

How to run a peer support talking group

An autistic adult peer support group can help people communicate in a supportive and confidential environment. Members of the group can express emotions, question thoughts and beliefs, and focus on helpful actions that others in the group may suggest.

1. At the beginning of the group session



The group facilitator will open the group by:

- introducing themselves
- communicating the aims and objectives of the group
- establishing the rules for behaviour with the group and creating a code of conduct
- acknowledging the importance of different modes of communication.

2. The role of the group facilitator



Start the session with a wellbeing check with each member in turn. Remind the members that everyone will have the opportunity to contribute, but nobody will be forced to do so. Make sure:

- quieter members of the group are not left out
- provide verbal prompts, eg “What have you been watching on TV?”
- intervene if one person is talking for too long.

3. Introduce the agreed topic for discussion



The facilitator should introduce the agreed topic and then follow the flow of the conversation. Some groups will flow naturally without support.

Some groups may benefit from:

- visual posters
- YouTube clips
- turn-taking
- refocusing the topic under discussion.

4. At the end of the group session



The group facilitator should close the group by:

- thanking everyone for attending
- establishing the theme of the next group discussion
- confirming the time and date of the next meeting.