

Join your Disability Support Group

If you haven't already, then you should join your local disabilities support group. If nothing else, for the companionship and knowledge that you can gain, at one of the group's many meetings.

The mutual sharing of common issues in a fun and informal environment for a couple of hours, every so often, really is quite therapeutic.

For this reason, maybe the placing of this section at the end of this guide, belies its importance and significance in your new lifestyle.

My support group is a registered charity that has many branches that meet regularly, for friendship, drinks (most of us are teetotal, due to our symptoms and medications), meals and outings. Members network, share information, have fun and make new friendships.

There is:

Bi-monthly newsletter containing jokes, information, activities and news from across the county.

Contact list for members who want their details circulated, showing at a glance, who is nearby, online or at the end of the telephone.

Telephone support line.

Access to professional welfare and benefits advice for those in need.

At the time of writing there are local branches around Hampshire, organising events and activities (e.g. regular

get-togethers, table tennis & pool, meditation sessions, pub meals, picnics, boat trips etc.

There is also a 16-25 branch.

An informal support network for more severely affected members who cannot get to meetings and events.

It should not be underestimated how social & emotional support, information & advice, friendship & laughter can help one in the struggle to cope with everyday life.

Meeting and talking to fellow sufferers can also play an important role in acceptance and management of the illness.

Joining a group can contribute to helping you regain your self confidence and feel less lonely.

Below are some quotations from members of my group:

“The mutual social and emotional support is very important to us. We chat, joke & generally provide light relief for ourselves. We are not just fellow sufferers, we become friends as well.”

“It is good to swap management advice and share our experiences, with different treatments and how to cope with the illness in a better manner.”

“We laugh and trade stories with our friends, rather than dwelling on the negatives.”

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