

Addressing Group Member Trauma

When a group advertises a safe and supportive space, members may feel comfortable speaking about past trauma they have experienced. Here are some tips on how to address trauma as a group, and support members as they make use of a safe space.

1. Offer gratitude and affirmation

Thank the individual for sharing their experience with the group. Remember that the group may be the first place that this person has felt comfortable speaking about their trauma. Saying "thank you for trusting the group with that" and "I believe your experience" is an important part of ensuring a safe space.

2. Offer support, don't force it

Remember to ask the person if there is anything the group can do to support them in the moment. It is ok if the member says no. Here are just a few things that the group can offer:

1. Offer space for them to speak more on their experience and how it has impacted them.
2. Ask if they would like to hear if others have had experiences similar to theirs. Keep in mind that it is ok if the person says "no, that isn't helpful"
3. Remind the person that the group is a safe space, and what they speak about will not be shared, provided they are not in immediate danger of hurting themselves, being harmed, or hurting others.
4. Remind the person that the group is there to support them and not to judge them.

3. Offer resources

LGBTQ groups are often lifelines for students, and can provide safe and supportive spaces for people to find community and share their experiences. It is important to provide resources for things that the group can't provide, like medical support, mental health support, and trauma-informed care providers. Always have a list handy of hotlines and local resources that a member can access if they would like. Check out the Iowa Safe Schools website for many of these resources! We are here to help.



Information adapted in part from the New York State United Teachers

Have questions or comments about this resource?
Email campus@iowasafeschools.org

