

## Graduate Student Support Group 2022 (In Person)

The Graduate Student Support Group aims to create a “community of care” through having a confidential, safe, and supportive environment wherein students can share challenges and successes associated with being in graduate school, and give and receive support and strategies. The group will have consistent processes for checking in with each member at the start, and ending the session together. There will also be time for individuals to have deeper explorations of challenges, and group support and strategizing, for those members who need it on that day. Depending on the group interests and needs, we might have pre-planned parts of some sessions where we explore topics common to graduate students (see below).

<b>Time:</b>	Thursdays, 2:00-3:30 PM
<b>Dates:</b>	Biweekly, October 6, 2022 – April 20, 2023
<b>Location:</b>	SUB 2-600
<b>Facilitators:</b>	Jason Murray, M.Ed., R.Psych. Gabrielle Desgagne, M.Ed., Doctoral Resident (Fall 2022) Christina Spinelli, M.A., Doctoral Resident (Winter 2023)

### Group Structure:

- The group is semi-structured and primarily involves group discussion, giving and receiving support, and strategizing together.
- We aim to create a “community of care” ethos for our group. That means:
  - To assure all participants’ comfort and safety, group members are expected to demonstrate respect for others’ experiences and comments. You are also required to treat others’ information as confidential - “what is said in the group, stays in the group” - and to keep private the identities of group members. Sessions are NOT to be recorded in any way.
  - We will bring to this group different life experiences, different identities, and different privileges and oppressive experiences. It’s essential that we work together to support and uphold the lived experiences and shared stories of each group member. Therefore, in this group, we aspire to be LGBTQ2S+, gender, culture, race, ability, and age positive and supportive. That means working to be aware of our privileges, to be sensitive and caring with the identities and experiences of others, and being open to getting feedback if we cross a line.
  - Let’s honour our time together, and limit distractions, by not multitasking during the group. Put your phone on silent and don’t check it. There will be a short break to check messages, use the washroom, etc. Bring a water and/or snack if that would help you to feel more comfortable
  - We will follow the COVID best practices laid out below.

- This is a support group, not a treatment group. As such, it is not the place to look for ongoing treatment of a specific mental health concern. Individual therapy, or a group program specific to the mental health issue, is a better option. The group might be able to provide support and limited strategies for such issues, but not more in-depth personalized treatment.
- Potential topics for some sessions:
  - Imposter syndrome
  - Grad school and parenting
  - Supervisory conflict
  - Mental health - depression, anxiety, loneliness, perfectionism
  - Motivation
  - Guest speakers on academic topics, career exploration
  - Challenges for International students
  - Sexism, challenges for women
  - Harms of academic culture
  - Issues of social justice, advocacy
  - Professional boundaries
  - Finding joy in the present
  - Intrinsic motivations and meanings for graduate work
- COVID health and safety is still a priority for our very busy clinic. We follow the best practices laid out for medical and health clinics to help us avoid an outbreak that could significantly impact the health of our staff and students, as well as interrupting our services to students.
  - In-person groups require masking at all times, with the exception of short breaks to remove your mask to quickly eat or drink. It is possible that group therapy services may move to an online format if health and safety becomes an issue, for example in the case of an outbreak.
  - If you are ill, or have *any COVID symptoms*, please email or call our admin team and do not attend the group. Honour our group ethos of a community of care.

### **Group Eligibility:**

- In a group therapy environment, much of the focus is on the delivery of psychoeducational content and fostering a dynamic where all participants feel safe and comfortable to share their experiences as they relate to the content of the group. Given this structure, psychologists are unable to provide the necessary assessment and intervention in a group setting to clients who need more focused one-on-one care. ***As such, in order to participate in group, it is important that you are not currently at risk of harming your self or others.*** If you are currently at risk of harming yourself or others, please contact CCS to book an Initial Consultation or phone ACCESS 24/7 at 780-424-2424 to access community mental health supports.
- Groups are open to those clients who are not currently receiving individual therapy. If you would like to attend the group and have individual therapy, please seek individual services through the [GSA](#).

- Each participant must have an Emergency Contact person who can provide support in crises or emergencies should they arise.

#### **Group Requirements:**

- You will receive meeting reminder e-mails from the reception desk two days before the next group meeting. If you are unable to attend the meeting, please reply to the e-mail or phone **reception (780-492-5205)**. Otherwise, you do not need to respond to the reminder email.
- Prior to the start of group, you will need to complete an online consent form about the procedures and expectations regarding your participation in this group program, along with other demographic forms and symptom inventories. A link to these forms will be sent to your email following the Group Information Session. The group facilitators will review the consent form with all group members on the first day of group. If you have any questions or concerns about the forms, you are welcome to email the facilitator.

#### **How to Register Your Interest in Therapy Groups at CCS:**

1. From the [website](#), click the “Register for Group Information Session” link below the group you are interested in and complete the sign-up form.
2. Attend the Group Information Session. Here, you will learn more about the content, structure, and expectations for the group and you will have a chance to meet the group facilitators. The facilitators will also explain the criteria for being in a therapy group and also answer questions you might have. \*You must attend the info session to be eligible to sign up for the group.\*
3. Shortly after the Group Information Session, you will receive an email with consent forms and demographic information to fill out. If you are still interested in attending the group, fill out these forms within two days of the info session. ***If you are no longer interested in the group, you don't need to fill out the forms!***
4. Seven to 10 days after the Group Information Session, students who have submitted their completed consent forms will be contacted by email and provided confirmation that they are enrolled in the group.
5. If we have more students interested in the group than we have space, we will randomly select ten participants for the group. If we have enough to fill two groups, consideration will be given to running two alternating groups. We may consider running a virtual only group if demand for this service exists. Any students not offered a space in a group will also be offered alternate means of support in the interim, including an Initial Consultation.

**Please note: in some instances it is determined by the group facilitator that clients would be better served through individual rather than group treatment. Facilitators reserve the right to relocate group participants to individual services as needed.**