



ausEE Inc. Support Group Guidelines

ausEE Inc. is a non-profit, community based, volunteer driven organization committed to provide support for those affected by eosinophilic gastrointestinal disorders. In addition to the online support forums ausEE Inc. provides via www.ausee.org, we are happy to help facilitate 'in person' support groups for those willing to host or attend one locally. These meetings are held outside the liability of ausEE Inc. and information discussed or shared during these meetings are not the views held by or supported by ausEE Inc.

ausEE members wishing to hold support group meetings must do so at their own liability, however below are some general guidelines to help the group get started.

1. KEEP CONFIDENTIALITY

Maintain confidentiality at all times in all areas having to do with the group and its members. "What is said here - stays here." Who attends should also be confidential.

2. MAKE "I STATEMENTS"

Avoid using "you" or "we" as one can only really speak for oneself.

3. SHARE FEELINGS about your "experience, strength, and hope".

Feelings are neither right nor wrong and people relate to others experiences.

4. You are NOT a medical professional.

Sharing your experiences is OK, but offering medical advice is **NOT**.

Establishing a Support Group

When a member of ausEE expresses an interest to host/coordinate or attend a support group meeting then ausEE will obtain that member's permission to pass on their name and email address to the closest support group host/coordinator based on their location. If there is no established support group coordinator in close proximity than the interested member will be advised that they will be notified when a coordinator is available to facilitate a support group meeting in their location.

A support group host/coordinator's role is to maintain their local support group meetings members contact details, whilst respecting confidentiality, and to facilitate the running of the support group meetings. Once a local support group is established it may be decided amongst the group to rotate the coordinators role. It is a good idea for the coordinator to send invitations for an upcoming support group meeting to the members in their group by email advising of the day, date, time and location for the planned meeting. The invitation should include some guidelines around bringing food to a meeting as some people attending may have a child with a life threatening allergy. It is suggested that due to the various dietary needs that meetings are set up as BYO (bring your own) food. It may also be necessary to request attendees to avoid wearing strong odours to meetings as some people attending may have sensitivities to chemicals and odours.



ausEE

ABN 30 563 569 016

Your First Meeting

There is no right way to run a meeting. Be creative, or if you are nervous, work from a guide or agenda, as this can help reduce nerves and keeps the group focused.

If it is a sensitive topic you might hold an informal meeting where people share experiences over a cup of coffee. If the issue is more common, you might hold your first meeting in a park or at a cafe. The possibilities are endless.

Ensure that the meeting takes place in a relaxed, safe and friendly environment. Remember people are often sharing their experiences for the first time.

A Suggested Format for Meetings

Meet and Greet

- Greet people as they arrive
- Offer them tea or coffee
- Provide name tags or a sign-in sheet if appropriate

Welcome

- Open with a brief welcome and start on time
- Introduce yourself
- Explain the location of the toilet and kitchen facilities
- Decide if you will ask for donations for refreshments
- State the purpose of the meeting – make the organisation of the meetings the topic for your first meeting
- Note the closing time for the meeting

'Round Robin' Introductions

- Go around the room and ask people to introduce themselves
- Ask them to state their name, their reason for coming to the meeting and what they hope to achieve
- Some people may prefer not to share their name or personal information at this stage, so let them know that sharing is not compulsory

Establish Ground Rules

Ground rules create a safe, supportive environment for all group members. It is important that these rules are established in the early stages of group development so that members develop a sense of trust when sharing personal information. Some examples of ground rules:

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is the most crucial of ground rules. It is vital to recognise that some people don't mind if others know they belong to a Support Group, but others do have a need for privacy. Members need to know that what they say will be kept private and inside the group.

Confidentiality is the right of all group members, and when confidentiality is broken, the group needs to decide what action to take. It is important to console the person affected, and to minimize any possible impact.



One person speaks at a time

It is important that all members are given an opportunity to speak and be heard. It may be a good idea to allow each person 5 minutes to speak without interruption. It is important to listen to each other with respect, and allow expressions of feelings without threats or criticisms by others. Groups should agree that put downs, personal attacks and sarcasm are not appropriate for group meetings.

Starting and finishing meetings on time

Start and finish meetings on time. While some members may be flexible about times, it is important to recognise that others have busier schedules and may need to organise their lives around meeting times.

ABOVE ALL ENJOY EACH OTHERS COMPANY!!!!

Duty of Care

If it is suspected that a child has been abused or neglected, or a disclosure has been made, the administrator, moderators or volunteers of ausEE Inc. will exercise a duty of care to protect children and report suspicion of child abuse and neglect as required by the current children's protection legislation. If during a support group meeting, foul play is suspected, either Sarah Gray (sarah.gray@ausee.org) or Mercedes Hinchcliff (mercedes.hinchcliff@ausee.org) must be contacted within 24 hours.

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