

HERE/HEAR GROUP: WEEK 1

1. Welcome and Introductions

At the beginning of every group, take a few minutes to welcome everyone, **stress that Here/Hear Groups are safe places** where no one is judged, looked down upon, and everything remains confidential, and go around the room and have everyone introduce themselves (this is in case someone forgot a name or is new, there is no awkwardness).

2. Meditation/ Mindfulness

This is a time where the group spends a few minutes in meditation. The idea is to root each individual in the present and in the divine connectedness of all things. This also helps each member of the group find a little clarity. This is not a time where everyone clears their minds, but finds what is really on their minds. It's also a time where everyone can connect by getting to the same page. A Here/Hear group should be enjoyable but is also work because it carries a lot of responsibility.

In order to ensure not going too long (or too short) in meditation, set an alarm for 2-3 minutes, at least at your first meetings. The meditation time can grow from there if the group wants it to.

3. Discussion

The discussion time is where the members can share whatever is on their minds or hearts. It is not a group therapy session, but more a time to commiserate with one another over the issues in life, especially what it is like to live with a mental illness.

If the first weeks and months are difficult, that is ok. It will be as the group builds trust. As well, if the group finds that it is "stuck in a rut" or needs some freshness, it can always introduce topics to talk around. In this, one person each week would have to come up with a topic for the group and just open it to everybody. No leading, just open. If the group works with the topic, great; if not, that is fine too. (And Here/Hear will have a list of topics to get you started).

4. Reflection

During this time, each person writes down one or two takeaways from the time together. It is a good idea to have pen and paper handy. At the end, you can share together or simply keep them private. End the group in some sort of corporate way. Say, "Peace to you" to one another, or another such idea.