

## WHY SUPPORT GROUPS WORK

### **Instant Identity**

- Someone knows how you feel, you're not alone
- A special empathy different from professionals

### **Empowerment**

- Based on notion that there is "strength in numbers"
- Encourages people to be responsible & take control

### **Mutual Self-Disclosure**

- A safe place to disclose, to be forgiven, to obtain redirection
- Accountability

### **Helper-Therapy Principle - mutuality and reciprocity**

- Helping is therapeutic - the person who is helping is helped the most
- Increases competence & self-esteem
- Creates equality between members

### **Social Role Models - role modeling, vicarious learning**

- Provides examples of someone who is coping, changing, making it
- Opportunities for vicarious learning

### **Normalizing Effect**

- Helps members view their experience as normal processes - "I'm not crazy"
- Combats tendency to feel stigmatized

### **Networking**

- Helps to embed persons in a network of caring relationships
- Immediate access, no appointment; help beyond regular meeting times
- Role other than "patient" when interacting with professionals & decision makers

### **Information - practical coping, latest information, etc.**

- Centers of information - practical, educational & scientific
- Serve to redefine the term "expert" because of their experiences - the "experiential expert"

### **Ideology**

- Help provide a world view of self & their problem
- Provides a viewpoint and sometimes a program for overcoming some problem or situation