Closing ritual guide

For support group facilitators

What is a closing ritual?

Closing rituals are reflective activities, typically introduced at the end of a support group meeting. They can help bring closure to the meeting, allow a moment to reflect on what has been shared and build deeper connections between group members. Closing rituals can also provide an opportunity for the group to get to know each other on a personal level, seeing each other as unique individuals separate from their caregiver role or diagnosis. They work well to bond newly formed groups or those in transition.

Example of a closing ritual

Ask: Describe in one word how you are feeling in this moment.

Each group member is given an opportunity to respond before closing the meeting.

How to get started

As its title implies, a closing ritual is traditionally an activity that takes place at the end of the support group meeting but you can also start your meeting with a 'getting to know you' question to set the tone. Regardless of the timing of the ritual, it can be helpful to provide an explanation to the group before introducing it for the first time.

Consider the following strategies:

- When starting the group, let everyone know you would like to reserve approximately ten minutes at the end of the meeting for a closing ritual or reflective question.
- Highlight some of the benefits of closing rituals and why you think it is important for this group to try one (e.g. bonding, connection, reflection, deeper learning).
- Provide an example of a time when you or a colleague successfully used a closing ritual with another group and discuss the value it brought to the meeting.

It is not mandatory to utilize a closing ritual at every meeting. It can be helpful to gather feedback from the group after using a ritual 2-3 times to see how they are enjoying the practice. As the facilitator, use your judgement; each group may respond differently. Be flexible and try different options. Take note of what activities worked well with each group.

Closing ritual options

Reflective questions

- **What is one thing you appreciate about this support group?**
- **Can you share one thing you are grateful for today?**
- **What has caregiving or living with dementia taught you about yourself?**

Deeper learning

- **Try connecting a question to what was shared in the meeting:** *In today's meeting we spoke a lot about therapeutic activities and reminiscing. Who would like to name one activity you enjoyed doing as a child?*
- **What is one strategy or tip you've learned from this group that has had a positive impact on your life?**

Exploratory questions to encourage self-care

- **What does a "good day" look like for you?** *This can help caregivers to think creatively about what's most important to them and how they might be able to incorporate that into their current routine.*
- **What never fails to make you smile?** *Sometimes caregivers get so wrapped up in the day-to-day, they might forget certain elements of their identity, like what makes them laugh, or what they like to do for fun.*
- **What activity do you wish you could do more of?**

'Getting to know you' questions

- **Where is your favourite place to go on vacation? What makes this place your favourite?**
- **What type of music do you enjoy listening to?**
- **What is your proudest accomplishment?**

Affirmations

The facilitator may wish to start with an affirmation that the group repeats and then encourage members to share their own.

- **"I am not alone on this journey."**
- **"Self-care is not selfish."**
- **"I will do something for me today."**
- **"I am doing the best I can in this moment."**

Activities

- Close the meeting by reading a quote or poem and encourage group dialogue. Members may wish to bring their own poem/quote to share each month.
- Bring a photo or memento that represents something meaningful to each member (this may require more time and would only be done on occasion).