



## **NAMI Family Support Group Experience Guidelines**

The Group Guidelines tell us how we are going to care for each other in the group. They provide the mutual consideration, acceptance and protection that are hard to find in the real world. We will follow these guidelines each meeting to create the sanctuary and safe place we need.

NAMI Family Support Groups are free, peer-led support groups intended only for any adult caring for a loved one who has experienced symptoms of a mental health symptom(s). You will gain insight from hearing the challenges and successes of others, and the groups are led by trained leaders who've been there. \*If you are here to observe for credit in a class or any other reason beyond supporting a family member with a mental health symptom(s), we ask that you please respect the group and exit at this time. Please contact NAMI's Helpline at 833-626-4244 for questions.

This meeting is directed by the Support Group Facilitator(s). They have the responsibility to guide group members in a healthy and purposeful discussion that will help them address the issues for which the group is designed. Sometimes this means we will gently introduce ourselves into the discussion to help you and the rest of the group.

We strive to be accepting and open to all; hoping to provide an environment where you can feel free to bring all of you. However you identify, represent or feel, NAMI wants to provide a space for you to do so.

### **Group Guidelines**

1. Start and stop on time
2. Time limit for check in is 1 minute
3. Absolute confidentiality
4. Be respectful
5. Be mindful of others: no monopolizing or cross talk
6. Keep it in the here and now
7. Empathize with each other's situation
8. Use "I" statements when expressing your own experiences

These guidelines are important to creating a safe space during the group for all members – if you are unable to follow these guidelines you may be asked to leave the group.

### **Principles of Support**

1. We will see the individual first, not the illness.
2. We recognize that mental illnesses are medical illnesses that may have environmental triggers.
3. We understand that mental illnesses are traumatic events.
4. We aim for better coping skills.
5. We find strength in sharing experiences.
6. We reject stigma and do not tolerate discrimination.
7. We won't judge anyone's pain as less than our own.
8. We forgive ourselves and reject guilt.
9. We embrace humor as healthy.
10. We accept we cannot solve all problems.
11. We expect a better future in a realistic way.
12. We will never give up hope. By a show of hands, do we all agree to these guidelines and principles?