

Support Groups

(Not as weird as you might think—
and possibly exactly what you need)

Yes, they can sound awkward. No, they're not just sad folding chairs and forced sharing. On the fence? This one's for you.

1. “First, What Even Is a Support Group? And Do I Have to Talk?”

Short answer: A support group is a space (online or in person) where caregivers talk to other people who *actually* get it. That's it.

It's less “Hi, my name is...” and more “Wait...YOU deal with that too?”

Some are:

- In person
- Virtual
- Condition-specific (dementia, autism, cancer, veteran care, etc.)
- General caregiving
- Practical / resource-heavy
- More emotional-support focused

What you actually get:

- ✓ Real advice from people who've done this before
- ✓ A place to vent without explaining every detail
- ✓ Tips that doctors, hospitals, or Google may not tell you
- ✓ Validation that caregiving can be hard *and* loving
- ✓ Less “I'm the only one drowning” energy

What it's not:

- ✗ A requirement
- ✗ Therapy (though it can feel therapeutic)
- ✗ Perfect
- ✗ Always your vibe

2. “Okay, Well How Do I Know if I Want to Join One? Because I’m Not Really Interested in Crying in a Church Basement.”

A Support Group Might Help If:

- ✓ You feel weirdly alone, even around people
- ✓ Your friends love you, but don't fully get it
- ✓ You need practical tips from people “in it”
- ✓ You're burnt out, overwhelmed, resentful, or all three

But It Might Not Help If:

- ✗ You don't have bandwidth for one more thing right now
- ✗ Hearing other people's situations may stress you out more
- ✗ You mostly need logistical help, not emotional support
- ✗ You tried one and hated it*

**If that was the case for you, that doesn't necessarily mean “never.” It might just mean “not this one” or “not right now.”*

Green Flags

- 🚩 You leave feeling lighter
- 🚩 You learn something useful
- 🚩 You feel less isolated
- 🚩 You don't feel judged
- 🚩 People are honest without making everything terrifying

Red Flags

- 🚩 Constant doom spiral
- 🚩 Fear-mongering
- 🚩 Bad medical advice
- 🚩 Competitive suffering
- 🚩 You leave feeling worse every time

P.S. If you join one, and you hate it...you are **allowed to leave**. Remember, this is **support, not a hostage situation**.

3. “I’m Intrigued. Now How Do I Actually Find a Support Group?”

Finding a support group can kind of feel like **dating**. Some will feel like a great fit. Some may make you want to immediately leave after five minutes.

OPTION 1

Start with the Pros

Best if you want legit recommendations and less guesswork.

These are often the easiest places to find vetted, relevant groups:

- Hospital social workers
- Doctors’ offices or specialists
- Clinics or treatment centers
- Therapists
- Area Agency on Aging (AAA)
- Local nonprofits or caregiving organizations

OPTION 2

Go Online

Best if you want flexibility, anonymity, or fast options.

The internet can honestly be a goldmine for caregiver support. It can also be a dumpster fire. Sometimes both at once. Start with:

- Facebook groups
- Reddit communities
- Nonprofit websites and forums
- Condition-specific organizations

Before you show up, it’s totally fair to ask:

- Is it free, or is there a cost?
- How often does it meet, and for how long?
- Is it cool if I just listen?
- Who runs it: a trained facilitator or a fellow caregiver?

4. “So, I Found a Few I Like. Should I Do It in Person? Or a Zoom Hang?”

There's no wrong answer here. Both can help. But the “best” one is usually **the one you'd realistically attend.**

In-Person Groups (IRL)

Usually good if you:

- ✓ Feel isolated and need real human interaction
- ✓ Want deeper connection
- ✓ Prefer face-to-face conversation
- ✓ Need an excuse to leave the house
- ✓ Like more structure / accountability

Usually hard if:

- ✗ Transportation is tough
- ✗ Your schedule is unpredictable
- ✗ You can't leave your loved one alone easily
- ✗ Social interaction already feels exhausting

Virtual / Online Groups

Usually good if you:

- ✓ Are overwhelmed or low-energy
- ✓ Need flexibility
- ✓ Have caregiving duties 24/7
- ✓ Want privacy or anonymity
- ✓ Feel nervous about opening up in person
- ✓ Want to “test drive” support first

Usually hard if:

- ✗ You want deeper personal connection
- ✗ You get overwhelmed by internet chaos
- ✗ You'd rather talk than scroll

One Last Thing

You're not looking for “the perfect support group.” You're looking for **less alone**. Try one. Keep what helps. Leave what doesn't.

This is caregiving support...not a lifetime membership.

Save yourself some Googling.

More Caregiver Cheat Sheets at [WeCareOutLoud.org](https://www.WecareOutLoud.org)

