

‘Wise Choices’ Group

A Group for discovering your Values and Life Directions

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

Wise Choices Group

This group is a place where you can learn new ways to manage in your day to day life. The group is like a warm interactive class; run by group therapists rather than teachers.

The ideas used in this group are based on the approach known as Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT - pronounced as one word). This type of therapy looks at new ways of dealing with difficult thoughts and overwhelming emotions, as well as exploring what it means to live a meaningful life. The groups involve some presentation of information, discussion, activities to explore the topics presented and practice of skills.

The Wise Choices groups are separated into different modules which are based on levels of skill. The beginner modules focus on:

- learning about thinking patterns, emotions and values
- reflecting on your own thinking patterns and emotions
- identifying your personal values
- introducing skills for relating to your thoughts and feelings in a way that frees you to make different choices
- learning about relationships and reflecting on your own patterns of relating
- learning ACT ideas and skills to address relationship difficulties.

The more advanced modules focus on further education and practice of ACT concepts and skills as well as support and learning to help you:

- identify steps in line with your values
- take these steps
- work with the barriers that inevitably arise.

Each module consists of 10 groups. All the groups go for two hours. There will be a maximum of eight group members in each group, and two or three group leaders. By enrolling in each series separately you make progress in smaller steps according to your needs.

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Frequently Asked Questions

What will be expected of me?

Joining the group will involve a commitment to attending all the sessions you've enrolled for; additionally we ask that you come to groups with a willingness to join in. We encourage group members to practise skills learned outside of sessions. It is 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 abide by 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 the 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 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 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 have 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.