



Opening and Closing Language

The way a support group begins and ends helps set the tone for the entire meeting. A warm welcome can help participants feel comfortable sharing, while a thoughtful closing can help members leave feeling encouraged and connected.

Facilitators do not need to follow a script exactly. The language below is intended as guidance and can be adapted to fit the personality and needs of your group.

Opening a Support Group Meeting

Welcome and Introductions

A brief welcome helps create a comfortable environment and reminds participants of the purpose of the group.

Example opening:

“Welcome everyone. We're glad you're here today. This support group is a place where people living with Parkinson's, as well as care partners, can connect, share experiences, and support one another. Our goal is to create a respectful and welcoming space where everyone feels comfortable participating in whatever way feels right for them.”

If new attendees are present, consider adding:

“We're especially glad to welcome anyone who may be joining us for the first time. Support groups can feel a little unfamiliar at first, but there is no pressure to share until you feel comfortable. Listening is always welcome.”

Group Guidelines

It can be helpful to briefly remind the group of shared expectations.

Example:

“Before we begin, just a quick reminder that what is shared here stays here. We respect each other’s experiences and perspectives. Everyone’s Parkinson’s journey is different, and this group is here to support one another.”

Brief Check-In or Icebreaker

Facilitators may invite participants to introduce themselves or share a brief check-in.

Example:

“Let’s take a few minutes to check in. If you’re comfortable, please share your name and how things have been going recently.”

Alternatively, facilitators may use a light conversation starter to help members get to know one another.

Example:

“Today instead of a full update, let’s start with a simple question. What is something small that has brought you joy recently?”

Transitioning Into Discussion

Once introductions are complete, facilitators can gently guide the conversation into the meeting topic.

Example:

“Thank you for sharing. Hearing everyone’s experiences helps remind us how much we can learn from one another. Let’s spend some time talking about...”

If the meeting has a specific topic or speaker, briefly introduce it before beginning.

Closing a Support Group Meeting

Ending the meeting thoughtfully helps participants leave feeling supported and connected.

Reflection

Facilitators may invite participants to briefly reflect on the discussion.

Example:

“Before we wrap up today, does anyone have a final thought or takeaway they’d like to share?”

or

“Was there something shared today that you found helpful or encouraging?”

Community and Group Announcements

This is also a good time to share announcements.

Examples include:

- Upcoming WPA programs or educational events
- Community resources or exercise opportunities
- Volunteer opportunities
- Future meeting dates

Facilitators may also invite participants to share announcements.

Example:

“Before we finish today, does anyone have any community announcements or resources they would like to share with the group?”

Closing Encouragement

Ending on a supportive note helps reinforce the sense of community within the group.

Example closing:

“Thank you all for being here today and for sharing your experiences. Support groups work because people are willing to show up and support one another. We appreciate each of you and look forward to seeing you at our next meeting.”

Facilitator Tip

You do not need to follow a script perfectly. Over time, facilitators often develop their own style that feels natural for their group.

What matters most is creating an environment where participants feel:

- welcomed
- respected
- heard
- supported

Even a few thoughtful words at the beginning and end of a meeting can help participants feel connected to a community that understands their journey.

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