



Support Groups and You

Supporting One Another.

There are very few things that can match common experience as a bonding agent for humans. Differences in background, culture, age, and anything else that would otherwise polarize individuals suddenly matter very little when people find themselves standing on life-changing common ground. A profound example of this is the experience of weight loss success shared by thousands who take part in Barix Clinics support groups. These support group members gather on a monthly basis to motivate, educate, and encourage one another. Many dedicated volunteers take the lead in keeping these support groups thriving all across the country.

Understanding, encouragement and compassion make up the foundation of a great support group. And wherever you are in your weight loss journey, you'll find others there too, eager to share their stories.

Who Attends Barix Support Groups?

Because the Barix weight loss program promotes a lifelong commitment to healthy living, it's no surprise that the support starts even before the surgery. Those considering surgery have an opportunity to hear "the real story" from others who have had surgery, and are successfully maintaining a healthy weight. Support groups can help people in the pre-surgery phase to increase their confidence in their decision to have surgery. Topics range from the surgery itself to practical information regarding insurance, lifestyle changes, and other day-to-day challenges. Pre-surgery patients are helped to appreciate that weight loss surgery is a tool, not a miracle. And those who are successful commit to a complete lifestyle that supports a healthy weight.

Those who have recently had surgery can connect with others who are adjusting to the emotional and physical changes. New ways of eating, exercise tips, emotional changes, and relationship adjustments are just a few of the subjects openly discussed in these groups. In addition, the groups present a timely opportunity to share in the excitement at a time when pounds are melting away, medical conditions are improving, activities are becoming easier, and life is getting more wonderful with each passing day.

Perhaps the most valuable assets of all Barix support groups are the "veterans." The veterans have had the surgery years earlier and have successfully settled into their healthy new lives. These people can provide priceless insights to others who have recently had surgery, as well as to those considering it. And of course,

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it works the other way too. Weight-loss veterans know the value of support doesn't diminish with time, and they're as eager as ever to be encouraged by anyone, regardless of where they are in their weight loss program.

Besides, as we established earlier, there is far more that unites us than separates us. Regardless of where we are on the road to good health, our lives tend to be busy, stressful, too sedentary, and full of opportunities to make poor food choices. The support group connection helps us all to stay on track. As members, we can provide encouragement (and yes, accountability) to those needing additional support to stay with the lifestyle habits that support a healthy weight.

Friends and family members can also benefit from attending support groups. A greater understanding of the lifestyle changes, physical changes and emotional changes will make them stronger supporters on a day-to-day basis.

If you are not currently a member of a Barix support group, we encourage you to look into it. No doubt you can be strengthened by others who are eager to share their stories, and we're equally certain that they can be strengthened by yours.

Benefits of Attending Barix Support Groups

Real hope. Hearing others' stories and seeing the physical results helps you view your own healthy goals as reachable.

Understanding. You may find that among all your supporters, others who have walked in your shoes are best able to understand and support you.

Empowerment. Increasing knowledge and learning skills that lead to success puts you in control of your weight loss journey.

Self-confidence. Knowing that others like you have succeeded can help you believe in your own success.

Supporting Each Other in Every Way

Support group members maintain a ***nonjudgmental attitude***. They accept others for who they are, and *where* they are in their ability to adjust to the physical and emotional changes of surgery, even realizing that others have the right to make personal choices--right or wrong.

Members support others by ***accepting differences***. Not all will experience the same levels of hunger, have the same ability to exercise, lose weight at the same rate, or choose to meet goals in the same way. Those differences should be embraced, as they can enrich the group. They allow members to explore different ways within the Barix recommendations to reach and maintain a healthy weight.

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The ***sharing of experiences*** gives group members a strong sense of connectedness. Our personal stories will inspire and motivate one another. Sometimes what one member shares is exactly what another member needed to hear. We remind one another that we are not alone--others have had similar experiences and made it through.

Members can provide ***accountability*** for your choices--sometimes challenging you to rethink your attitude or behavior. This too should be embraced. Remember, knowing that people care about you and want to see you succeed can keep you focused on your positive lifestyle goals.

A ***listening*** ear can be a powerful support, too. Members understand that sometimes a person simply needs an opportunity to talk candidly in a safe environment. Rather than advice or direction, that person may just want an opportunity to talk through a situation.

Members feel safe to express their personal feelings when they know others will respect ***confidentiality***. What is shared in the support group stays in the support group.

Attitudes are contagious—and a ***positive attitude*** can affect others like nothing else. Each member helps by avoiding contentious and challenging behavior, dominating the conversation, gossiping, and general negativity about the program. This way, members are sure to leave the meeting energized, recharged, and refreshed.

Making Sure You Get the Support You Need

Support group leaders should be open to the needs of the members and welcome feedback. Initially, some find it uncomfortable expressing a personal issue in a group setting. Those who feel they could use help in this area can speak privately with the leader, either at the meeting or by phone. Perhaps a request for a specific topic can be raised to the group to generate a discussion. Members also may want to give feedback regarding how the group utilizes meeting time.

You may find that your needs are more than a support group can meet. In that case, you might consider linking up with a Barix Buddy for more frequent phone or email contact. Barix Buddies function as accountability partners, a one-on-one arrangement where each Buddy monitors the other's progress on a weekly basis. You may also find it beneficial to work with a therapist to identify any underlying issues.

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Seek out the support channels that best fit your needs. Remember, support can come in many forms. Look to friends and family members for day-to-day support as you implement new healthful lifestyle habits, experience emotional changes, and make relationship adjustments. Obtain the skills to overcome emotional eating with The Solution (www.thepathway.org).

How to Start a Barix Clinics Support Group

If you are interested in starting and leading a Barix support group in your area, you can find information and complete an online application (www.barixclinicsstore.com/id454.html). Support group leaders are volunteers who have had bariatric surgery at Barix Clinics at least 6 months ago. They are dedicated to following the Barix Clinics recommendations for lifestyle habits that support a healthy weight, and are current with lab tests and office visits. Most of all they have the desire and willingness to support others who have had weight loss surgery.

These volunteer positions do take a significant commitment of time and energy. In addition to facilitating the support group meeting and providing accurate information and ongoing education about the Barix program, leaders have other responsibilities. These include maintaining a positive supportive environment, serving as a role model for members of the support group, securing an appropriate meeting place, communicating any significant developments in the meetings, reporting changes in meeting times or locations and faithfully attending their own support group meetings.

Support group leaders are very passionate about the difference that bariatric surgery has made in their lives. They have a strong desire to celebrate the success of others and help others through challenges. Support group leaders gain personal satisfaction and community recognition in their role by delivering quality educational resources, emotional support, and fellowship to others, and by assisting them in finding a new life--free of their excess weight.

Support Group Mission Statement

The Barix Clinics Support Group mission is to help Barix patients to be successful in achieving their weight loss goals by:

Providing a positive, supportive environment in which ongoing education and mutual support and encouragement can take place, and through fostering and facilitating the development of supportive personal relationships between patients.

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