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WHO WE ARE

For over thirty years, the mission of the New Jersey Self-Help Group Clearinghouse has been to help people find and form all types of self-help groups. To that end, we maintain a database of nearly 7,000 mutual aid support groups in New Jersey for abuse, addictions, bereavement, disabilities, health, mental health, family, parenting, caregiving and more. We also have information on 1,200 national, international, online and model one-of-a-kind groups.

Persons who are looking for groups can call our toll-free number to get information on any of these groups. Our helpline is open Monday through Friday, 8:30 am until 5:00pm and is always answered by a real person!

In addition to helping persons find groups, we also help interested persons to start needed new groups. Whether someone wants to start a group because there is none in their area, or an agency wants to offer groups at their facility, the Clearinghouse can help. Our services include free telephone consultation, literature on starting, running and maintaining groups, free workshops on starting and facilitating groups and networking with others who are interested in helping.

CONTACT US

1-800-367-6274 (in NJ only)
more easily remembered as

1-800-FOR-MASH (Mutual Aid Self-Help)
973-989-1122 (outside NJ)
973-989-1159 (fax)

Website: <http://www.NJgroups.org>
Email: info@selfhelpgroups.org

NJ Self-Help Group Clearinghouse
375 E. McFarlan St.
Dover, NJ 07801

ROLE OF SELF-HELP GROUPS

DURING TIMES OF ECONOMIC DOWN TURN

It hasn't been an easy couple of years for many people. Companies are having mass lay-offs or reducing employee hours and benefits. Entitlement programs such as Medicare and Medicaid are paying less, making it harder for low-income or persons with disabilities to find adequate services. The prices of gas and groceries have soared causing some people to turn to nearly bare food pantries. Medical costs have skyrocketed wreaking devastation on those families who are unexpectedly faced with a medical emergency or birth of a sick baby.

In these rough economic times, many hard-working people are finding themselves in unfamiliar territory—financial and/or emotional crisis. And oftentimes, with the loss of financial security, comes a plummeting of a person's self-esteem, confidence, feeling of self-worth and hope for the future. Many people are finding themselves feeling overwhelmed and depressed to the point of giving up.

So where can you go to talk with others who will understand your plight, offer you hope and coping strategies and listen to you in a non-judgmental manner?

*Feel free to share this newsletter.
Forward it via email to anyone
who may be interested. Or print
out a copy and pass it around.*

RESOURCES TO HELP DEAL WITH FINANCIAL STRESS

CONSUMER CREDIT COUNSELING SERVICES
(Referrals to credit counseling services in NJ)
1-888-726-3260 www.cccsnj.org

NJ FORECLOSURE MEDIATION HOTLINE (Help for qualified home owners) 1-888-989-5277
www.nj.gov/foreclosuremediation

NJ TENANTS RIGHTS (during a foreclosure)
Legal Services 1-888-576-5529

NJ FINANCIAL SUPPORT SERVICES & PROGRAMS
(Info on public assistance, utility bill help, food programs, etc.) **NJ 211 Helpline** (Just dial 2-1-1) <http://nj211.org> * **NJ Helps** <http://njhelps.org>

LOW COST PRESCRIPTIONS (Directory of pharmaceutical assistance programs)
Partnership for Prescription Asst. 1-888-477-2669 www.pparx.org * **Rx4NJ** 1-888-793-6765
www.rx4nj.org

UTILITY ASSISTANCE (Financial help to eligible persons) **NJ Weatherization & Home Energy Asst. Prog.** 1-800-510-3102

WELFARE (Info on welfare, food stamps) **Div. of Family Development** 1-800-792-9773

SUPPORT GROUPS There are many support groups dealing with various issues including:

- **Debtors Anonymous** (12-step groups to help persons stop incurring debt) 1-877-717-3328 www.njpada.org
- **Unemployment & underemployment** (to include groups for persons with a mental illness who are seeking jobs)
- **Displaced Homemakers** (who lost support of spouse due to death, divorce or disability)
- **Addictions** (including alcohol, drugs, smoking, gambling, overspending, etc.)
- **Caregivers** (for various situations, ages, disabilities, medical conditions, etc.)
- **Health Problems** (cardiac, stroke, lung disorders, genetic disorders, multiple sclerosis, etc)

To find a group near you, call the Clearinghouse at **1-800-367-6274** and we can connect you with the nearest group that suits your needs.

ROLE OF SELF-HELP GROUPS DURING TIMES OF ECONOMIC DOWN TURN

(Continued from page 1)

One such safe, confidential, and usually free resource is a local self-help support group. It isn't always easy to talk with neighbors, friends or family members when you have lost your livelihood due to an illness of a spouse, have searched unsuccessfully for a job for over a year, or are on the brink of foreclosure on your home. But at a support group meeting the other members understand what you are going through because they, too, have gone through similar situations. Just how can self-help support groups help during economic down turns?

- **THE PRICE IS RIGHT!** Most self-help groups are free (however, some request a donation or "pass the hat.") Some groups charge a very small per-meeting fee usually to pay for renting the meeting site, or request a small yearly membership fee. If a person cannot pay, most groups will waive the fee.
- **PROVIDES PRACTICAL, HANDS-ON EXPERIENCE** At support groups, members exchange coping skills and practical information. As an example, during meetings for unemployed persons, members critique others resumes, practice getting interviewed through role playing, and do other activities that give members the confidence and knowledge to seek out and hopefully find employment.
- **PROVIDES INFORMATION ON LOCAL RESOURCES** Members of support groups usually are aware of which resources are available in their area; which agencies provide the best service, where free or low-cost services are available, which doctors are most familiar with specific disorders, who will take a certain insurance, etc.
- **HELPS BREAK BAD, EXPENSIVE HABITS** Sometimes, breaking an expensive habit can be extremely difficult, especially during times of stress. But this is usually the most important time to cut down on non-essential expenses (e.g. cigarettes, junk food, alcohol, spending sprees, etc). Research has shown that if you want to try to stop (or cut down on) whatever "bad" habit you may have, your chances of success are increased when you try to "kick the habit" in a group format.
- **VARIOUS GROUP VENUES ARE AVAILABLE** Are you holding down two jobs and don't have a lot of time to drive to a support group meeting? Or is the price of gasoline keeping you home at night? Don't worry! There are hundreds of online groups, email lists, listservs and message boards that are available 24/7 that you can join.

Don't have internet access because you have cancelled your service to cut expenses? Or do you just have the need to get out of the house? Don't worry! There are many local face-to-face groups dealing with unemployment, health and medical conditions, mental health issues (including depression), divorce, displaced homemakers, bereavement and a vast variety of other groups.

- **BUILDS SELF-CONFIDENCE** In a support group, a person with a problem or dealing with a stressful life situation not only gets help from others, but also becomes a helpful resource for others. Support groups turn help seekers into help providers—increasing confidence and feelings of self-worth.

Self-help support groups are not professional therapy, but rather are run by and for persons dealing with same adversity. These groups can provide the information, resources, understanding and caring that might be just what you need to get back on the road to recovery.

HOW WE HELP PERSONS TO START NEW GROUPS

There are a variety of ways in which the Clearinghouse can help you start a group:

How-to Literature: Our Clearinghouse has the country's most comprehensive library of various guides to self-help group development and maintenance including:

- General how-to's with ideas on how to start and run mutual help groups.
- Group development materials for hundreds of specific self-help support groups, detailing how to start and run that type of group.

Referring Potential Co-founders to You:

We can list you as a person interested in starting a group on our database. Then when we receive a call from someone in your area asking for your type of group, we can advise the caller: "We're sorry that there is no group in your area. However, there is someone interested in starting this type of group. If you are interested in helping, we can give you the contact information." That way, we can help network you with others willing to help even before you have your first meeting.

Networking You with Other Groups & Resources: We can put you in touch with representatives of similar groups so that you can get ideas on starting your group.

Phone Consultative Help: On-going assistance via our toll-free helpline is available from your Clearinghouse consultant, who will help you with any concern or obstacle you may encounter.

Free Workshops on Starting and Running Groups: We offer free workshops on starting and facilitating groups.

Workshop Schedule 2012

| HOW START GROUPS | | FACILITATION SKILLS | |
|------------------|------------|---------------------|-----------|
| Jan. | Somerset | Feb. | Essex |
| Mar. | Atlantic | April | Camden |
| May | Bergen | June | Middlesex |
| July | Gloucester | Aug. | Ocean |
| Sept. | Ocean | Oct. | Atlantic |
| Nov. | Morris | Dec. | Hunterdon |

Schedule is subject to change. Call for details.

NEW GROUPS ON THE HORIZON. . . Examples of a Few that Could Start if Others Help

One of the key services that the NJ Self-Help Group Clearinghouse offers is free assistance to interested persons and agencies in starting needed new support groups. Many of these groups are started by persons who were looking for a group only to find that there was none in their area. Some are developed by persons who lived through a stressful experience who now want to make sure that no one else has to "go it alone" or they want to give back. Other groups are started in various social service agencies who want to offer their clients (and many times the surrounding community) additional help. Whatever the reason, the Clearinghouse has many resources to help people build a strong foundation on which to start the group. (See column on left).

At this current time, the Clearinghouse is working with over 125 persons or agencies who have requested assistance in starting groups. Some of issues around which persons are currently interested in starting groups include:

- **DIALECTICAL BEHAVIOR THERAPY** – This group will offer those who have undergone Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) a venue in which to practice DBT methods. The group would also be open to those who are interested in learning about DBT. *(Middlesex County)*
- **DOUBLE TROUBLE IN RECOVERY** – A member-run 12-step group for persons diagnosed with both a mental illness and an addiction. *(Burlington, Morris and Somerset Counties)*
- **FIRE BEREAVEMENT** – This group will provide emotional support for anyone who has lost a loved one in a fire, or who is experiencing trauma stemming from escaping from a fire where another died, and/or losing one's home or pets in a fire. *(Middlesex County)*
- **LOSS TO AN ADDICTION** – This group would be open to anyone who has lost a loved one due to an addiction (overdose, alcohol, etc). *(Monmouth County)*
- **UNEMPLOYMENT** Neighbors-Helping-Neighbors, for those who want to re-invigorate their job search, will meet in various libraries. *(Bergen & Morris Counties)*
- **VETERANS** Several groups for veterans are starting including Iraqi and Afghan vets *(Atlantic County)*, Military Servicewomen *(Bergen County)*; and Female Victims of Military Sexual Trauma. *(Bergen)*
- **PERSONS IN ARRANGED MARRIAGES** which will help members strengthen themselves and the value systems required for a successful arranged marriage; and **PERSONS IN FORCED MARRIAGES** which will offer emotional support to anyone who is, or was, in a forced marriage. *(Statewide) www.gangashakti.org*
- **STEP-PARENTING** to provide support in successfully blending two families together and help parents deal with the challenges. *(Morris)*
- **AACT-NOW!** Support for African American families of persons with a mental illness. *(Essex)*
- **POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER** for persons who are suffering from PTSD from a variety of causes. *(Essex, Burlington, Monmouth)*
- **PARENTS OF ESTRANGED ADULT CHILDREN** for those whose adult children no longer communicate with them. *(Ocean)*

If you, or someone you know, might be interested in helping any of these groups to start, please contact the Clearinghouse. To start a group takes time and dedication. It is always easier to start groups with a "core group" where "mutual help" is apparent from the very beginning.

FACILITATION TECHNIQUES

12 Effective Ways to Deal With A Monopolizer

It seems that every support group, at one time or another, is cursed with an individual who monopolizes the group's time, meeting after meeting. As a facilitator, no matter how uncomfortable it may make you feel, it is important to deal directly with this situation; otherwise you run the risk of losing the other members who are probably feeling frustrated and ignored. Here are some techniques that other group facilitators have developed that may help:

1. **CREATE A "SHARE THE AIR" RULE** Include in your ground rules *"We don't monopolize the group's time in order to leave time for all members to participate."* When someone starts to go on and on, point out how some members haven't yet had a chance to speak. Start by mentioning a positive about what they have been saying, e.g., "You raise a good issue. But we need to observe our ground rule and leave time for others to speak. Can you summarize your point in a few words because we need to move on?"
2. **MOVE THE FOCUS TO SOMEONE ELSE** Maintain eye contact with the speaker while they are speaking. When they take a breath, move your glance to another part of the room and ask "How have others here handled similar circumstances?"
3. **FRIENDLY INTERRUPTIONS** Be respectful but firm: "Excuse me Mary, but I'm concerned about the time. We really need to move on. Can you wrap up in one minute?" Some support groups even use a gavel or egg timer to let the speaker know when their time is up!
4. **ESTABLISH TIME LIMITS** Some groups will divide the allotted time by the number of people who would like to speak. Then they use a timekeeper or a kitchen timer, or pass around a watch with a second hand to keep track of the time. Or consider having a timed agenda for the full meeting - where next to each item agenda or turn, you suggest a time to which the group agrees. If the group falls behind, enlist
5. **BAN "DOUBLE DIPPING"** Have a ground rule stating that *"No member can speak a second time until all members have had a chance to speak."* Enforce this rule when necessary. If members raise their hands to speak, to effectively deal with those persons who constantly raise their hands, say "Let's only hear from those who have not had the chance to speak yet."
6. **PUT THE PERSON TO WORK!** Ask the person to take on a volunteer job at the meeting such as timekeeper, the taker of minutes, or to summarize the night's discussion at the end of the meeting.
7. **SPEND A PENNY** This technique can effectively help deal with those members who feel the need to add their comment after everyone else speaks or interrupts other speakers. At the beginning of each meeting, give each group member five pennies. In the middle of the room have a tin can or jar. Whenever anyone speaks during the meeting (including interruptions), he/she must put a penny into the jar. When they run out of pennies, they run out of "words."
8. **PARK IT** Have an "Unfinished Business List" (or "Parking Lot") where people's additional concerns that cannot be addressed at meeting due to time constraints, can be referred back to at a future meeting, e.g., "John, since we don't have enough time to get to all the issues you've raised, let's add the unaddressed ones to our 'Unfinished Business List' and perhaps we can get to it next week."
9. **USE A PROP** To reduce interruptions by a person who monopolizes, use a "talking stick" or other object during group discussion. Only the person holding the stick may speak, which discourages people from spontaneously (and repeatedly) speaking out of turn. When the speaker is done, they decide who gets the talking stick next. (So who will usually get it last? The monopolizer, of course.)
10. **BREAK INTO SMALLER GROUPS** Perhaps it is time to evaluate whether or not group is becoming too large for members to have enough time to talk. If so, consider breaking into smaller groups.
11. **USE SIGNALS** This tip can be used very successfully for those members who know that they tend to monopolize the conversation and welcome guidance from others. Develop signals that you can use to let the member know that they need to wrap-up. These can be anything from flash cards with "minutes left" written on them, to pointing to your watch, to using a secret "code" word. These cues should be discussed before the meeting. You will probably find that these signals will start to work on all the members!
12. **CREATE A SPEAKING ORDER** Before the group discussion starts, have members take numbers (which represent the order in which they will speak). Let new people, those in crisis, and those who need to leave early take the lower numbers. Persons who are hesitant to speak, and members who tend to monopolize get the higher ones.

Not all of these tips will work in every situation nor with every person. Also, different facilitators will feel more comfortable using some of these tips over others. But as a facilitator, it is crucial to deal with those members who hoard most of the available discussion time. If not, you can expect both newcomers and long-term members to stop attending.

WHY REFER YOUR CLIENTS TO SUPPORT GROUPS?

- **RELIEVES THEIR SENSE OF ISOLATION** - Facing adversity, getting a diagnosis or facing any stressful life situation can make a person feel alone and confused. Attending a support group helps them realize that they “are not alone” thus giving them a sense of community.
- **POSITIVE ROLE MODELS** - Clients will meet others who have successfully dealt with their common problem which can provide hope.
- **WELLNESS TOOLS & COPING STRATEGIES** - Group members share experiences, tools & strategies on dealing with their situation 24/7.
- **PREVENTS PROFESSIONAL BURNOUT** - Adding self-help group support to a client’s program can help alleviate professional burnout while giving clients peer support & understanding between visits.
- **HELPER THERAPY** - Allows clients to provide understanding & help to others as well as getting help for themselves.
- **EMPOWERMENT** - Members learn to take an active rather than passive role in their own recovery
- **SUPPLEMENTAL HELP** - Attending a self-help support groups acts as a supplement to, not a replacement of, professional help.

Would you be interested in a free presentation on self-help groups at your agency, coalition, college, county or state association?

The Clearinghouse is sometimes available to speak at staff meetings, regional conferences or other gatherings on the availability, benefits and variety of self-help groups. If your organization would like to know more about how self-help groups could benefit your clients, employees or agency, consider including a free presentation at any of your events. For information **contact Ed** at the Clearinghouse at 1-800-367-6274 ext. 15.

IDEAS ON HOW PROFESSIONALS CAN BETTER REFER CLIENTS TO SELF-HELP GROUPS

- Provide a **brochure or flyer** on the group.
- Provide a copy of a good **newspaper article** on the group.
- Provide a copy of any local **group’s** and/or national **newsletter**.
- Compile and provide a listing of anonymous **quotes by other patients** as to the value of that group to them.
- If not on the brochure, provide the name of any **contact person** for the group. Tell the client to contact that person for more information on the group (e.g., how meetings are run, number and age range of members, etc.) or to answer other questions the client might have.
- Determine if the group might possibly be able to provide a **member who would escort the client to the meeting**, or who would meet with the client just outside or at the meeting to greet them, and provide a quick orientation and be available to answer any questions.
- Have the client **call the group from your office** to get information on the group.
- **Role play** with clients what it is like to attend a self-help group.
- Explain to the client how research on **“helper therapy”** has shown how taking on any role within a self-help group helps in one’s own recovery process.
- Show clients a **video** on how a specific support group can help.
- During group activities, invite a **past client who is well on the way to recovery** to come back and talk about what services and group activities helped them to succeed after leaving the program.

Need help with any of these suggestions? Contact the Clearinghouse for additional resources. We can provide contacts on available groups, research on the benefits of groups, some newspaper articles, and various brochures, literature and videos on a limited amount of groups.

WHAT IS A SELF-HELP GROUP?

A self-help group is a group of people who share a common problem, illness, disability or other stressful life situation, who come together to help each other cope. Members share experiences, strengths and hope in order to overcome or deal with their situation. Self-help groups are sometimes referred to as a support group, or mutual aid self-help group.

Self-help groups are:

- **MADE UP OF PEERS** - Members share the same problem or experience. Since members are all “in the same boat,” there’s an almost instant sense of community. Members learn that they “Are not alone.”
- **MEMBER-RUN** - The sense of ownership of the group is with the members, not just one person. Members therefore feel freer to voice their needs, and become more involved in making “their group” work.
- **MUTUAL HELP** - Members help one another. The primary way members benefit is through their both getting and giving help.
- **NON-PROFIT** - Groups are free, “pass the hat” or have minimal dues to pay incidental costs. There’s no fee for service. It’s mutual aid.

UPCOMING SPECIALTY PROGRAMS FOR 2012

In addition to our regular workshops on “Starting an Effective Self-Help Group” and “Group Facilitation Skills,” the Clearinghouse periodically sponsors a variety of specialty workshops. In 2012, we are tentatively planning several interesting programs including:

SAFETY PLAN WORKSHOP – The workshop will discuss specific strategies, techniques and safety plans which groups and members can adapt in order to promote suicide prevention within their groups and their general community.

ADVOCACY SKILLS FOR MENTAL HEALTH CONSUMERS – This workshop presents various ways that mental health consumers can help themselves and others in the practice of self-advocacy. This workshop is being conducted at several self-help centers.

WRAP (WELLNESS RECOVERY ACTION PLAN) – This workshop will cover the development, promotion and application of WRAP (Wellness Recovery Action Plans), developed by Mary Ellen Copeland, for recovery from a mental illness and/or chronic illness. WRAP principles can be incorporated very easily into self-help groups which can encourage and assist members to develop wellness tools and action plans to help them better cope with symptoms and stressful situations.

PROFESSIONAL TRAINING WORKSHOP – This workshop will provide an update on self-help group developments and encourage a discussion of the benefits of self-help groups, as well as the beneficial roles that professionals can play in working with these community groups. The training will help identify successful strategies and techniques professionals and agencies can utilize to help both their clients and their communities.



For additional information on any of these programs, contact the Clearinghouse.

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JANUARY IS SELF-HELP GROUP AWARENESS MONTH

January is traditionally welcomed in with great celebration and with hope for the future. Since January is designated as “Self-Help Group Awareness Month,” groups members can also celebrate and promote their groups.

Attending a self-help group is a great way for people to better keep their New Year’s resolutions (quit smoking, lose weight, deal with a stressful situation, change a bad habit, improve their physical and mental health, etc.), So January is the ideal time to celebrate all the good that self-help groups provide. “Self-Help Group Awareness Month” provides an opportunity for group members and supportive professionals to get the word out about the existence and benefits of their groups.

So, celebrate your group! Recognize all the hope, strength and knowledge that your group imparts on its members. Ring in the New Year with the knowledge that you have made a difference in other people’s lives.

YOUR FEEDBACK IS VALUABLE TO US!

PLEASE LET US KNOW. Did you find this newsletter helpful? Do you have any suggestions on improvements for future issues? We would love to hear from you! Just send an e-mail bwhite@saintclares.org

Do you have a story to share? If you would like to **submit a story** or article for the next edition of the newsletter, please call the Clearinghouse. *We regret that we will not be able to publish all submissions.*

VISIT OUR WEBSITE

Come visit our newly revamped website! We now list local contact information for all of the **mental health** and **addiction**-related self-help groups throughout New Jersey. The website also has:

- ✓ [Lists of groups by County](#)
- ✓ [Lists of groups by Specialty](#) (addictions, cultural-language, faith-based, men, older adults, youth, parents, disability, economic, etc)
- ✓ [Mini-Guide to Mental Health Resources](#) statewide list
- ✓ [Literature](#) (starting, running, facilitating groups, problem-solving etc.)
- ✓ [Helpful Resources](#) for Self-Help Groups
- ✓ [Speakers’ Bureau](#) contact list



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Quick Resource

The NJ Self-Help Group Clearinghouse is a member of Saint Clare’s Health System, Denville, NJ, and a subsidiary of Catholic Health Initiatives. It is funded through the NJ Division of Mental Health and Addictions.