

GUIDE FOR EXERCISE GROUPS FOR *THE JOYOUS RECOVERY*

Through the Peak Living Network, you can put together a group of people who wish to work together on the healing exercises that accompany *The Joyous Recovery*. Here are the guidelines for Exercise Groups:

1) We recommend a group size of about four people. Having the support of a substantial number of people strengthens a person's ability to benefit from doing the exercises, but you also want to keep the group small enough to allow plenty of time for each person to share at meetings. A larger number of people would also pose more challenges for those who aren't comfortable in a group or don't have experience with group work.

2) Having a committed group of people who attend regularly is essential to building safety and support in your group. So ask people to agree to come to every meeting except when there is an unavoidable conflict, and ask for an initial commitment of a minimum length of time (three months? six months? longer? – you decide). Decide also what the duration of each group will be; 90 minutes seems to be about right.

3) In addition to the questions and exercises that are in the "Exercise Program," your group can also draw upon the "Book Group Guide" (which is also on this website). The latter is focused on the discussion of ideas rather than on personal sharing and healing work, but it offers a quick outline of each chapter that you could use to structure a review at the beginning of each of your Exercise Group meetings. Recapping the reading together at the beginning of each meeting can help group members to be active participants even on weeks when they didn't get the chance to do all of the reading. (And your group might decide they're interested in taking up some of the other questions raised in the Book Group Guide that aren't part of the Exercise Program.)

4) The Exercise Program is designed to be a mixture of journal writing, two-person co-counseling sessions, and group work for those who have a group. At the beginning of each meeting, the group should quickly look over the unit for the *following week*, and make decisions together about which exercises you'll do in a journal or in co-counseling sessions and which ones you'll do together as a group.

Also, some of the exercises involve carrying out a specific action and then doing some emotional processing later of what came up doing the assigned action. By reading ahead in the Exercise Program, the group will be able to decide how to structure this work.

5) I encourage people to find one or partners with whom you could do co-counseling sessions outside of group meetings; speaking with just one other person is a different experience from

talking to multiple people at once. Your co-counseling sessions could be done with other members of your group – which will tend to strengthen the connections within your group – but it’s also fine to do them with someone else. (You can read elsewhere on this website about “Finding a Partner.”)

6) Encourage a culture in your group of kindness, supportiveness, and flexibility. Criticism has no place in an exercise group, and equally unwelcome are judgmental comments such as, “Why did you do what you did? Why didn’t you do something else?” Healing happens in an atmosphere of love, patience, and understanding.

7) If you would like help in finding members for your group, or would like some guidance in how to organize and facilitate, please reach out to PeakLivingNetwork@juno.com. Feel free to also be in touch if your group runs into difficulties or if you need assistance with conflict resolution within your group.