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Support Group Guidelines

Accentuate the positive! Eliminate the Negative!
And feel much better in between!

I'm very biased. I believe support groups work best when we:

- Learn what is possible rather than what we can't do;
- Focus on what we can be grateful for rather than what we hate or regret.
- Have fun and can smile.

If you want an on-going gripe group then you've come to the wrong place!
We only have a once a year GRIPE GROUP session. All the other group meetings will focus on the 3 "H"s: **Happy, Helpful, Healthy**

Our pain doesn't need more SUPPORT!

We come together to support each other, create hope and inspiration, to feel better, live better and be better! Each of us, in our own way, will experience that and define that differently. The important part of support is not to support each other's pain – but to support our wellness, growth and understanding.

Here's a few guidelines to help everyone have the best experience possible:

- **Confidentiality:** Honor the confidentiality of group members. If you discuss YOUR experience outside the group:
 - Do not reveal or refer to other group members by name.
 - Talk about YOUR feeling about
 - YOUR experience with
- **Non-interpretation:** Experiences, feeling and thoughts of each member are precious and highly personal. Try not to interpret other people's experiences for them. When you comment on someone's experience because they may be vivid or impact you it is useful to begin your comment with **your** experience not theirs. For example:
 - "If this happened to me I would
 - "For me/In my life this might mean. . . ."
 - "This reminds me of when I"
- **Sharing:** Every effort will be made to allow everyone who wishes to share the time to do so. **It's ok to share your negative emotions & experiences.** It's crucial to be aware of your own feeling. Don't just brush them off or ignore them. They will chase you down to make sure you are paying attention to them! Some of the more obvious emotions which can enflame chronic conditions like fibromyalgia are: Grieving what was, what could have been; Anger (frustration counts, it doesn't have to be rage); Helplessness; Hopelessness; Sadness about what could have been; Fear (anxiety) of what the future may bring. **But Beware!** You might be asked to think about and share your personal positive experiences too!

- **Rotating responsibilities.** We ask everyone to volunteer to do something to support the group. Recognizing that we all have different abilities, time & energy there will be easy small opportunities so everyone can contribute based on their ability. It's a pot-luck - if everyone brings one dish it creates a meal.

Here are some roles you could consider-we'll talk about them more at the meetings.
(Bear with me, I like to give the roles silly titles which brings a bit of healing humor)
AND you can come up with more easy one-time opportunities
for everyone to participate in making our group great!

Fearless Leader – Facilitates the group for the month.

Meeter Greeter – Welcomes everyone at the door. They can sit or stand.

Tagger – Makes out name tags.

Follow-up Phoners - Phone or e-mail the newcomers after the meeting.

Music Maven - Choses & brings their favorite CD/tape to play during the meeting.

Caterers – Bring refreshments

Techie - Sends meeting reminder via e-mail

Paparazzi Person: Take digital pictures at the meeting and send them on-line after the meeting to everyone on the mailing list.

Ritual Ring leader – Reads a poem, passes around the Victory Box, decorates the Victory Box, lights the birthday candle, etc.

Biographer of the Month - One person every month tells their life story. This helps participants get to know each other as more than just having fibromyalgia.

The biographer can do anything they want in a set amount of time: Photos, family traditions, hobbies, anything goes.

Elephant Trainer – Brings a "white elephant" for a door prize

Jokester of the Month-Brings a silly joke to share.

Song Bird – Leads the group in song.

- **Time:** Groups will start promptly. If the door is closed when you arrive do NOT knock. Simply enter quietly.
- **FREE Zone:** Our group is a cell-phone free and fragrance free zone.
- **Attendance:** Please call or e-mail in advance to let me know if you are not able to come so that we don't worry about you!
- **Smile!** The smile muscles are connected to the brain. It's been established that smiling triggers the release of natural anti-depressants. And a smile begets another smile.

Taking care of me!:

I am NOT always available for any questions you have. I do NOT always promptly return calls or e-mail requests. This is how I have learned to pace myself so that I can feel and function to the best of my ability given my own fibromyalgia/chronic fatigue aches, pains, moans & groans! I will get back to you. Just be patient.

How you can support me and our group:

Volunteer for anything you can based on your ability. I try to create very small, one-time tasks & responsibilities so everyone can take part in the management, decisions, and spirit of our group. I am your fearless leader but you can take some of the fear away by participating according to your will and ability. **Thank you!**