

# **Domestic Abuse Counselling Group**



**for anxiety and depression**

**Service provided by East London NHS Foundation Trust**

## Background information

Domestic abuse, often hidden and deeply personal, is a pervasive issue that transcends cultural, socioeconomic, and geographic boundaries. It involves a pattern of behaviours used by one partner to maintain power and control over another partner in an intimate relationship. This abuse can manifest in various forms, including physical, emotional, psychological, sexual, and financial abuse. Physical abuse is the most visible form, characterized by the use of force causing injury or physical harm. Emotional and psychological abuse, while less overt, involves behaviours that demean, intimidate, or isolate the victim, often leaving deep psychological scars. Sexual abuse includes any non-consensual sexual acts or coercive behaviours around sexuality, while financial abuse involves controlling or limiting a partner's access to financial resources, severely restricting their independence.

The dynamics of domestic abuse are complex and often involve an interplay of fear, love, economic dependence, and societal pressures, making it challenging for victims to leave abusive relationships. The impact of domestic abuse is profound, not only on the individuals involved but also on their families, especially children, and the wider community.



## What will happen in the pre-engagement call?

Before joining the group sessions, each participant will be offered a one-to-one pre-engagement meeting via Microsoft Teams with one of the group facilitators, who will be a trained Relational therapist. This is a chance to have a first connection, to put a face to a name, to test using MS Teams links and to discuss any initial concerns or hesitations around group work.

## What will happen in group sessions?

The content of each session will be determined by the group participants. It isn't possible to know exactly what will come up, before beginning the sessions, and facilitators will help you to think about any anxiety about this.

The facilitator's role involves helping clients to unpack the complex interpersonal dynamics that characterize abusive relationships. This process includes understanding patterns of attachment, power imbalances, and the ways in which trust and safety have been compromised. By creating a relational space that contrasts with the abusive dynamics the client has experienced, the therapist helps the client to explore new ways of relating that



are based on mutual respect, understanding, and validation.

Some of the themes that will come up naturally and we hope to explore further are:

- Loss of identity, negative self-belief and harsh self-talk / critical self-appraisal
- Powerlessness and empowerment (self-esteem and boundaries)
- Power and control
- Relational attachments and dynamics
- Loss and grief
- Anger, injustice, guilt, shame and forgiveness
- Cultural impact on patterns of abuse

Facilitators will take an active role supporting participants to notice and reflect upon their emotions, thoughts and observations, and to think about how they feel about interactions between themselves and other members of the group.

Group sessions will offer an opportunity to share and reflect upon interpersonal themes that come up in the group, and to think about these with other members of the group, and with group facilitators. Participants will be invited to share their thoughts and perspectives with each other, and to think



about their emotional responses to what others are communicating.

### **What will happen after the group sessions end?**

After the group sessions end, an individual review appointment will be offered with one of the group facilitators.

### **What is expected of me if I join a group?**

Sessions will last for 2 hours and run for 10 weeks. They will take place at the same time and day each week, and participants will be asked to commit to attending all sessions. There is a maximum number of 8 participants with two Relational therapists as facilitators.

Currently we only offer online groups. Please note that when joining an online group, the expectation is to have your camera on during the sessions.

We ask that group participants attend on time, and ensure that they are able to speak confidentially, if joining an online group.

We expect that information discussed and interactions shared within the group sessions will not be shared outside of the group, to maintain confidentiality. We also ask that all participants are respectful of other members of the group.



We hope to see you soon!



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**NEED URGENT HELP?**

Our service is not staffed to be able to provide urgent help. If you feel you are in crisis, you can make an urgent appointment with your GP to discuss options on how to get the support you need quickly. Alternatively, you can call the 24hr Mental Health Crisis Support Team (for all ages 24/7) on NHS 111 and select option 2. At all times, you can also call the Samaritans on 116 123, or attend your local hospital

