

# Introduction of support group and online support group

[Health & Medicine](#), [Mental Health](#)



Support groups bring together people facing similar issues, whether that's illness, relationship problems or major life changes. Members of support groups often share experiences and advice. It can be helpful just getting to talk with other people who are in the same boat. While not everyone wants or needs support beyond that offered by family and friends, you may find it helpful to turn to others outside your immediate circle. A support group can help you cope better and feel less isolated as you make connections with others facing similar challenges.

A support group shouldn't replace your standard medical care, but it can be a valuable resource to help you cope (Staff, 2013). Examples of support groups include those who have similar illnesses, diseases, or chronic conditions, such as cancers and addiction. Also support groups help people with relationship problems, such as divorce and adoption, as well as those with major life changes, such as the death of a partner or child, caring for an elderly parent, divorce, or job loss (Corey, 1997).

Members of support groups typically share their own personal experiences and provide each other with helpful advice. It can be extremely therapeutic to actively communicate with others who face the same types of life challenges. Generally, support group members are not judgmental. Being negatively judged sometimes happens when an individual discusses their problems with close family members and friends. Additionally, a support group can help people feel much less isolated or alone as they make valuable “connections” with other “like-minded” people (Yalom, I. 1995).

While a support group should never replace professional medical or psychiatric care, it can be a valuable resource to assist individuals in effectively coping with their problems. Support groups occur in a variety of different formats or settings, including in-person group discussions, telephone conversations, and online groups. Groups are often formed by non-profit organizations, advocacy groups, mentalhealthclinics, hospitals, medical websites, and by a "lay" sufferer.

Online support groups can help someone gain a sense of control or empowerment and reduce their levels of stress, depression, or anxiety by promoting open, honest sharing of personal feelings, mutual emotional support, comfort, "virtual" hugging, sharing of practical treatment information, coping strategies, personal experiences, and "success stories" by way of e-mails and Internet group discussion boards (Wessel, K, 1996). Since at least 1982, the internet has provided a new venue for support group (John Schappi, 2012).

Discussing online self-help support groups as the precursor to e-therapy, Martha Ainsworth notes that "the enduring success of these groups has firmly established the potential of computer-mediated communication to enable discussion of sensitive personal issues. For example Email, Usenet and internet bulletin boards have become popular methods of communication for peer-to-peer self-help groups and facilitated support groups.

Support groups have long offered companionship and information for people coping with diseases or disabilities, and online situational oriented groups have expanded to offer support for people facing various life circumstances, <https://assignbuster.com/introduction-of-support-group-online-support-group/>

especially those involving personal and cultural relationships (Van Brunt, 2008). A convenient aspect of online support groups is the around the clock availability to its members. People can go online to blog or chat with others anytime of the day or night. There are no time constraints like there potentially would be with an in-person support group with scheduled meetings.

Access to help is always available with online support groups. We've seen the development of both synchronous groups (where individuals exchange messages in real time) and asynchronous groups, where members not simultaneously online can read and exchange messages. In a study conducted by Gunther Eysenbach, John Powell, Marina Englesakis, Carlos Rizo, and Anita Stern (2004), the researchers found it difficult to draw conclusions on the effectiveness of online peer-to-peer support groups.

In online support groups, people must have the desire to support and help each other, and many times participants go on the sites in order to get help themselves or are limited to a certain subgroup. An additional benefit to online support groups is that participation is asynchronous. This means that it is not necessary for all participants to be logged into the forum simultaneously in order to communicate.

An experience or question can be posted and others can answer questions or comment on posts whenever they are logged in and have an appropriate response. This characteristic allows for participation and mass communication without having to worry about time constraints. Additionally, there are 24 hour chat rooms and spaces for focused conversation at all times of the day or night (Uken, J, 1996). This allows users to get the support

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they need whenever they need it, while remaining anonymous and comfortable.