



Meeting and Group Guidelines

By attending Exchange, you are expected to honor these guidelines and respect everyone in this ministry. You may not see the same people in every meeting, so these guidelines are especially important for all to feel safe and supported. Everyone is at various places in their journey. Our time together is designed to be beneficial for everyone and is a place for dignity and respect.

Attendance

Everyone that reads, attests and adheres to these guidelines is **always** welcome to attend. Because of varying schedules and commitments, it is common for the group to ebb and flow with regards to who attends each meeting. Exchange is one part of an essential support system (God, church, fellowship groups, other support groups, formal and lay counselors, mentors, friends, family, etc).

Confidentiality

The only 100% assurance of confidentiality is found within the scope of professional counseling. There is always a certain amount of trust required among the members of any support group. All support groups at Exchange are safe and a private place to talk freely. By attending an Exchange support group, you are agreeing to keep all things shared confidential. Information is not to be discussed outside of Exchange, which includes respecting the privacy/identity of those who are attending. We would ask that notes are not taken unless they are for personal growth and application only. The takeaways** from group are expected to be for each person's individual growth in hearts and minds.

There may be times where you may recognize someone or will have to work through fear, shame and distrust when considering attending a meeting. You are encouraged to prayerfully consider an important question, "Has God led me to engage in Exchange and am I ready to trust God enough at this time to do that?". This initial question, along with the ongoing issues that each person faces while walking this out, are very real. With that said, everyone is at a different place when it comes to those questions. We want you to know that we fully support whatever decision you and/or your family make because this is a decision between you and the Lord. We will always be here whenever you are ready. Respecting others information and handling it responsibly is required and we have a zero-tolerance policy **because it is a priority for everyone to feel safe.

The Support Group is not a counseling or therapy group.

There is a fine line between support and counseling/therapy. Please be aware that we are here for our individual growth and to share what we are learning in our own journey, not to change, police or "fix" anyone else. God will take care of this within our personal

relationship with Him. God has established the authority of the Ministry group leaders and they are responsible to facilitate discussion. There are times when members may have deeper areas to work through that Exchange is not designed to address. If this surfaces in the group, the group leader will address that privately. Exchange is here to support each member in their desire to grow in their relationship with God as it relates to the reason each person comes to Exchange Ministries.

Politics and Theology

Because we have various beliefs around specific doctrines, our goal is to remain in unity on the primary points of our Statement of Faith. These are located on our website. Through our humility and desire to be defined by Jesus Christ alone, we can find truth, peace, healing, freedom, and wholeness to love God, love ourselves and love others well. This comes by being in His presence, renewing our minds in His Word and reasoning together (fellowship). We are called to be holy, set apart. He compels unity amid our imperfect progress. There can be a strong pull to gravitate towards certain topics. However, Exchange is not a place to discuss politics, promote support for or lobby against political issues or other areas that will distract us from our mission and goals. Topics, such as these, can bring division or isolate members and will be handled with balance, maturity, and redirection. Members currently or will eventually belong to a church body that operates and teaches within their specific doctrinal beliefs. All members are encouraged to participate in their other circles of fellowship where they can feel free to discuss those topics.

External Contact with Members

- Members are encouraged to connect with one another and develop healthy, godly relationships. You should be mindful that those who are working through their struggle with SSA are at varying places in their journey towards healing and wholeness.
- No one is going to police your interactions outside of Exchange. However, we ask that you inform the Executive Director and/or your Group leader of those you are connecting with regularly outside of the meetings. We are informed of current situations and this will help keep us aware in order to assist with any dynamics that could impact you or the group.
- We want you to know that outside contact is solely at your discretion.
- Should anyone, at any time, make you feel uncomfortable or overstep appropriate boundaries, let us know immediately. It will be handled graciously, but also directly and with integrity to ensure emotional, spiritual, and physical safety remains a priority.

Respect and Interactions

- Everyone is at different places in this journey and will not always agree. If a point of disagreement occurs, please be respectful and address the group leader so the topic can be facilitated in a responsible manner.
- Please be aware that appropriate, non-judgmental language is expected. Judgmental statements, regardless of their validity, are not permitted or appropriate in our group, ministry or with another member. Such statements are

not appropriate and break down the trust which makes the group a safe place to authentically discuss personal feelings and struggles.

- Although everyone's experiences are valuable, we ask that you please refrain from giving counsel. If you feel you have advice to give, always ask the recipient if he/she wants it and allow the Ministry group leader to facilitate the discussion. Exercise your own judgement when receiving advice.
- When sharing, use "I" statements and please refrain from theorizing or philosophizing as much as possible. This will keep the group intentional and focused on actual issues and not distracted by speculation and assigning intent to others.
- Please be aware and respectful when speaking about experiences. Due to the nature of our support group topics, expressed feelings, thoughts, and experiences may negatively impact others in the group. Sexualized and graphic information is not permitted to be discussed with other members or in the small group setting at the meetings.
- This will assist in not exposing others to information that could be detrimental.

Being a support to individuals in their pursuit of healing and wholeness is a long journey. Success is not easily measured since each person is unique and paces themselves*** for different reasons. However, if Exchange is continuing to have a presence in the church community, in your life and helps you move forward in healthy relationships with God, your family and others, that is success! We are so glad that you have reached out to us and we want you to know you are not alone.