

Group Myths and Realities

Myth: "I'm already anxious around people; I'll never feel okay talking in the group!"

REALITY: Most people experience anxiety during the first few sessions of group – it is a normal and quite common experience! Over time, however, you will notice the anxiety begin to decrease. Don't let anxiety deter you from joining a group. In fact, group is a highly effective and powerful treatment for many forms of social anxiety, as it allows you to test new behaviors and overcome fears related to social interactions in a safe and therapeutic environment. Group helps us learn to get comfortable with the uncomfortable!

Myth: "I'll be forced to share things I don't want others to know about me."

REALITY: As with any counseling, you are in control of the content and pace of your disclosures – no one will force you to share or disclose information before you are ready. Nonetheless, keep in mind that group is most effective when you actively participate and, at the very least, are willing to report on your thoughts and feelings in the group.

Myth: "I just know others in the group won't like me. They will judge me if I open up about myself."

REALITY: Most group members find that one of the most powerful elements of group is learning how similar their experiences are to those of others in the group. Because of these shared experiences, group members learn to trust and respect others in the group, and consequently feel increasingly safe and comfortable sharing more deeply and genuinely about themselves. Group members may still provide you with honest feedback about your behavior and/or impact on others, which at times may be challenging. However, group leaders are present to ensure that interactions between group members remain safe and respectful at all times.

Myth: "I won't benefit as much from group therapy because I have to share the time with others."

REALITY: Over 50 clinical trials have demonstrated that group is at least as effective, if not more so, than individual therapy. For one, you may benefit just as much from listening carefully to others even if you are saying relatively little in the session. Seeing other group members' progress can help you realize that you, too, can cope and feel better.