



Center for Community Support and Research  
Wichita State University

## The Effective Self-Help Group

### Organizational Structure

- ☞ Agrees on common mission, goals and purpose
- ☞ Has a relationship with an appropriate national/regional organization
- ☞ Has access to needed resources--meeting space, mailing, phone, publicity
- ☞ Has definite traditions and structure
- ☞ Is characterized by and structured around a strongly felt need, problem or illness
- ☞ Maintains a good balance between informality and structure
- ☞ Maintains appropriate relationships with the professional helping system
- ☞ Provides, in addition to mutual support, other related helpful activities

### Group Process

- ☞ Advocates for the needs/concerns of the constituency it serves
- ☞ Deals realistically with the problems of relapse and regression
- ☞ Distributes helping opportunities evenly throughout the group membership
- ☞ Encourages members to help each other obtain goals and provide feedback on goals
- ☞ Has accumulated a strong experiential base of knowledge
- ☞ Is growth focused and encourages its members to be growth focused as well
- ☞ Is guided by a rationale that helps explain the problem and methods of coping with it
- ☞ Supports members in their attempts to apply new strategies concerning their problems
- ☞ Uses a variety of principles and techniques in dealing with problems
- ☞ Maintains confidentiality within the group

### Group Meetings

- ☞ Adds a social aspect to meetings and activities of the group
- ☞ Meets in settings that are reinforcing
- ☞ Offers meetings that are non-judgmental and provide positive learning experiences

### Group Membership

- ☞ Has members who are willing to share personal feelings, concerns, successes and failures with one another
- ☞ Is composed of members with similar backgrounds, ages, education and interests
- ☞ Members share a strong sense of commitment and cohesiveness

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## Group Leadership

- ☞ Develops more than one or two leaders, core members or "energy" persons
- ☞ Shares and distributes leadership roles both formally and informally
- ☞ Tends to make decisions within the group using a consensus-building style