

Trans Support Group Conversation Guide

In 2019 advocates from sexual assault support centers and Maine Transgender Network co-facilitated groups for trans and non-binary survivors of sexual violence. Part of that partnership included developing a screening process (and an evaluation process) that fit the style, values, and policies of both agencies. Below is the shared screening tool centers and MTN facilitators used for prospective group participants.

Participant Name: _____ Pronouns _____

Facilitator Name: _____ Pronouns _____

Facilitator Name: _____ Pronouns _____

Date: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Voicemail Message okay? Yes ___ No ___

What the best way to get a hold of you if group is canceled?

Preferred way to be contacted: Text ___ Phone Call ___

Is there someone you would want us to call in case of an emergency? What pronouns or name should we use for you? Does this person support your gender identity? If no, how would you like us to navigate coordinating your care with them?

Navigating emergency contact instructions:

Introduction

Purpose of this conversation

Mostly this is a chance to get to know each other and see if we are a good fit. It is a space for you as a potential participant to learn a bit about us as facilitators and our ideas for what this group will be like. Lastly, this is an opportunity for facilitators to listen to you and learn how we can make this group a safe(r) and healing space for you. We hope to do this by discussing our conversation guide questions below.

Purpose of the group

This program, one of the first of its kind, will offer a confidential and safe environment for trans identified and gender non-conforming folks to talk about their experiences as survivors, to learn coping skills, access resources, and create a community of support.

Logistical information

Group will begin on _____ and run for _____ weeks. Last Session will be _____

Location _____

Time _____

Are there any sessions you won't be able to attend?

Snow day protocol: Facilitators will notify you through your preferred method of contact if we have to cancel due to snow. We plan to make up any missed sessions.

Accessibility

Here is a rundown of what the space has: (Facilitator expands on navigating the space. Address, entrances, bathrooms, privacy, accessibility offerings, etc.). Here is what the space looks like currently: (show picture.)

Is there anything we can do to make sure the meeting space is accessible for you? Physical accommodations like chairs without armrests, wheelchair ramps, gender neutral and/or handicap toilets etc.? Do you have any sensory needs that we can assist with? Certain lights, smells, sounds etc., anything that would interrupt your participation in the group?

Any questions about space logistics?

Conversation Questions

You are in control of how you share your experiences. This can be a space for you to share the details of your story if you feel empowered doing so, but it is not expected nor required to participate.

1. What made you consider coming to a support group?
2. Have you thought about your personal goals for the group? What are you interested in addressing?
3. We plan on having the group create ground rules together. Is there any group norm you would like to share? What is important to you about how the group operates? Share handout of MTN ground rules and discuss.
4. Do you have any other experience with groups? If yes, what was the best thing about the group? What was the hardest thing?
5. We recognize that healing is not linear. We don't think you need to be any amount of "healed enough" to be in this group. At the same time, we accept that the nature of this group is intense and has the potential to be triggering. Being triggered or "sent back into your trauma" can look like many different things to different people. What have you noticed about how you react when you are triggered? What has been helpful to support you? What has not been helpful? Can we make a plan about how we can help when that happens?
6. In life when coping with really difficult circumstances, it's not uncommon to have behaviors that are harmful to yourself or others. We believe you know what's best for you and are not here to put a judgment on the ways you cope. This is an opportunity to talk about the ways we cope and provide support if a coping mechanism is being more harmful than helpful to you. Are there any ways in which you cope that feel harmful and that you would like support around from us? Are there any healthy coping skills we can reinforce or suggest?
7. What does your support system look like? Are there folks you can lean on when things are tough?

8. We recognize that healing is really complicated and has many different paths. Our support group is just one of those paths. Are there other healing paths you have tried or are interested in?
9. Safety is a complicated subject but so important to the space we are trying to cultivate in this group. What do you need to feel safe within a group?
10. Many survivors seek out mental health support after a sexual assault. Have you had mental health/medical/medication experiences that were helpful? Any that were unhelpful? Anything important we should know about how to best support you? Anything you are worried might impact your participation in group?
11. Is there someone or anyone in the trans/queer community that you would feel unsafe and unable to participate in this group with?
12. What do you do to take care of yourself? What do you do for fun?
13. Any questions or concerns about the group?

In the moment needs

Example 1. You are listening to another group member share their story of sexual violence and you need to leave the room. Would it be helpful for us to check in on you? Do you just need time alone? For how long? Do you have a favorite grounding exercise we could plan to do with you? What else?

Follow up needs.

Example 2. If you feel you are having a tough night, is there anyone it would be helpful to call for you, or call with you, on that night or the following day?

Things you should know about the group

1. Though this group can be therapeutic in nature, our role is to be your advocate, not your therapist. We are committed to being with you in this space for healing and can help connect you to therapy and other resources for continued support in your healing.
2. A reality of this work* and community is that sometimes survivors have also caused others sexual harm. If this is true in your experience, that does not stop you from participating in this group, but due to how we are funded, we are not able to discuss those experiences in this group. (* unpacking and undoing the impacts of sexual violence within society as a whole)
3. Our support group is a sober space. If that's ever an issue for you and need support around that, we want to work with you to maintain accessibility in the space.
4. Review Maine Trans Network Guidelines, they also apply in this group.

Next Steps

We will be meeting with folks for the next couple of weeks and from our list of potential participants will be trying to craft a group of 6-8 people who will be a good fit for each other and this group. We will be getting back to you between _____ and _____ to follow up.