

# Talk-Based Therapy Group

A group for sharing your thoughts and feelings in conversation with 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

## Talk Therapy Group

Often in life we have a range of thoughts, feelings and reactions that crop up in response to people or events. Sometimes these thoughts, feelings and reactions can be helpful, and sometimes they remind us of old hurts and past pain. Sometimes it can feel as though things we'd left in the past have come back again; old bad feelings haunting our current lives.

This is a group where instead of having set topics presented to you, you are assisted by the group therapists to talk more freely about what's on your mind. Sometimes you may need to talk about how things are feeling "right now" in the group; other times you may want to talk about things that have cropped up over the last week or since you last attended the group. The thoughts, feelings and actions that are important to the group become the topics each week.

The aim in all this is for you to explore your feelings, examine old ways of thinking and being, and support each other to maintain and build new ways of relating. Sharing troubles that occur from interactions in the group, as well as those from relationships in your life outside the group are encouraged. Through this process you have the opportunity to experiment with new ways of relating and to make real, human connections with others.

The group is run in a way that promotes safe communication. Opportunities for practising verbal and non-verbal ways of getting your message across are encouraged. Unpleasant emotions and the ways we try to avoid them are recognised, accepted, and explored. While we will talk about issues important to each individual member, we ask group participants be careful about "triggering" others into places they may not want to go. Therefore, care is taken in talk about self harm or early trauma. The group leaders will coach you where you may be unsure.

At its best, this group works toward solving problems by creating safe, real, intimate and spontaneous moments between you and others. Getting to know and appreciate your own mind in relation to, and separate from, other people's is the main aim of Talk-based therapy groups.

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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

**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 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.