



WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT

Chronic Fatigue and Fibromyalgia Support Groups

These groups bring together people living with ME/CFS (myalgic encephalomyelitis/chronic fatigue syndrome) and fibromyalgia for peer connection and mutual support in navigating two of the most misunderstood chronic conditions. Both share features that make community especially important: largely invisible symptoms, a history of being dismissed by providers, no definitive diagnostic test, and a heavy burden of disbelief from healthcare, employers, and family. Both carry elevated depression, anxiety, and isolation, driven significantly by not being believed. Because fatigue and post-exertional malaise can make leaving home hard, online and accessible formats are central here.

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

- A fit for anyone wanting a space where their illness is accepted as real.
- Works best alongside care from providers knowledgeable about ME/CFS.
- Significant comorbid depression or anxiety may call for treatment too.

What it's for

People with ME/CFS or fibromyalgia at any stage of their illness.

For pacing, energy conservation, flares, and advocating in medical care.

For grief over lost function and the toll of chronic disbelief.

WHAT TO EXPECT

1 Built for low energy: audio-only, asynchronous, or participate from bed.

2 Live groups meet monthly or biweekly; online communities run around the clock.

3 No expectation of regular attendance; you take part when able.

No trials of these specific groups exist, but the surrounding evidence supports them.

- A review of 31 reviews found peer support for chronic conditions improves **self-management, quality of life, and psychological wellbeing**.¹
- A Cochrane review found psychological therapy for chronic pain produced small-to-moderate gains in **pain, disability, catastrophizing, and mood**.²

MAKING THE MOST OF IT

Believed, no proof needed. Validation no amount of medical care provides.

Practical expertise. Pacing and flare strategies often beat general advice.

Energy envelopes respected. The group is built around how these bodies work.

QUESTIONS TO ASK BEFORE YOU JOIN

- 1** What accessible formats does it offer (audio, asynchronous, low-stimulation)?
- 2** Is it peer-led or a clinician-facilitated psychoeducational group?
- 3** Is attendance flexible enough for someone managing flares?

Ready to find a group?

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



Sources

Chronic Fatigue and Fibromyalgia Support Groups · references keyed to the numbers on page 1.

- 1 Thompson, D. M., Booth, L., Moore, D., & Mathers, J. Peer support for people with chronic conditions: a systematic review of reviews. *BMC Health Services Research* (2022), 22(1), Article 427.
- 2 Williams, A. C. de C., Fisher, E., Hearn, L., & Eccleston, C. Psychological therapies for the management of chronic pain (excluding headache) in adults. *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews* (2021), 2021(11), Article CD007407.

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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.