

Action Methods Group

A group to expand understanding of yourself and your ways of relating to others

Spectrum Treatment Groups

The groups are for people who:

- frequently feel upset or angry
- have relationship problems
- act impulsively or make bad decisions when under stress
- are struggling to give up self-harm or other forms of self-destructiveness
- feel empty or unsure of who they are
- feel they don't have a life worth living
- are open to learning new ways of coping
- willing to practice new skills in everyday life

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The first aim is to gently challenge patterns that keep you stuck in negative spirals of self-destructive thoughts and feelings. In doing this you might connect with unwanted feelings and thoughts however facilitators will support you to do it in ways that feel “safe enough”. You may find that the ways in which you often relate to others is actively worked within the group. Connection to other group members and the group leaders is carefully facilitated throughout these processes and the feedback provided is based on moment by moment observations. In this work, your awareness will increase through both your presentation and that of others in the group.

The second aim is to expand the range of roles you perform in life. This means you get to explore and rehearse in action, roles that already exist in your relationships, as well as roles you hold in your imaginative life. Patterns of thinking; both past and present can come to light in these scenarios. Future possibilities are also considered as new realisations and insights come to your awareness. The group and the group leaders are highly supportive of this process.

The group uses various techniques to bring about safe encounters with aspects of your self and those you have with your family members and friends outside the group. In action methods, group members rehearse assertiveness and express feelings that may have been restricted, feared or avoided. Old hurts, emptiness and dissociation can give way to new possibilities for relating to yourself and others.

All group members will be supported and coached to assist with other group members' expressiveness. We use a variety of playful and creative means to achieve this. Connection between group members is further assisted by sharing at the end of the session about what aspects of the group work you related to personally. The insight and support for change, developed through these processes can be profound.

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Frequently asked questions

What is expected of me?

Joining the group will involve a commitment to attending all the sessions you've enrolled for; additionally we ask you come to groups with a willingness to join in. We also encourage group members to practise skills learned outside of sessions. It's expected all participants will share some of their personal experiences, thoughts and feelings for the purposes of working through problems and making progress. This sharing can, at times, be challenging. In order to maintain group safety group members are required to follow a set of established group norms.

You will need to be able to travel to the group location each week.

Where are the groups held?

Depending on demand Spectrum operates groups each week in the east and west of the Melbourne metropolitan region. East groups are run in East Ringwood. West groups are run in Footscray. From time to time Spectrum runs treatment groups in other locations in Victoria.

How do I start?

Before you start Spectrum group treatment, you will have a full assessment with an experienced Spectrum clinician (see steps below). If accepted for Spectrum treatment you will usually have a Spectrum clinician appointed. Your Spectrum clinician will work closely with others in your treatment team including your case manager, GP, psychiatrist and/or counsellor. Spectrum sees this team as your 'support people'. These people will play an important part in supporting your progress and may also be available to you for skills coaching during difficult times. It is important you are seeing your 'support people' regularly throughout the time you are attending Spectrum treatment groups. Spectrum will provide regular feedback to your 'support people' for the duration of your engagement in Spectrum treatment.

What other supports will help me?

From time to time you may feel vulnerable during and/or after groups. Spectrum group therapists will support you during group time as much as possible. Outside of group hours, your usual crisis plan, developed with your Area Mental Health Service case manager/clinician, will outline your immediate supports. Through your Spectrum clinician you will have access to other Spectrum services that may provide additional support for short periods of time; they can discuss these services with you.

Can I come to more than one Spectrum group?

Yes, so long as you have been accepted for Spectrum treatment, it is agreed that you would benefit from more than one group and you can commit to attending all the group sessions.

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Next Steps

What are the next steps?

Step 1: Discuss your interest in Spectrum Treatment with your case manager, therapist or doctor from your Area Mental Health Service. If agreed they can make a referral to Spectrum for you. Once your referral has been received, one of our staff will discuss things with the person who has made the referral and arrange to meet you. We will be happy to answer further questions and talk more in detail about Spectrum treatments when we get to meet you. **We call this the “clarification”.**

Step 2: If you want to go beyond the clarification process you will be required to attend a number of one to one sessions with a Spectrum clinician for a full need assessment. We also discuss issues in more depth with your AMHS case manager, doctor or therapist and with your permission other people who are significant to you such as family members and your GP. It is important we get a full picture of your needs including the difficulties you experience, what kind of treatments you’ve had in the past, and some of the expectations you have about attending Spectrum Treatment. This step can take a number of weeks. **We call this the “general assessment”.**

Step 3: If, after this assessment everyone agrees you meet Spectrum’s criteria for treatment and may benefit from our involvement with you, we will offer you a course of treatment with us. This may last from a few weeks to quite a number of months. We will appoint a Spectrum clinician to meet with you regularly over the whole period of your time with us. These meetings will help you make sense of things and get the best out of the treatment groups. As mentioned above your Spectrum clinician will keep close contact with your ‘support people’.

Step 4 (optional): Spectrum needs to evaluate and research our treatment programs to help us improve our services. We will ask you if you’d be willing to participate in these activities. If so, the group leaders may discuss the procedure with you.

Please note: All clients referred to Spectrum must have a contact clinician (e.g., case manager, therapist etc.) from a public Victorian Area Mental Health Service, who is actively involved in your treatment.