



Dialysis Center Support Groups and PFE

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Objectives or Talking Points

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Starting Your Support Group

What do you want to accomplish with your support group? Will your group be professionally-facilitated by the clinical social worker or will you have a peer/patient-facilitator (s)? There is merit in both. Next, decide the structure for your group.

- ❖ Curriculum-Based: These are commonly psycho-educational groups.
- ❖ Topic Focused: Discussions are focused on recovery in relation to one topic area but are often less structured than the curriculum-based format.
- ❖ Open Forum: The structure of the other two models does not apply. There usually isn't any pre-arranged plan. The meeting unfolds through talking and sharing.

Timing is Important

- ◆ If you decide to do a professionally-facilitated group, decide on the day and the time that works best for you, your patients and families.
- ◆ If you work with in-center hemodialysis patients only, you will want to choose a time that will not conflict with treatments. If you have two shifts, aim to meet after the 2nd shift so that both groups can attend.
- ◆ If you work primarily with home patients, you have a bit more flexibility. Working patients may be more apt to attend if group is closer to the end of the workday.
- ◆ Encourage patients that live far from clinic to arrange their lab day on the same day of support group to make it easier for them to come.

Make a Flyer

- ◇ Create a flyer that you can post in the clinic.
- ◇ Post in the lobby, training rooms, bathrooms, in-center hemodialysis walls
- ◇ Hand them out
- ◇ Mail them
- ◇ Have a lobby day to jump start your group
- ◇ Get your team to support you

Important Factors

- ❖ You need to remind patients and their families. Call them, email them, write the date and time on their calendars, have them add the date and time to their phones and then do it again the day before and maybe even the day of.
- ❖ Bring food! Having water, coffee/tea and some type of food or snack is important. Keep it kidney-friendly and healthy.
- ❖ Don't switch dates and times around or you will confuse your patients and families and they will probably miss meetings.
- ❖ Don't be late or cancel. Plan in advance, if you need to change a date. Try not to change the time or day, just push back by a week if you absolutely need to.
- ❖ Go over confidentiality at first group meeting and with every new participant thereafter.

Keeping Your Group Engaged

- ◆ Always prepare for your group meetings, don't wing it or come unprepared.
- ◆ When you put the effort into creating exercises, topics, education and literature, your participants will remain encouraged to come.
- ◆ Give everyone time to express themselves. Don't allow others to dominate.
- ◆ Facilitate and encourage peer to peer support. Don't take the lead. Lead the members towards supporting each other.
- ◆ Create interesting structure, fun openings, hopeful endings, homework.
- ◆ Always invite new patients and their families to the group.

Exercises That Increase Empathy & Awareness

- ◆ Short Ted-Talk videos, bits or pieces from films, and You Tube videos can spur interesting conversations. Watch the video as a group. Write down thought provoking questions that help them relate to their own experience as a dialysis patient or the caregiver to a dialysis patient. Have them choose a question and read it out loud.
- ◆ Example of a question: 1. Was there anything helpful or insightful in the video that might help you in your day to day experience as a person on dialysis or as a caregiver?

Exercises That Increase Empathy & Awareness

- ◆ Have each participant write down an important wish and have them fold the paper and place in the center of the table. Ask that participants remain anonymous and not let on to group who's wish is who's. Each person will choose a wish. If they choose their own, ask them to choose another. Each participant will read aloud a wish. Participants are asked to share their own thoughts and comments and then we open it up to the group.
- ◆ Examples of wishes: *"I wish my mother cared more about her health than I do."* *"I want to be healthy again."* *"I hope I can live another year to meet my new grandchild."*

Exercises That Increase Empathy & Awareness

- ◈ Write down common emotions onto pieces of paper or cards and flip them over and place in the middle of the table. Have each participant choose a card. If they would rather choose another card, they can, or someone can choose theirs. Have them share with the group how they can relate to this emotion.
- ◈ Examples of common emotions amongst dialysis patients and caregivers are: Guilt, sadness, fear, burdened, overwhelmed, angry, hopeless, thankful, grateful. There are more.

Openings & Closings

- ◇ Depending on how big your group is, you might be able to have an opening and a closing. If your group is large, you might need to extend your meeting to 1.5 to 2 hours, instead of 1 hour.
- ◇ Openings and closings can be the same each week or you can be creatively different each month.
- ◇ Examples of an opening would be asking the group how their last few weeks have been and if there is something, they would like to share with the group.
- ◇ Closings can be something the facilitator reads that leaves the group with hope. It can be an opportunity for participants to share any upcoming event or experience that may require positive thoughts, prayers or words of encouragement.
- ◇ Always leave the group on a high note. Closings are important.

Learn

- ◆ Learn from the good group meetings and from the ones that may feel like they fell short.
- ◆ Don't be afraid to address certain uncomfortable blunders in the moment or at the next group if you feel it needs to be addressed.
- ◆ Stick to the rules, one person speaks at one time, be respectful of others, etc...Make sure everyone has the rules in writing when they join.
- ◆ Don't allow gossip talk, complaining about staff or other participants, don't make the group about yourself, you are the facilitator, not the patient.
- ◆ Keep the group on time, be open to feedback and ideas for group, be creative, be prepared.
- ◆ Let everyone know that all religious beliefs are respected. No discrimination based on race, religion, or sexual orientation is permitted. Make sure this is in your rules.