

Self-Help Facts and Definitions

What is Self-Help/Mutual Support?

Self-Help/Mutual Support is a process of sharing common experiences, situations or problems. Self-help is participatory and involves getting help, giving help, and learning to help yourself as well as sharing knowledge and experience. There is no charge to participate, although a nominal donation to cover expenses is sometimes requested, but never required. Self-help initiatives continue on an ongoing basis, are voluntary in nature rather than mandatory, and are open to new members. Self-help activities are run by and for the participants. The primary purpose of self-help is to provide emotional support, practical support and information exchange.

Self-Help Initiatives Include:

Self-Help Groups: This category includes traditional face-to-face groups (open or closed), transitioning groups (moving from professionally led educational/support group model to a self-help one), and Internet/on-line self-help discussion groups.

Peer-Support Models: This involves one-on-one contact and support for people who share, or have shared, a common concern. These models can take on various forms (e.g. telephone support networks, issue specific pen-pal networks or e-mail exchanges).

Self-Help Networks: Groups of self-help groups networking around common issues.

Self-Help Organizations: Organizations with a significant proportion of their work focused on self-help initiatives

Self-Help Centres: Clearinghouses or centres responsible for maintaining contact information for self-help initiatives in a given location (i.e., city, province, state). These centres may also be engaged in assisting the development of new self-help initiatives.

Did you know....?

There is an on-line self-help group for caregivers all over Canada, people who can't get to a meeting, but want to talk to others in the same situation. Sponsored by Sympatico's Healthy Way, the group is a source of support for men and women, ranging in age from 22-73, members taking care of someone they love and coping with all the challenges that responsibility brings.

There is a self-help group for grandparents raising their grandchildren all alone.

There is a self-help organization founded by parents who have lost a child. Bereaved Families of Ontario trains parents to help other parents deal with their loss, and to let the healing begin.

There are more than 3000 self-help groups in Ontario.

There are self-help centres across Canada, connecting people to self-help groups and organizations that can make all the difference in the world.