

Online Support Groups



Anxiety Disorders Association of Victoria



## Opening Speech

Hi everyone, thanks for joining us online to an ADAVIC support group.

This is a place to talk about our experiences with anxiety and depression, including things like stress, worry, panic attacks, self-esteem, obsessive compulsive disorder, social phobia, and related disorders.

Facilitators tonight will soon introduce themselves, and we're here to ensure the Support Group is beneficial for all. Our role is to provide structure to the group, assist with discussion, and to ensure that everyone follows the group code of conduct.

### So how does this group operate?

- \* This is a support group rather than a therapy group.
- \* As a group, we share our experiences and offer support and ideas, rather than try to solve problems or "cure" people. We think it's up to the individual to find out what works for them.
- \* There are no set topics—it's up to you what we talk about!
- \* There is no pressure to talk (you are welcome to just sit and listen).
- \* The meeting will run for 1.5 hours and there will be a 5 minute break at 7.45pm. If you need to step away from the meeting, just let the facilitators know.

### We have some principles to ensure the group is fair and safe for all

- \* We respect the opinions of others even if we don't always agree
- \* We listen without judging
- \* We try not to interrupt others
- \* We maintain confidentiality—what we talk about in the group stays in the group unless there is a concern for people's safety
- \* We try not to swear
- \* We try to avoid provocative topics related to religion and politics
- \* Finally, we try to minimise distractions or outside interference (e.g., phone calls, social media use, interruptions from people in your home, etc.)



### Is everyone okay with this?

We'd like to thank you for coming along—we know it can be quite daunting—even for regulars. You may find it a bit challenging to know what is appropriate to discuss, so facilitators can help to guide this process.

Okay, with that said, does anyone have anything in particular they want to start the meeting off with tonight? Perhaps an experience you've had, or a question for the group?

## Opening Creed

We are a group of people with common bonds, sharing our troubles, experiences, understanding, strength, and wisdom in relation to anxiety.

We listen, explore options, and express our feelings.

We do not prescribe, diagnose, or give advice... we suggest.

We are accepting and non-judgemental to group members.

We respect and uphold the confidentiality of group members and what is shared in the group.

We have the right to take part in any discussion or not.

We each have the right and opportunity to equal talking time.

We have the right to not speak or to withhold personal information if we prefer to do so.

We aim to have one person speaking at a time, to actively listen when someone is talking, and to avoid having side conversations.

We focus on topics related to anxiety and depression. We avoid discussing provocative issues based on religion, sex, or politics. We take care in discussing topics that might be highly distressing for people in the group.

## Rules and Code of Conduct

Welcome to the ADAVIC Online Support Group.

In order for us to ensure these support groups remain a respectful and safe environment for all, we require every participant to adhere to the below rules and code of conduct:

### What is the purpose of the Support Group?

- ★ To create a safe environment for people to openly discuss any issue relating to anxiety, depression, and related disorders.
- ★ A place for people to seek social support while sharing and reflecting on their personal experiences with anxiety and depression.

### Who runs the Support Group?

Support Groups are led by ADAVIC's trained facilitators who volunteer their services. It's important to note that ADAVIC facilitators are not able to counsel group members—the purpose of their role is to facilitate the conversation and to ensure group members adhere to the code of conduct.

### Who can attend?

- ★ All participants must be over 18 years of age.
- ★ Support Groups are for people experiencing anxiety, depression and other mental health related disorders as well as for their partners, friends, or carers.
- ★ To help cover ADAVIC's costs, each participant is required to pay a small attendance fee for every support group they attend. If you are attending as a support person for a participant (eg. as a partner), there is no fee.

### Is everything I say confidential?

What gets discussed in a support group stays in the support group meeting, unless the facilitators have concerns about your wellbeing or the wellbeing of others. Facilitators may need to provide information to others to help ensure the safety of group members.



### What can we discuss in the group?

While we welcome and encourage all participants to contribute to conversations whenever they feel comfortable to do so, there is an expectation that everyone refers only to their own personal experiences relating to anxiety, depression and related issues. This is not a forum for discussion on anything outside of these areas.

*Rules of Engagement when contributing to discussions in Support Groups include:*

- ★ *Avoiding colourful language*
- ★ *Not interrupting others*
- ★ *Respecting the opinions of others, whether you agree or not*
- ★ *Being mindful of sharing the conversation between group members*

### Do I have to speak?

- ★ There is no pressure to speak—everyone is welcome to just sit and listen.
- ★ There is no pressure to stay for the entire meeting.

### Temporary absence from the Online Support Group

Please note that should you need to leave your computer temporarily for any reason, then please click the "Away Button" on Zoom to indicate you are not available. Be aware that if you are absent for more than 15 minutes, the facilitators may assume you are not coming back and may log you out of the session.

## Rules and Code of Conduct, continued

### Say goodbye when leaving

Whether you choose to leave the group early or you stay to the very end, we ask that you provide a signal that you are leaving so our facilitators know you're okay. You can do this by typing 'Goodbye' in the Zoom group chat, or if it's at the end you can wave or say goodbye verbally. ADAVIC is not in a position to follow up with individuals who leave the group unexpectedly, so this little gesture will go a long way to helping our facilitators determine if any group members are in distress.

### Inappropriate behaviour

Open and honest communication is encouraged within every support group, but always be aware of how your words may impact on others. ADAVIC has a zero tolerance policy for aggressive, violent or disrespectful behaviour towards others at all times.

Everyone is welcome in ADAVIC support groups, regardless of race, gender, religious beliefs, disabilities, sexual orientation and sexual preference. We work hard to keep these groups inclusive for all, and as such we avoid any conversation topics which could compromise this.

ADAVIC facilitators work hard at keeping conversation safe, non-triggering and recovery focused at all times. We ask that you be patient and kind with other group members and try to respect everyone's opinions, ideas, and experiences if they differ to your own. Please be respectful of conversational space and try not to dominate the conversation.

Please also do not engage in any behaviour that might compromise the privacy and confidentiality of participants and the group.

**Participants are strictly prohibited from:**

- \* *Recording conversations that occur in the support groups*
- \* *Taking screenshots or photos of the support group*
- \* *Sharing confidential information from the support group to social media*

### Consequences of breaching these rules

If a facilitator believes someone has breached any of the rules listed above, they will intervene and refer to the Rules and Code of Conduct. If you have seriously or repeatedly breached the Rules and Code of Conduct (e.g., inappropriate behaviour that is harmful to individuals or the group) you will be warned and/ or removed from the online support group without notice at the facilitator's discretion. A facilitator may mute you from the group and/or have a private conversation during or after the group to discuss issues in your participation. If the facilitators are satisfied you understand what the problem was and will not intentionally breach the rules again, you will be able to return to the support group. If you breach the rules again, you may be 'removed' from the support group and banned permanently from returning.

If you have any queries, concerns or require further information relating to these Terms and Conditions, you are invited to email the ADAVIC Committee at [adavic@adavic.org.au](mailto:adavic@adavic.org.au).

### Phones, social media, and outside communication

While you are present during support groups, we kindly ask that you avoid communicating with anyone outside of the group. We understand that sometimes it's not possible to switch your phone off or stop someone from walking past the computer, but if you do need to engage with someone outside of the group then please take a short break to do so.

## ADAVIC Disclaimer

### Disclaimer

The Anxiety Disorders Association of Victoria (ADAVIC) is a not-for-profit organisation that provides support, information and resources and is NOT a substitute for, the knowledge, skill, and judgment of qualified psychiatrists, psychologists, physicians and other mental health care professionals. If you have any questions about any medical matter, you should consult your doctor or other professional healthcare provider. Our role is to support and assist you in reaching your own goals, but your success depends primarily on your own effort, motivation, and commitment and follow through. While we make reasonable efforts to compile and provide accurate information ADAVIC makes no representations and gives no guarantees that this information is currently correct, complete, reliable or suitable for any purpose. We disclaim all responsibility and liability for any direct or indirect loss, damage, cost or expense whatsoever in the use of our online group service.

### Assumption of Risk

There are sometimes unknown individual risks and circumstances that can arise during use of our Online Support Group. We are not responsible for your personal choices or actions before, during or after participating in our group. You understand that any mention of any suggestion or recommendation on or through our Online Support Group is to be taken at your own risk, with no liability on the part of ADAVIC and its facilitators/volunteers. You accept full responsibility for the consequences of your use, or non-use, of any information provided by ADAVIC facilitators and/or other participants through any means whatsoever. Your use, or non-use, of this information is at your own risk, and you absolve us of any liability or loss that you, or your family or any other person, may incur from your or their use, or non-use, of the information provided.

### Agreement

By signing below, I agree that I have read the "Disclaimer", "Opening Creed" and "Rules & Code of Conduct", agree with them, and will abide by them.

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Name

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Date (dd/mm/yyyy)

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Signature (Typing in your name will suffice)

Please Note:

- \* Attendees can only attend one Anxiety and Depression meeting per week (Mon or Wed). However, those attending one of these two groups can also attend the Agoraphobia Support Group and any other future groups focused on a specific disorder.
- \* There will be no refunds or credits if you do not turn up to a paid meeting.
- \* From time to time sessions may be observed by an ADAVIC representative for quality and training purposes.

## ADAVIC Online Support Group Registration Form

**First Name**

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**Last Name**

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**Phone Number**

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**Postcode**

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**Where did you hear about us?**

I had been attending regular  
physical ADAVIC support groups

ADAVIC Website

Facebook

Twitter

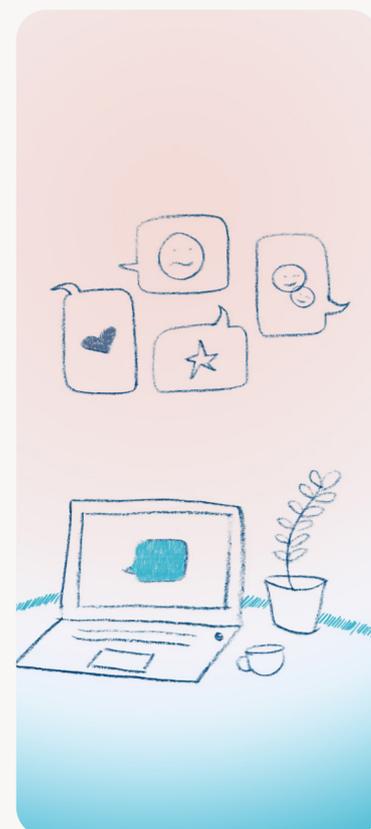
Instagram

Friend

Google

Other (kindly specify):

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**Payment**

The cost per meeting is \$3.00. Payment can be made through *Trybooking* at this direct link: [ADAVIC Online Support Group - Payment | TryBooking Australia](#).

We require payment by 5pm on the Friday before each Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday support groups. There is a limit of 11 people for each support group, so we recommend making payment earlier in the week to secure your place.

You can also make more bookings in advance.

### Registration Rules

By signing below, I hereby acknowledge that I have completely read and fully understand ADAVIC's terms and conditions of attending an Online Support Group. I also affirm the truth of the following statements:

1. At the time of signing this form I am 18 years of age or older.
2. I have read and understood the "Rules & Code of Conduct" and "Disclaimer."

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date** (dd/mm/yyyy)

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature**

Please Note: All information collected by ADAVIC will be kept entirely confidential: Your personal information will be kept strictly confidential and will not be sold, reused, rented, loaned or otherwise disclosed to external individuals or organisations. Any information you give us will be treated with the utmost care and will not be used in ways that you have not consented to.