



WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT

Co-occurring Disorder Groups (Dual Diagnosis)

These structured groups treat a mental health condition and a substance use disorder together, in the same setting and often the same session, rather than splitting them across programs that don't talk to each other. Co-occurring disorders are the norm, not the exception: most people in substance use treatment also meet criteria for a mental health condition, most often depression, anxiety, PTSD, or bipolar disorder. Integrated treatment, addressing both at once, is the evidence-based standard, and groups are a central way it's delivered.

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

- For people stable enough for a group who name both conditions as targets.
- Not during acute psychiatric crisis or active withdrawal, which need stabilizing first.
- Works best with medication management and case coordination. Call or text 988.

What it's for

Any combination of a mental health condition and a substance use disorder.

Common pairings: depression and alcohol, PTSD and substances, bipolar and substances.

Used across outpatient, intensive outpatient, and residential care.

WHAT TO EXPECT

1 Sessions run 60 to 90 minutes and address both conditions together.

2 How symptoms and use feed each other, coping for both, relapse warning signs.

3 Curricula include Integrated Group Therapy, Seeking Safety, and Dartmouth's stage-based model.

Integrated treatment consistently beats treating each condition separately.

- A 2023 review of 11 trials found integrated care produced **significantly greater improvement in psychiatric symptoms** than non-integrated.¹
- A Cochrane review found integrated programs yielded **better mental health outcomes than standard care**.²

MAKING THE MOST OF IT

You belong here. Too "mental health" for rehab, too "substance" for clinic? This is the room.

Watch the pattern. Others' stories show how your two conditions link.

Treat both at once. Working one and ignoring the other rarely holds.

QUESTIONS TO ASK BEFORE YOU JOIN

- 1** Is treatment truly integrated, or two separate tracks?
- 2** Which curriculum does it follow, and how many sessions?
- 3** Is medication management and case coordination available?

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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

Co-occurring Disorder Groups (Dual Diagnosis) · references keyed to the numbers on page 1.

- 1 Chetty, A., Guse, T., & Malema, M. Integrated vs non-integrated treatment outcomes in dual diagnosis disorders: a systematic review. *Health SA Gesondheid* (2023), 28, Article 2094.
- 2 Hunt, G. E., Siegfried, N., Morley, K., Sitharthan, T., & Cleary, M. Psychosocial interventions for people with both severe mental illness and substance misuse. *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews* (2013), Article CD001088.

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