



Guide to Hosting Member Group Discussions

Written by: Peaceloveandpaws

Hosting group support discussions can be a great way to meet both members and listeners who are a part of the 7 Cups community. The chat room can be a very busy place with lots of people coming and going with various questions. As a discussion leader, it is important to focus on those who are participating and do your best to be fully engaged. It's okay to be nervous as a new host or be unsure about timing.

Notice any comments or well-made points during the discussion. Use your active listening skills to reflect what you hear, seek clarification, and ask follow-up questions when the discussion lends itself to further inquiry. As discussion hosts, we want participants in the group rooms to feel welcomed, safe, validated, understood, and engaged.

Remember to remain objective and professional at all times. Please do not offer any advice as a discussion host. Please refer to your room supporter or moderator guides for de-escalation techniques.

As a room supporter or moderator, you are a vital part of your sub community and discussion hosting can be rewarding for your team and for yourself.

There are many ways to host discussions in group support rooms. Your opportunities to host can be through guided discussions, open chats, pop up chats, or Sharing Circle/Healthy Habits. To be a successful host, you should be...

- Able to commit to a regular time slot each week
- Familiar with our community guidelines, support forum & chat rooms
- Passionate about supporting people with the relevant topic
- Open-minded and non-judgmental
- Good at working in a team, and being flexible
- Professional at all times

What is Group Support:

Group Support Rooms are chatrooms with the purpose of providing emotional support. Emotional support can be achieved not only through speaking of issues, being

listened to, empathized with, validated, but also through a sense of belonging, community, and lightheartedness. Our role as listeners in group support is to help keep the rooms a supportive space and/or build it to be one.

What is special about the group support dynamic?

- Multiple supportive conversations can happen at the same time.
- Group support rooms are fast paced. In some cases, the topics can change and shift any second. There is increased potential for conflict as ideas, opinions, and emotions are shared.
- Participants constantly come and go.
- Members can be affected by the reaction of their host and participants in the room.
- Boundaries can sometimes be blurred when you have 1-1 members participating in group support rooms when you are hosting. Additionally, you may find members who frequent a particular room have had interactions that are more personal.

We need to be mindful about what a member might want to share in group discussions. Some members may feel very comfortable sharing while others may be more hesitant. If a member seems uncomfortable in a discussion or seems to need more personalized support, it is appropriate to mention that they may receive more personal support in a 1-1 listener chat.

Types of Group Discussions:

Guided discussions are topic specific and, many times, are specific to the group support room where you are hosting. When you are onboarded, you should be given access to the team's dashboard. On the team dashboard, you will find a list of discussion scripts that have been approved for use for your specific team. Many sub community dashboards have scripts dedicated to game nights. Each guided or scripted discussion is held in one hour increments. If you do not have access to the team dashboard, please contact your Community Mentor Leader or Support Team or Session Leader.

- [Sample Script for Guided Discussions](#)

Open Chats are unscripted discussions held in a specific support room. Open chats offer community members and hosts the opportunity to chat in an informal setting. Community members choose the direction of the chat. Open chats are held in one hour increments. Open chats should include an introduction, icebreaker, and conclusion.

- *Example Introduction: Hello everyone and welcome to our (name of sub community) Open Chat! Let's remember to show kindness and support to others in the group at all times. Everyone is welcome to share and participate as they would like. If you need personalized support during this time, please connect 1-1 with a listener. This session will last 1 hour.*
- *Example Conclusion: Thank you to everyone who joined us for today's open chat. It was a pleasure having you all here, and hearing your experiences and thoughts. If anybody has any feedback for this discussion, please fill out this form: (**The link to your sub community feedback form is here**) If you are interested to find out about more opportunities to share and learn about (**Your Sub Community Name**), please check out the subcommunity here: (**link to your sub community**). If you would like to see which discussions are happening each day and at what time you can do so by checking out the community calendar: <https://www.7cups.com/home/communityCalendar.php>*

Pop Up Chats are scripted or unscripted chats surrounding a topic or theme. Hosts can choose a script or use an icebreaker or a series of icebreakers to prompt discussion among members. Pop up chats are room specific chats that are fun and lighthearted. Pop up chats are held in 30 minute increments. Click [HERE](#) for guidelines for Hosting pop up chats.

Sharing Circle/Healthy Habits are semi-scripted discussions meaning there is a clearly defined introduction and closing. Guidelines are posted at the start of each session and, occasionally, during the discussion as new members join the chat. Members who wish to share have to enter a queue and share their personal thoughts and situations freely in increments of 5 minutes. Both hosts and participants offer support to the member who is sharing. Each session is held in one hour increments.

- [Sharing Circle Team Guide](#)
- [Sharing Circle Script](#)
- [Small Steps Towards Health Habits Script](#)
- [Sharing Circle Video Guide](#)

How to Start a Discussion:

1. If you are hosting in a room that is not a 24/7 room, request a doorkeeper or Community Moderator at least 30-60 minutes prior to opening the room to be sure the room is opened on time. The room should be opened about 5-10 minutes before the start time.
2. Send an invitation to all group support rooms 10 minutes before start time to give participants time to come to the room. *Please be mindful not to interrupt an ongoing discussion by checking to see if the banner is set up.* This should include the time (in ET) and location of the discussion, the discussion topic, and the usernames of any hosts. Please be sure you list the time in ET and give some guidance about how soon that is for those who aren't in the Eastern time zone.
 - a. Example: "Hey everyone! You're invited to join me and the name of your co-host (if applicable) in the _____Room at 11am ET (in about 10 minutes) for a (type of chat or discussion topic). Everyone is welcome to join. Hope to see you there!"
3. Set the banner for your discussion at the start of your discussion. If your discussion is scheduled to begin at 11 am ET, set the banner at 11 am.
 - a. To set the banner, choose the white box at the top of your screen that says 'Start Discussion'.
 - b. A box will appear once you click the link. If you have a co-host, please add their name. If there is no co-host, leave the section blank.
 - c. Set the length of your discussion from the menu.
 - d. Select 'Start Discussion'
 - e. Find additional details [HERE](#)
4. Copy/paste the introduction message for the script you will be using. For unscripted discussions, please use an introduction from an approved script. If necessary, you may modify the introduction to suit the type of chat you are hosting.
5. Once the introduction has been posted, begin the discussion with an icebreaker if there is any. If necessary, you may modify the introduction to suit the type of chat you are hosting
6. Ask questions at a natural pace, keep an eye on how the room flows. If there's a lull or an opportunity to segue between questions, feel free to move on to the next question.

7. Keep an eye on the clock. Your discussion needs to fit into the appointed time slot. Pace your questions. It's okay to run over time a little, but try not to go more than 5 minutes late.
8. Be sure to copy/paste the conclusion. If you are hosting an unscripted discussion, please use the conclusion included on an approved script. This gives members the opportunity to leave feedback on your session. You may also want to promote any discussions for your sub community and promote recruitment for your sub community.
9. Thank your participants for attending with warmth and gratitude.
10. If your discussion is taking place in a room that is not open 24/7, please remind participants that your room will be closing at least 2-5 minutes before the discussion is scheduled to end.
11. If you do not have a doorkeeper already allotted to close the room for you, ask in a Listener Support room for a doorkeeper or the Community Moderator on duty to close the room for you.
12. Once the room is closed, please follow your team's direction for logging your chat. Your Community Mentor Leader or Support Team/Support Session Leader will instruct you regarding your specific sub community's tracking system.
13. Congratulations! You just hosted a discussion.

Tips for Hosting Member Group Support Discussions:

- **Welcome each individual that enters the group room, even if they don't say anything.** Greeting everyone warmly invites members to join the discussion. Whenever possible, please use the member's name in your greeting. If you have several participants joining at the same time, it's okay to say, "Welcome to everyone entering!" Please be mindful that some participants may choose to observe rather than actively participate. At times, participants may join in the middle of a discussion. They may ask what the topic is and what is the current question.
 - *We're having a discussion on _____ if you'd like to join in. Our current question is _____*
- **Active listening is a big part of discussion hosting.** Reply to participant responses throughout the discussion. Use [reflection](#), [empathy](#), [validation](#), and professionalism. You can comment on, agree with, and even ask follow-up questions to responses, so long as you're remaining supportive and compassionate. Follow-up questions like "Why do you feel that is?" can be great for flow and gaining a following of regular participants. Even if it's just to say "I like that," it makes the room feel more inclusive and like a discussion, rather than someone asking questions and moving along a script.

- **Guided discussion scripts are there to support you as you are hosting.** It's okay to go off-script here and there in order to let the participants guide the discussion. If you feel it's more appropriate to ask questions in a different order or to skip a question altogether because it feels like it's already been answered, you're free to do so. Read the room and adjust as necessary.
- **Timing is everything!** In a scripted discussion, it's important to give participants time to respond to the question. However, you want to avoid 'radio silence'. Finding a balance by reading the room takes practice and every discussion (even with the same script) is different meaning timing is never set in stone. Don't stress if a question goes longer than you expected or if one doesn't go long at all. Let it flow naturally. Similarly, with Sharing Circle and Healthy Habits, a sharer may need a bit more time to compose their thoughts. Open chats are, by nature, more casual chats but timing is still important. Some chats will evolve rapidly and cover many topics while others may need a helping hand to keep the chat flowing. Reading the room is an important aspect of timing and can be a delicate balance.
- **Be mindful of triggers.** Even if the script doesn't have a pre-written trigger warning, read over the script beforehand to check for possible triggers and include those in your intro or before those triggering questions. Wait a few minutes after sending the trigger warning message before moving on in order to give everyone a chance to step out or seek support if needed.
- **Be prepared.** Have your discussion script open and ready to go about 20 minutes before. This takes into account any potential delays in loading the script and gives you the opportunity to open any windows or applications you will need. I find it helpful to open two windows on my laptop; one for the script and one for 7 Cups as it is easier for me to follow along having both visible on my screen.
- **Host in Pairs!** Co-hosting is a great way to give participants extra support and to help keep a discussion moving forward. If you're co-hosting with someone else, please coordinate with them beforehand to decide who will do what (i.e. submitting to the calendar if applicable, requesting a doorkeeper if applicable, setting the banner, inviting participants, etc.). Take time before the discussion to decide the hosting dynamics: one asking questions while another supports, alternating asking questions, switching midway through, one introducing and closing while another asks questions, or any other dynamics.
- **Be yourself.** Participants like to feel a connection with their host. Don't be afraid to add your own flavor or voice when hosting. Mix up your responses, be encouraging, share a thought about a question you ask (if you are comfortable doing so), and be engaged.
- **Try to attend several discussions before hosting.** Take time to observe as many discussions as you are able in different rooms. Every host has a different style and every

group is unique. Note what the host is doing well and how participants respond. Additionally, you can join the Buddy Program for new room supporters and moderators [HERE](#).

- **Be Punctual and Consistent.** Participants look forward to seeing us for discussions so it's important to be there on time, every time. While your self care is a top priority, it is important to notify your Community Mentor Leader, Support Team/Session Leader, and your co-host as soon as possible if you will not be able to host. Missing 3 discussions without notification could have serious repercussions, including the loss of your role.

Helpful Links and Resources:

[Community Guidelines](#)

[Community Mod Schedule](#)

[Doorkeeper Request Form](#)

[Advice Alternatives](#)

[Leading Discussion Tips](#)

[Role of a Listener in Group Support](#)

[Community Calendar](#)

[Group Support Chatroom Rules explanation Master post](#)