

Finding a Peer Support Group That Fits

Look for a meeting where the purpose, approach and practical arrangements fit the support you want. Use the organizer's current information, then decide what you want to try.

Keep completed notes private. Use short notes in each box; continue on another copy or separate paper when needed. Save the completed PDF on your device and reopen it to check your notes before closing.

Mutual-support groups bring people together around recovery experiences. NIAAA describes several options and notes that these groups usually are not led by clinicians. They can sit alongside professional care; they are not a substitute for individual medical advice. The examples below come from NIAAA's alcohol-treatment guidance. [1]

Some starting points, not a ranking [1]

Option listed by NIAAA	What to explore
Alcoholics Anonymous (AA)	Alcohol recovery and a 12-step approach with a spiritual component.
LifeRing	A secular peer-support approach to abstinence from alcohol and other drugs.
SMART Recovery	A program emphasizing motivation, coping, problem solving and life balance.
Women for Sobriety	A self-help program designed by and for women.

Find current meeting information

Alcoholics Anonymous

<https://www.aa.org/>

LifeRing

<https://lifering.org/>

SMART Recovery

<https://www.smartrecovery.org/>

Women for Sobriety

<https://womenforsobriety.org/>

These are examples, not every option or a recommendation that you join one. The organization names and links are listed by NIAAA; local availability and each meeting's arrangements still need checking. [1]

Questions before a first meeting

- Who is this meeting for, and what does a newcomer do? Is speaking optional?
- Is it online or in person, at what time and time zone, and is access or booking required?
- What beliefs, recovery goals or expectations shape the group?
- How does the group approach prescribed addiction medicines and other professional care?
- What are the privacy expectations, costs and accessibility arrangements?
- Is there an organizer I can contact before attending?

Original example: useful fit questions

“Tuesday online” may fit your schedule but still leave questions. Ask whether that session is for newcomers, whether you may listen without speaking, and how to get the current joining details. An unanswered question can go to the organizer before you attend.

Choose a first option

Meeting and confirmed arrangements

Name; organizer/official contact; time/location; access needs; what is still unconfirmed.

After trying it, if I choose to

What felt useful or uncomfortable? What question do I want to ask? Return, try a different meeting, or choose another kind of support?

Protect your care and privacy

Ask your own clinician about treatment or medicine decisions. Decide what personal details you want to share; a group’s stated privacy expectations are not a guarantee that every participant will keep information private.

Sources and Further Reading

[1] NIAAA: Long-term Recovery Support

<https://alcohol treatment.niaaa.nih.gov/support-through-the-process/long-term-recovery-support>