



Depression and Bipolar
Support Alliance

Peer Leadership Center

50 Ways to Create a Recovery-Oriented Atmosphere

SELF DIRECTION

1. Help participants through a vision setting exercise.
2. Hold a discussion around recovery-centered goals.
3. Hold a goal setting workshop for all participants.

PERSON-CENTERED

4. Use person-first language in all publications and when speaking to or about the support groups. Example: "Our support groups are for people living with depression and bipolar disorder. At our groups we talk about our experiences and share tools and ideas of ways we can improve our lives."
5. During introductions ask people to give their name and something they like to do, rather than their mental health condition.

EMPOWERMENT

6. Develop a new leader/facilitator orientation system or a mentoring system.
7. As a group, write a letter to the editor of a newspaper or magazine on a topic of interest.
8. Encourage participants to bring ideas or issues to the group.
9. Help participants connect to community resources (employment, housing, healthcare, etc.).
10. Have (and follow) term limits on leadership (if applicable).
11. Give presentations to different groups within the community about mental health.
12. Celebrate participants who are taking action within the group or greater community.

HOLISTIC

13. Host a walking group for participants.
14. Host social events such as movie nights, picnics, etc.
15. Bring in speakers to talk about meditation, healthy eating, yoga, etc.
16. Host a "family night."
17. Give examples of relaxation exercises in your newsletter or on your website.
18. Host a comedy night with movies, stand-up comedians, laughing exercises or anything else you can think of to get people laughing (make sure to use appropriate humor!).
19. Provide opportunities for participants to share ways that help them connect with or build their spiritual side.
20. Organize participant's involvement in a community service project.

NON-LINEAR

21. Hold a session and/or discussion around the five stages of recovery.
22. Help individuals prepare for set-backs by providing them with customizable wellness plans, advance directives, etc.
23. Develop a plan for how the group will support a person who is going through a hard time.
24. Encourage individuals to share with the group what helps them when they are going through a hard time.
25. Hold a "celebration night" to celebrate all the goals that have been achieved and how far people have come.
You can also dedicate a time in every support group to share successes.



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STRENGTHS

26. Help participants identify their strengths.
27. Provide opportunities for participants to showcase their strengths or talents (talent shows, writing an article for the newsletter, etc.).
28. Involve various participants in group tasks or jobs and encourage mentorship between individuals who would like to learn new skills.
29. Avoid language such as high-functioning or low-functioning.

PEER SUPPORT

30. Hold support groups and create additional support groups for specific populations.
31. Write to legislators, doctors, newspapers, etc. about the benefits of peer support.
32. Develop a buddy system within the group.
33. Encourage participants to write up or record testimonial of how peer support has helped them and share this with others.
34. Showcase research on peer support in newsletters, at meetings and on your website.

RESPECT

35. Encourage participants to give presentations on their background, culture, upbringing, etc. and celebrate these differences.
36. Invite speakers from the community to come in and talk to the group about how different populations view mental health.
37. Create a suggestion box and regularly try to incorporate suggestions.
38. Hold a discussion around negative self-talk and ways to combat it.
39. Provide opportunities for all participants to share in decision-making and the direction of the organization.
40. Develop and distribute evaluations regularly.
41. Encourage participants (and the group as a whole) to write thank you cards.

RESPONSIBILITY

42. Start your meetings on time.
43. Focus conversations on what is within your control and encourage other participants to do this as well.
44. Encourage participants to commit to doing something that contributes directly to their recovery each week.
45. Encourage participants to take an active role in their treatment plan by helping them to determine what they want to discuss with their provider and what they want to get out of treatment.

HOPE

46. Develop a regular forum for sharing all kinds of recovery stories, verbally and in print.
47. Encourage participants to keep track of how far they've come by journaling, marking anniversaries, etc., and remind participants of their progress when they forget.
48. Provide hopeful quotes, readings, songs and/or pictures.
49. Profile people and their recovery stories in your newsletter or in the local newspaper.
50. Start all meetings with a reminder that people can and do get better.