

Guidelines for Participation in Bay Area Cancer Connections' (BACC) Support Groups

Purpose of the groups: Bay Area Cancer Connections' support groups provide a private place for people to discuss their experiences, share ideas, and provide support to one another. BACC groups and activities are voluntary associations of social support, and participants from all geographic areas are welcome. They are not professional therapy groups, and they may not meet all of your emotional support needs. BACC groups should not be your primary source of education regarding your diagnosis or treatment.

- If you need additional support or information, you are welcome to:
 - Speak with the group facilitator to obtain additional resource information.
 - Meet with one of our volunteer therapists for one or two free therapy sessions.
 - Email, call, or meet with our Personalized Cancer Information Education Specialists.
 - Call or email our Helpline (our Helpline hours are Monday-Thursday 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m., Friday 9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.)
 - We also encourage you to speak with your doctor if you have any questions about your treatment.
 - In case of emergency, call **911** or go to your local Emergency Room. For a mental health crisis or emotional distress, call or text **988** (Suicide & Crisis Lifeline).
- **Punctuality Policy:** We ask that everyone arrive on time to group. Please note that clients who arrive more than 15 minutes late may not be admitted to the session.
- We ask that all participants respect the confidentiality of others in the group. Free and open discussion is enhanced when all members agree not to share personal information with people outside the group.
- Confidentiality is strongly encouraged by all group members but cannot be guaranteed.
- Facilitators are obligated to take any necessary steps if they believe a group member is a danger to themselves or others or if information regarding child abuse, dependent adult abuse, or elder abuse is revealed during the group.
- If a participant has concerns about something that was said in the group, we ask that these concerns are brought up during the group meeting.
- Participants are encouraged to share their own stories, perspectives, and experiences. All points of view are welcome! However, some limits should be observed:
 - Participants should not ever give medical advice nor attempt to diagnose or recommend treatment options to others in any of BACC's programs.
 - Participants should not make any statement that is a conclusion about the medical condition of another person.
 - We encourage participants to discuss any information or concerns that arise during participation in the group with their personal physicians.
 - Participants should also keep in mind, and make clear in their communication during

the group, that everyone's situation is unique, and what may be right or comfortable for one person may not be for another.

- Participants listen carefully and respect others' points of view (e.g., participants do not interrupt, name-call, etc.). Participants and facilitators aim to respect "equity of voice."
- We ask that participants remain free of distractions while in group (i.e. cell phones, driving, cooking, and exercising).
- Participants are encouraged to maintain communication and social ties with one another outside of the group. However, any email communication or listservs developed by the participants are intended for community building only, and the information shared does not represent BACC's viewpoint.
- If a participant is removed from the group, the facilitator or a representative of BACC will contact them as soon as possible, ideally before they are removed.
- If a participant is interested in gathering medical information or sharing information with others, this information must first be given to Erika Bell, Ph.D., BACC's Director of Cancer Information and Education. Erika will then disseminate any vetted medical information in the group through the use of the library's online research folders, which can be accessed on BACC's website (<https://www.bayareacancer.org/cancer-information-education/>) by clicking the "Breast Cancer Resources" or "Ovarian Cancer Resources" buttons. If clients need assistance accessing or understanding the information, they are encouraged to call the Helpline and ask for an appointment with one of our Personalized Cancer Information and Education Specialists.

If a participant has questions about these guidelines, they should contact Sonia Sifuentes, Director of Programs, at 650-242-0686 or Sonia@bayareacancer.org.