ORIENTATION TO GROUPS

The University of Utah Counseling Center (UCC) offers an array of groups. A current listing can be found at [http://counselingcenter.utah.edu/services/group-counseling.php](http://counselingcenter.utah.edu/services/group-counseling.php) or at the UCC, room 426 of the Student Services Building. Therapy groups require an intake and pre-registration. You do not have to be a client to attend our support groups; you can register online at [http://counselingcenter.utah.edu/forms/support-groups-registration.php](http://counselingcenter.utah.edu/forms/support-groups-registration.php).

FACILITATORS Groups are facilitated by clinicians who have special training in group. Our counselors represent the disciplines of psychology and social work. Facilitators are licensed clinicians and/or graduate students and interns. The UCC is committed to diversity, thus our groups operate under the principles of inclusion and multicultural appreciation. Facilitators bring their own style to each group.

PURPOSE Groups themselves range in purpose: some focus on interpersonal process, others primarily provide support, while others serve more as instructional vehicles. In a space dedicated to healing and growth, members explore personal, interpersonal and relational issues in a context of self-reflection, mutual support and community. Members often experience increased self-awareness, insight and growth in their relationship skills. In the case of support groups (Sharing and Caring, Faith + Doubt), the facilitators will provide support, not therapy. Members who are interested in a deeper exploration of their concerns should seek therapy in addition to the support group. Referral resources will be provided by group facilitators upon request. If a facilitator feels additional help would be beneficial, support group members agree to follow the therapist’s suggestion to pursue recommendations for therapy in order to continue attending the support group.

GENERAL GUIDELINES Although each group has its own culture and norms, there are some overarching guidelines to which all UCC groups subscribe. Each therapy group requires a meeting with at least one of the facilitators prior to attending. This pregrou meeting can be scheduled through our receptionist, your individual counselor or at intake. For support groups, no intake is necessary; you just need to read this informational packet and submit a signed copy of the last page (Group Participation Guidelines and Agreements). The pregrou meeting provides an opportunity for you to ask questions, get clarification of the group, and meet the facilitator(s).

Following are some guidelines that foster a safe, rewarding group experience:

1. Confidentiality
   Participants and facilitators are expected to maintain the confidentiality of any personal information shared during group. We ask that everything said in group remains confidential (unless
it is about yourself) and that you agree to not reveal the identity of other group members to anyone outside the group. To promote optimal therapeutic treatment, facilitators may at times need to consult with other members of the UCC’s clinical team; utmost care will be taken to preserve your confidentiality. Although members are encouraged and expected to maintain each others’ confidentiality, facilitators have no control over the actual actions of participants. Please talk to facilitators to voice any concerns that may come up regarding confidentiality. Facilitators are mandated to break confidentiality and report to the appropriate person or agency in the following cases:
A. If you threaten imminent harm to yourself or someone else;
B. If you disclose knowledge of abuse, neglect or exploitation of a child or vulnerable adult;
C. If required by the law;
D. If you disclose you have a communicable disease that is a serious public health risk and is unreported to the health department.

2. Respect
A. Only give feedback that you intend to be helpful, and first ask others if they want feedback. We are here to help each other, not to judge one another.
B. The UCC appreciates and values diversity. You may encounter people with many individual differences in your group. Some examples are: religion, sexual orientation, appearance, values, etc.
C. Everyone in the group has the right to speak and to be heard. Disagreement must be expressed respectfully. It is certainly appropriate to express anger, but do so in a way that does not threaten or intimidate others.

3. Time
A. Each group member’s perspective is valid and adds to our enriched understanding of ourselves. Notice how much you talk and how much you listen.
B. If you are going to be absent, please notify one of your group’s facilitators.
C. The group will begin and end on time.

4. Attendance
A. We request members commit to regular attendance, because anyone’s absence is a loss not only to the individual but to the group as a whole.
B. We ask that you attend at least three group sessions prior to making a decision to leave the group. Sometimes it takes a little adjusting before one feels comfortable with a group setting.
C. Prior to each session, you may be asked to fill out the CCAPS, a questionnaire that helps facilitators be aware of client distress.
5. Do not compare the significance of problems. No one’s struggle is more or less important than anyone else’s.

6. If you are in a support group (Faith + Doubt or Sharing & Caring), social relationships between group members outside of group may be permitted; ask your group’s facilitator. We ask you to be aware of other members’ feelings in discussing any outside contact you may have to prevent anyone from feeling excluded. In all other groups, outside-of-group contact is highly discouraged.

7. If at any time, a facilitator believes your needs go beyond what group can effectively offer, the facilitator will meet with you to discuss other options. If you are in a support group, and it’s determined you would also benefit from psychotherapy, it may be required you concurrently attend psychotherapy in order to continue attending the support group.

8. You agree to not use mind or mood-altering substances, including alcohol, prior to group meetings.

9. Responsibility for the group is shared. It is important for you to participate, but what you choose to talk about, and when, is up to you.

10. If for some reason you must end your participation in the group, please give at least one week’s notice in group and plan to take time to say good bye to the group during the following meeting.

11. Some people will reach their goals for the group in one semester. Others will stay longer. There is no maximum length of stay in UCC groups.

12. Here are resources should you find yourself in crisis between group sessions:
   A. M-F, 8-5: University Counseling Center (801) 581-6826.
   B. 24-hour crisis line at University Neuropsychiatric Institute: (801) 587-3000.

Welcome to this UCC group! We expect it to be a rewarding experience. If you anticipate having difficulty adhering to any of these guidelines, please talk with a facilitator during your screening session or with group members in the first meeting. If you have a complaint about your group experience and would like to discuss this with a supervisor, call Karen Cone-Uemura, Ph.D., UCC Groups Coordinator, or Dr. Lauren Weitzman, Director of the UCC. You can also contact our Clinical Services Director, Cindy Harling, LCSW, or Assistant Clinical Services Director, Josh Newbury, LCSW. We can all be reached at (801) 581-6826.
Group Participation Guidelines and Agreements

**Attendance:** I will attend consistently because this promotes my well-being and creates community in the group. I will notify one of the facilitators or the UCC if I’m unable to attend a session.

**Timeliness:** I will arrive on time and leave when group is over because this demonstrates dependability.

**Confidentiality:** In order to create an environment that is safe for all to share thoughts, feelings, and experiences, I will refrain from disclosing or discussing other people’s information outside of group.

**Participation:** Everyone’s needs are important, thus I will share my experiences and allow others time to share theirs. I have the right to choose what I disclose in group, remain silent, or pass.

**Silence:** I will honor silence because it provides the opportunity to process thoughts and feelings.

**Respect:** I will refrain from making judgmental comments, interrupting others, having side conversations, or answering texts & phone calls. I will allow others their feelings, compassionately listening to their experiences. I will refrain from putting down myself or others. Because diversity is fundamental to a healthy group, I will respect others even if we differ in beliefs, lifestyles, religion, politics, etc. I will seek to understand the views of others, knowing that we can agree to disagree.

**Communication:** I will use “I” statements, ask for what I need, respectfully provide and receive feedback, and speak only for myself. I will avoid giving unsolicited advice or asking intrusive questions. I take responsibility for my words and actions, doing my best to communicate my feelings in the moment if I’m offended, hurt or confused. If I have committed such an action, I will remain open to receiving feedback about my impact on others. We strive to honor intent and address impact.

**Amnesty:** Being human, we may at times say something that offends or hurts someone else. I agree to address, try to process, and compassionately relate with any group member whose actions I perceive as hurtful or offensive, and not hold these behaviors against that person in the future.

I agree to these responsibilities as a group member.

____________________________________  ________________  _____________
Print name  Signature  Date

Name of group  Day, time, & location of group  Facilitator(s)