can be helpful. But they're not usually kept track of by professional mental health providers. Some of them can spread inaccurate and sometimes dangerous information. Some information is based on rumor, not sound medical practice. Keep this in mind. And don't stop your medicine or change your medicine or dosage without speaking with your healthcare provider. Be careful when sharing personal information. Talk with a trusted provider before trying untested treatments or therapies.

© 2000-2027 The StayWell Company, LLC. All rights reserved. This information is not intended as a substitute for professional medical care. Always follow your healthcare professional's instructions.
This information is not intended as a substitute for professional medical care. Always follow your Healthcare professional's instructions. Copyright Krames LLC.