



GETTING YOUR GROUP STARTED

Today we will be going deeper into getting your group started and making a contract

Questions you need to consider before getting your group started will include:

- Deciding on a group name,
- How often your support group will meet, and how long each meeting will be,
- Decide if the group will be a closed or open meeting (Tip – closed substance abuse meetings are more powerful than open meetings. Open meetings that will include family members are recommended once monthly)
- If coffee and tea are offered for the early comers, decide how it will be paid for. You can either sponsor it, get sponsors or take a weekly contribution from those who can afford it.

MAKING A CONTRACT

At the very first meeting, it can help if you explain what confidentiality means to all members so that all participants have the same understanding and expectations for privacy. Try to create a non-judgmental atmosphere where participants, both old and new, feel comfortable sharing their feelings. Sharing allows participants to understand themselves better through the insights of others.

- **Say:** We want CHOOSE LIFE to be a safe environment where we can learn and grow together in relation to substance abuse. I, as your facilitator, cannot make this a safe place on my own. I need your input and help. Ask participants to say what they think are important rules that will help create a warm and safe place for CHOOSE LIFE.
- Write these down on a board.
- From their input draw up a contract which each person can sign at the beginning of Session 3.

It is important that every group will create round rules which can be framed as "group agreements," It is often helpful if participants create the rules or agreements for themselves as to how the group will be run. This will help you to establish boundaries to keep order in the group. If rules are broken, it is important to remind the group of the agreements that the group established, to provide a level of continuity and safety.

Some common ground rules include:

- Expectations around confidentiality: "what you say in the room, stays in the room"; anything said or noticed in the room will not be repeated or discussed at another time or place
- Openness and respect: group members are expected to listen to each other without interrupting, take turns speaking, and speak without judgment or giving advice; by the same token, choosing not to speak is also respected

SAMPLE OF GROUP CONTRACT:

This document explains what you can expect from our recovery group sessions. It also explains what your rights and responsibilities are. If there is anything you feel unsure of please feel free to discuss this with your facilitator.

In attending a CHOOSE LIFE support group, I understand and agree to the following conditions:

CONFIDENTIALITY	Please √
I recognise that the CHOOSE LIFE Programme is run by Christian volunteers possessing an earnest desire to help me apply CHOOSE LIFE management skills. To that end, there may be times when the facilitator may need to consult with other professionals for assistance.	
I understand that all private information collected about me will be treated as confidential and cannot be disclosed by the facilitator without my written consent. Members of the CHOOSE LIFE Group will contract to uphold confidentiality.	
<p>In certain situations, however, legal rules may oblige your facilitator to disclose information about you (applicable to under children under 18). This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Emergency situations:</u> If the facilitator has reasonable cause to suspect that you will be a real risk to the physical safety of others or yourself. • <u>Statutory duty and Court orders:</u> Relevant information may be made available when statutory duties and court orders are involved in pending court cases. 	
CHOOSE LIFE GROUP GROUND RULES	

<p>I agree to the following non-negotiable rules to ensure the smooth running of the support group:</p> <p>Confidentially Confidentiality may be breached by the group facilitators under the following situations:</p> <p>If it is disclosed that a minor, which is defined as a child who is 16 years of age or younger, has been or is at risk of being physically, sexually, or emotionally injured by another individual; If it is disclosed that one of the group members intends to physically, sexually, or emotionally injure another individual; or If it is disclosed that a group member intends to inflict personal injury on himself or herself. If a participant breaches this agreement he/she may be asked to leave the group.</p> <p>Conflict/Anger/Violence Both Conflict and anger are normal. Conflict and anger will be addressed constructively and handled correctly. No form of violence (emotional, verbal or physical) is allowed in the group under any circumstances. Should a participant overstep these boundaries, he/she will be asked to leave for the remainder of the session and will only be allowed back after at least one counselling session took place.</p> <p>Commitment I agree to attend all sessions of the group and to be punctual for each one unless my absence is unavoidable (e.g. due to illness). If I am unable on any occasion to arrive on time or to attend a session, or if I decide not to finish the course, I agree to contact the facilitator to make him/her aware of my situation. Participation is important in a support group and I commit to participate to the best of my ability within my comfort zone.</p> <p>Language The group will be run in English. No rude, foul, blaspheme or disrespectful language to be used in the group.</p> <p>Restrictions No one under the influence may attend support meetings No alcohol or drugs allowed at meetings No lending or borrowing money to each other No sex talk among the participants will be allowed</p>	
<p>ADDITIONAL COUNSELLING</p>	<p>Please √</p>

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• I understand that if during the CHOOSE LIFE Group sessions personal emotional issues become overwhelming, then the facilitator will assist you in seeking counselling if indicated and wanted by the participant. | |
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I have read and fully understood the rules provided above about the risks of this group. I understand that if I breach this agreement I may be asked to leave the group. By signing this document, I agree to accept the aftercare support group's rules, conditions, and limitations.

Name _____ Signature _____

Date _____

When a group is new, participation may be small. It is important not to be discouraged and to continue to meet as scheduled. People in your community need to see that the group continues to meet. The 'success' of a group is not based on how many people attend, but on the relationships that develop and the support that is provided.

Special note to the Facilitator:

- Ensure you keep your cup filled by doing daily devotions and prayer.
- There may be times when the group process becomes difficult, and you want to quit. If that happens, try to reconnect with the reason you started the group and work out the difficulties so the group can continue. This may mean passing the 'ownership' of the group to someone else. If you are the group facilitator, it is also okay to rotate out of your role and become a regular member of the group. This not only gives others an opportunity to step forward and assume a leadership role but also gives you the chance to benefit from membership in a group you helped to create.

KEEP GOING – YOU ARE MAKING A DIFFERENCE