



Balm of Gilead

Support Group Guidelines

The Support Group provides Biblical education for the survivor on how sexual abuse has impacted their life and how to heal from the impact of sexual abuse. We learn from God's Word about forgiveness and how to find peace.

The Balm of Gilead has no opinion on issues outside the purpose of this support group. A sexual abuse support group is a safe place where the survivor learns they are not alone, where people are trustworthy and believe the survivor's story.

This group is designed to help you express your thoughts and feelings about sexual abuse and other interpersonal struggles you may have. The following guidelines will help you communicate clearly, directly, and personally.

1. **Speak in the first person**, using "I" statements. Instead of "People think..." or "You get the feeling..." etc., say "I think..." or "I feel..." Allow other people in the group to express themselves without putting words in their mouth.
2. **Speak in generalities**. We do not mention any name or gender in order to provide confidentiality and protection for all relationships. For example, instead of saying, "My husband and family do not understand why I am emotional during my healing," say, "There are people close to me who do not understand why I am emotional during my healing."
3. **Speak for yourself and about YOUR experience**. It may be tempting to try to solve another person's problems and give advice. If someone asks for your feedback, tell them about your experience with a similar issue or experience. Let the other person tell their story even if it is difficult to hear; telling it takes courage. Don't compare your story to another person's story.
4. **Focus on the topic of sexual abuse**. You may not have other opportunities to talk about this part of your life. Take advantage of the freedom you have to do that here.
5. **Speak honestly and spontaneously**. Trying to be polite, waiting too long, and choosing careful language can water down your freshness and genuineness. Express your thoughts and feelings at the earliest opportunity. Speak honestly. Honesty brings people together and you will help to bear one another's burdens.
6. **Expect periods of silence**. Silence can be uncomfortable, so learn to be all right in it. Especially when someone has shared something that is difficult to hear, or has become emotional, then rescuing can become a problem. Be aware of not trying to fill silent places. Comforting is good. Rescuing is not.
7. **Respect the confidentiality and value of others**. This is of utmost importance. EVERYTHING that is said in this group stays in this group. Nothing is shared with people who are not present at group. Respect each person in the group, holding each person in higher esteem than ourselves, remembering that each of us is here for the same reason. This also goes for the guidelines and rules: respect the disclosure statement and group guidelines, and keep member names confidential. Respect the hours that the group meets and arrive on time. Respect the unity of the support group by being committed to attending for the benefit of yourself and the other members.
8. **Pray**. It goes without saying that each session should open and close with Scripture and prayer. Each person in the group should be given a chance to pray if they are comfortable doing so. This gives a sense of responsibility and helps in healing.