

# NEW JERSEY SELF-HELP GROUP CLEARINGHOUSE

375 East McFarlan St., Dover, NJ 07801 \* 1-800-367-6274 or 973-989-1122 \* www.njgroups.org

## GROUP EVALUATION

Answer these questions as honestly and unbiased as possible. Any area for which you checked “No” indicates that it is an area that might need improvement.

### Meeting Location

1. Is the meeting **location convenient** and **safe**?  Yes  No
2. Is the meeting **time consistent** and convenient?  Yes  No
3. Do you usually **begin** the meetings on time?  Yes  No
4. Do you usually **end** your meetings on time?  Yes  No
5. Is the meeting **site comfortable** and conducive to group discussions?  Yes  No
6. Is the meeting site free from **stigma** and **triggers**?  Yes  No

### Relationships Between Members

1. Group members generally **trust** and **respect** each other  Yes  No
2. There **is honest, open communication** between members  Yes  No
3. Do group members **avoid cliquish** or exclusionary behavior?  Yes  No
4. Do members call each other for **support between meetings**?  Yes  No
5. Do members practice **good active listening skills** with each other?  Yes  No
6. Do members **let others to finish speaking** before jumping in with advice?  Yes  No
7. Are both new and old member's **needs** taken into account?  Yes  No

### Group Discussion/Process

1. Is your meeting format **flexible** when it needs to be?  Yes  No
2. Are **new members greeted** at the door?  Yes  No
3. Do you have **ground rules** or group discussion rules?  Yes  No
4. Does each member have an **equal amount of time** to talk if necessary?  Yes  No
5. Are the **meetings positive** and constructive?  Yes  No
6. Are group **discussions open to new ideas**?  Yes  No
7. Are group **discussions meaningful**?  Yes  No
8. Is **confidentiality** always observed?  Yes  No
9. Do members express **caring attitudes** towards each other?  Yes  No

### Leadership

1. Does the group feel as though it **belongs to all** of the members?  Yes  No
2. Are **difficult behaviors dealt with** in a timely manner?  Yes  No
3. Are problems solved with a sense of **balance and fairness**?  Yes  No
4. Does the leadership **remain neutral** during disputes?  Yes  No
5. Do the same **rules of conduct** apply to both members and leadership?  Yes  No
6. Can group members take an **active role** in running the group?  Yes  No
7. Can all members of the group **share responsibility** for the group?  Yes  No

### From the Outside Looking In

**Individual Member's Needs:** Write down what you believe to be the top five needs of your group's members. Evaluate whether or not you think each need is being met. If not, write down what obstacles you think might be in the way of having that need met.

<u>Need</u>	<u>Is it Met?</u>	<u>Why Not (Describe Obstacles)</u>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	_____
_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	_____
_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	_____
_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	_____
_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	_____

Pretend that you are an outsider (or a newcomer) to your group. Take a close look at the meeting site. Is it comfortable and conducive to group discussion? Observe how the members treat each other, and how well they listen to each other. Examine the structure of the group. Does it work? Write down what you like about the group, and what areas need work on. Be very honest.

#### What I Like About The Group

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#### What Areas Could Use Improvement?

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#### How Might We, As a Group Make Needed Adjustments:

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## Meeting Location and Time

**Is the meeting location convenient and safe?** The location of your group should be in a safe area, with lights in the parking lots so that the members feel safe arriving and leaving the meeting at night. The location should be conveniently located near public transportation or major highways so that it is easily accessible to all members. It is important that it is easy to locate with the building and street signs clearly marked. If a potential new member attempts to find your meeting but can't, they may not try again.

**Is your meeting site free from possible stigma and triggers.** You don't want a meeting site in a place where members might be uneasy about entering. If you have a group for teens dealing with mental health issues, you might consider a site such as a local library instead of a counseling center, allowing the teens to enter the building without fear of being seen by a classmate. You also need to decide if the meeting site should be located in a place that may convey negative feelings in certain members (e.g. a person grieving the death of a loved one may not want to attend a meeting in the hospital where the person died).

**Is the meeting site comfortable and conducive to group discussions or other group activity?** Just as there are many types of groups, there are also different types of meeting rooms available. If your group is focused on intimate group discussions then you don't want to meet in an auditorium-size room; especially one where you cannot move the chairs into a circle. On the other hand, if you have a guest speaker, you may not want a small room with the chairs arranged in a circle—but instead prefer a lecture-style set-up. Be aware of the “feeling” in the room, the noise level of the surrounding area, the amount of traffic in the other parts of the building, it's convenience to restrooms, a kitchen, etc. Are the chairs comfortable? These all make up the general ambience of the meeting.

**Meeting Day and Time:** If you

7.  Yes  No

8. Is the meeting **time consistent** and convenient?  Yes  No

9. **Do you usually begin the meetings on time?**

10. Do you usually **end** your meetings on time?  Yes  No

11. Is the meeting **site comfortable** and conducive to group discussions?  Yes  No

## New Members

**Are new members greeted at the door?** If not, there is a good possibility that newcomers will never return to the meeting. It is usually a big step for a person to attend a meeting for first time. They tend to be nervous and may not even know if they are in the correct place. But a friendly, smiling face meeting them at the door, introducing them to other members and letting them know a little about the group, makes all the difference.

Are new members greeted at the door?

## Relationships Between Members

Group members generally **trust** and **respect** each other

There **is honest, open communication** between members

People are **free to express their thoughts** and feelings without fear

Group members **act civilly** toward each other

**Do group members avoid cliquish or exclusionary behavior?** When new members join the group, don't let them feel left out. Include them in after-meeting get-togethers. Greet them at the door instead of hanging around with the “old gang.”

Do members call each other for **support between meetings?**

**Do members practice good active listening skills with each other?**

Do members **let others to finish speaking** before jumping in with advice?

Are both new and old member's **needs** taken into account?

## Group Discussion / Process

Is your meeting format **flexible** when it needs to be?

**Do you have ground rules or group discussion rules?** If not, why not? Ground rules have several great benefits. They are a great tool to use to help you deal with difficult behaviors. They put everyone on the

same page at the start of the meeting; allowing members to learn the group code of behavior. In addition, having these rules can actually make members feel safer just knowing that others won't give advice or verbally attack them, and that confidentiality is observed.

- Does each member have an **equal amount of time** to talk if necessary?* Do you have a monopolizer who likes to hog all of the time? Do you have a shy member who needs a little encouragement to speak up? If members feel as though their voice will not be heard, or if another member takes up too much time week after week, then your membership may dwindle.
- Are the **meetings positive and constructive**?* If not, make an effort to talk about proven solutions and accomplishments among group members. During check-in, ask people to name something good that has happened since the last meeting. Try to help focus group discussions to include what members found helpful to them. You never want a person to leave the meeting feeling worse than when they arrived.
- Are group **discussions open to new ideas**?* If not, your group might be suffering from "group think." This is when the group, as a whole, develops their own standards of what is right and wrong, correct and incorrect.
- Are group **discussions meaningful**?
- Is **confidentiality** always observed?
- Do members express **caring attitudes** towards each other?

### Leadership

- Does the group feel as though it **belongs to all** of the members?
- Are **difficult behaviors dealt with** in a timely manner?*
- Are problems solved with a sense of **balance and fairness**?
- Are **confrontations made in a caring way**?
- Does the leadership **remain neutral** during disputes?
- Do the same **rules of conduct** apply to both members and leadership equally?* Some groups have a set of rules for members, and another set of rules for leaders. Nothing puts a wedge deeper into the group than different rules for different people. Leaders are just members of the group that have taken on some additional responsibility to focus on the process of the group discussion.
- Can group members take an **active role** in running the group?
- Can all members of the group **share responsibility** for the group?

