



WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT

Childhood Abuse and Neglect Survivor Groups

These groups bring together adults who experienced physical, emotional, or sexual abuse, neglect, or other maltreatment in childhood, offering peer support and, in clinical settings, structured trauma-focused treatment for the long-term effects. Childhood maltreatment is among the most prevalent and consequential traumas: more than a third of US adults report at least one form, and the effects are often lifelong, including PTSD, complex PTSD, depression, dissociation, and chronic health conditions. The term complex trauma reflects the chronic, interpersonal nature of childhood maltreatment and its distinctive effects on attachment, identity, and affect regulation.

WHO IT'S FOR, AND WHO IT'S NOT

- A fit for those stable enough for group work, not in acute crisis.
- Severe dissociation or active psychosis may need stabilization first.
- Processing specific memories may be better served by individual therapy.

What it's for

Adults at any age navigating the effects of childhood maltreatment.

Some open to any form; others focus on a specific experience.

Peer support, or clinical groups using CPT, STAIR, TREM, or DBT skills.

WHAT TO EXPECT

1 Peer groups meet weekly or biweekly, 60 to 90 minutes, open format.

2 Clinical groups are phase-based: safety and stabilization before processing.

3 Ground rules limit graphic disclosure; the pace is intentionally slow.

Group trauma treatment works across childhood and interpersonal trauma.

- A network meta-analysis of 100 trials found trauma-focused therapies produced the **largest PTSD effects**, with group delivery showing significant benefit.¹
- A meta-analysis of 22 trials found group psychotherapy produced **large reductions in PTSD** across trauma types, maintained at follow-up.²

MAKING THE MOST OF IT

The group itself heals. Experiencing safety with others can be corrective.

Trust can be relearned. Connection without re-enacting harm is the work.

Slow is appropriate. Complex trauma takes longer than single-incident trauma.

QUESTIONS TO ASK BEFORE YOU JOIN

- 1** Is this peer support or a clinician-led trauma therapy group?
- 2** Is it phase-based, starting with safety and stabilization?
- 3** What are the ground rules around disclosing trauma detail?

Ready to find a group?

Browse 2,000+ therapy and support groups in all 50 states.

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If you're in crisis, call or text 988.

The Group Guide is a directory, not a clinic. This handout is general education, not medical or mental health advice. Listings are written by group leaders and are not endorsements. Confirm details, cost, and fit with any group you contact. Sources on page 2.



Sources

Childhood Abuse and Neglect Survivor Groups · references keyed to the numbers on page 1.

- 1 Mavranezouli, I., Megnin-Viggars, O., Daly, C., et al. Psychological treatments for post-traumatic stress disorder in adults: a network meta-analysis. *Psychological Medicine* (2020), 50(4), 542–555.
- 2 Schwartze, D., Barkowski, S., Strauss, B., Knaevelsrud, C., & Rosendahl, J. Efficacy of group psychotherapy for posttraumatic stress disorder: systematic review and meta-analysis of randomized controlled trials. *Psychotherapy Research* (2019), 29(4), 415–431.

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