



WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT

Older Adult Depression and Anxiety Groups

Depression and anxiety are among the most common and most undertreated conditions in later life. Older adults are less likely to seek care, more likely to present with physical symptoms that obscure the diagnosis, and more likely to have symptoms dismissed as normal aging. These groups address the conditions in a format that also counters the social isolation that so often accompanies them. They come in two forms. Clinician-led therapy groups apply CBT, problem-solving, behavioral activation, and life review adapted for older adults. Arts-based and peer engagement groups lift mood through connection and participation.

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

- A fit for those cognitively intact enough to take part in group discussion.
- Significant cognitive impairment may need adapted programming or a different setting.
- Active suicidal thoughts or severe symptoms may need individual care first.

What it's for

Adults 60 or 65 and older facing depression, anxiety, worry, or isolation.

Appropriate from mild and subclinical symptoms to moderate presentations.

Distinct from dementia caregiver and palliative care groups.

WHAT TO EXPECT

1 Clinician-led groups are structured: 8 to 12 sessions with homework.

2 Arts and social groups meet weekly or biweekly, 60 to 90 minutes.

3 Many run in senior centers, easing stigma; online options ease transport.

Both clinical and arts-based formats hold up in the research.

- A review of 39 studies found group arts interventions had **large effects on depression and moderate effects on anxiety**, maintained at follow-up.¹
- A review and meta-analysis found CBT linked to **significantly higher odds of remission** for anxiety in older adults, sustained over time.²

MAKING THE MOST OF IT

Low mood isn't just aging. Depression in later life is treatable, not inevitable.

A reason to leave the house. The group is a standing social anchor, not only care.

Start where it's easy. A senior-center arts group can be the gentlest door in.

QUESTIONS TO ASK BEFORE YOU JOIN

- 1** Is this a clinician-led skills group or a social and arts-based group?
- 2** Is the material adapted for older adults (pace, print, sensory needs)?
- 3** Are online options or transportation help available if I need them?

Ready to find a group?

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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

Older Adult Depression and Anxiety Groups · references keyed to the numbers on page 1.

- 1 Quinn, E. A., Millard, E., & Jones, J. M. Group arts interventions for depression and anxiety among older adults: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Nature Mental Health* (2025), 3(3), 374–386.
- 2 Johnco, C. J., Dickson, S. J., & Seaton, A. A systematic review and meta-analysis of CBT, other psychological therapies and pharmacological treatments for anxiety disorders in older adults. *American Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry* (2026), 34(4), 500–521.

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