



The GPS Group Peer Support Model

Guiding Philosophy

The GPS Group Peer Support Model is a trauma-informed, strengths-based group framework grounded in the belief that people are the experts on their own lives. Each person travels a unique path toward healing and growth. Participants are the drivers of their journey, and GPS provides the structure, guidance, and support to help them navigate.

Drawing on over 20 years of experience, the GPS model integrates evidence-informed practices including Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR), Motivational Interviewing, Polyvagal Theory, Somatic Grounding, Psychoeducation, and Peer-to-Peer Support.

Why Social Support Matters



Humans are wired for connection. Research consistently shows that social support improves both mental and physical health, reduces anxiety and depression, and increases resilience and longevity. Isolation is both a cause and symptom of emotional distress, while supportive relationships normalize experiences, reduce shame, and foster hope. GPS groups are designed to counter isolation by creating safe, consistent spaces for connection, reflection, and mutual support.

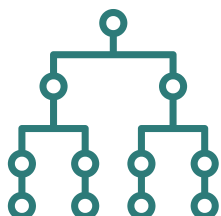


Trauma-Informed Group Practice

GPS recognizes that many people carry relational trauma from past group or caregiving experiences. Joining a group can feel risky. For this reason, the GPS model intentionally prioritizes safety, empowerment, and choice.

Core Trauma-Informed Principles

- **Foster Physical and Emotional Safety:** Create predictable, respectful environments with clear guidelines and routines.
- **Build Trust Through Transparency:** Clearly explain the purpose, structure, and flow of each session.
- **Support Autonomy and Choice:** Honor boundaries and allow participants to share at their own pace.
- **Promote Peer Connection:** Encourage empathy and mutual understanding through shared experience.
- **Acknowledge Cultural and Individual Differences:** Respect the diverse identities, histories, and contexts participants bring.



Structure of a GPS Group Session

Each GPS session follows a consistent, replicable structure:

1. **GPS Mindfulness Rest Stop:** Brief grounding to arrive and settle.
2. **GPS Guidelines:** Trauma-informed “Rules of the Road,” reviewed every session.
3. **GPS Realities:** Naming common struggles and unspoken challenges related to the topic.
4. **GPS Principles:** Affirmations of inherent worth, resilience, and capacity to heal.
5. **GPS Check In:** Uninterrupted, advice-free sharing by participants.
6. **GPS PATH Reflective Listening:** Facilitator reflections grounded in validation and affirmation.
7. **GPS Grounding:** Re-centering after emotional sharing.
8. **GPS Weaving:** Identifying shared themes, strengths, and differences.
9. **Optional Discussion or Exercises:** Education, skill-building, or deeper connection.
10. **GPS Closing:** Final reflection from each participant.



Who Can Use the GPS Model?

The GPS model is designed to be accessible and adaptable. It can be facilitated by licensed professionals, peers, people with lived experience, and trained lay leaders. Its structured yet flexible format makes it effective across diverse communities and settings.



Key Takeaway

The GPS Group Peer Support Model creates welcoming, structured spaces that reduce isolation, build trust, and empower participants to heal, grow, and find their own path forward together.