



Emmaus Family Support Guidelines and Meeting Format:

Who We are:

Emmaus Family Support is a peer-led support for mental health caregivers. We are a gathering of individuals who are the primary caregivers of loved ones experiencing mental health challenges who meet on the fourth Thursday of each month to share prayer, mental health resources, and life experience. Our focus is on shared learning, building resiliency, walking together, and moving forward towards a healthier life for ourselves and those whom we care for.

To this end, as peers we agree to gather using the following guidelines to ensure a safe and healthy space for all participants:

1. Confidentiality

- What is said in the group stays in the group.
- We will not discuss other members outside the group. We agree to not reveal the identity of other group members. Individuals are free to share their own involvement in the group as they wish.
- We will not discuss or share information outside of the group about the mental health challenges our loved ones experience, their diagnoses, or other information about our loved ones that may be shared in group sessions.
- We will not comment on group discussions outside of the group with each other unless follow-up between peers has been requested.
- We will not seek to contact each others' loved ones outside of group sessions unless such contact has been explicitly requested and approved by everyone involved.
- We understand that in cases where information is disclosed suggesting a danger of self-harm, it may be necessary to involve additional support, such as a mental health professional or emergency services. Information may be shared only insofar as it is necessary to provide needed support or ensure an individual's safety.
- We understand that a breach in group confidentiality, as outlined above, may result in members being asked to leave the group.

2. Participation

- We agree to allow all participants equal opportunity to participate.
- We agree that everyone reserves the right not to participate in personal sharing and discussion.
- One person speaks at a time. Others commit to listening.
- We agree to honour all opinions without judgment.
- We agree to share our own experiences rather than giving advice. ("I/we have tried this" rather than "You should do this".)
- While assisting at meetings as a facilitator, presenting information on a topic, or leading opening and closing prayer are open to everyone, no one is obligated to take on these roles.

3. Respect of Time and Meeting Space

- We agree to start and end meetings on time.
- Cell phones should be off or on silent/vibrate (without notification sounds) and not visible during meetings. We may break part way through the evening when checking for messages would be appropriate given some participants' home situations.
- We agree to leave our meeting spaces clean and tidy after use. We will be sure to check with the provider of our space before moving furniture or items. We will return everyone to the order in which we found it.

Emmaus Family Support Meeting Format:

1. 7:30 pm - Opening Prayer

2. **30 sec check** - Participants are given a brief amount of time to state current mood, mental, emotional, or physical space they're in tonight. "I'm doing well", "We've been struggling", "I'm exhausted..." etc.

3. **7:40 pm - Introduction of a topic(or perhaps a speaker)** for the evening followed by 20-30 mins of an examination of the topic or presentation by speaker with discussion.

4. **8:00/8:15 pm - Support Sharing:** This segment should begin no later than 8:15 pm to ensure sufficient time for sharing. The facilitator begins by asking if anyone has a particular issue, situation or need to share this evening. Sharing and conversation take place within the allotted time.

5. 8:45 pm - Wrap-up.

- Closing remarks - A brief (two or three short points) summary of themes and discussions touched on and potential actions that have been shared, or a simple thank-you to the group for their sharing.
- Sharing prayer intentions for the next month.
- Assigning Facilitator for next meeting.
- Suggest topics for the next meeting.
- Confirm the next meeting date.
- Assigning Opening and Closing prayer for next month.
- Next Meeting Date

6. 9:00 pm - Closing Prayer

Roles:

Facilitator:

- Ensures meeting starts and ends on time
- Keeps the evening moving forward as indicated by the meeting format.
- Leads and provides content for the information sharing/shared learning component of the evening.
- Ensures equal opportunity for sharing.
- Keeps track of who has agreed to lead opening prayer, closing prayer and facilitate for the next meeting.
- Shares next meeting date.
- Opening and Closing Prayer:
 - May be two different people.
 - Should be brief.
 - May take the form of a spontaneous prayer from the heart, a written prayer read by the individual, a written prayer shared by all (enough copies should be brought for all to share), a 'rote' prayer (such as the Lord's prayer, 'Glory be', Hail Mary etc.) or some combination of these.

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Emmaus Phone and
Online Support



Emmaus Website



Emmaus Prayer
Support