Courage to Heal: A Sexual Assault Recovery Group

And the day came when the risk to remain tight in a bud was more painful than the risk it took to blossom.

Anaïs Nin

The Courage to Heal group is open to women seeking support from others as they journey through recovery from sexual trauma toward a new sense of wholeness.

This is a private and confidential group that can help women cope with their emotions surrounding the trauma. These emotions may include, but are not limited to anxiety, sadness, anger and guilt.

Some objectives are to:

- Help participants share their experience
- Help participants recognize that they are not alone & understand the current impact of this experience on their lives
- Help participants begin to process feelings and beliefs associated with the trauma.

There is power in connecting with other survivors. It helps to talk about it. You are not alone!

To join this group, please indicate your interest using the [Group Interest Form][1]. Members will need to meet with the facilitator(s) to do a brief screening interview prior to
attending. The facilitator(s) will respond to all received group interest forms to set up a
time to meet.

FAQs

What is the structure of the group?

There is not a pre-planned structure. During the first group, members will make
important group agreements that help to create a safe and therapeutic environment.
From that point on, group members will bring up topics that are important for them.
Examples of topics that tend to come up include, but are not limited to: managing
uncomfortable emotions, trauma responses, academic and personal situations, what it
was like (or what it might be like) to disclose one’s status as a survivor to friends or
family, and how to develop trust in relationships.

What are the other group members going to be like?

The Courage group is open to undergraduate and graduate students as well as post-
docs. There will be a minimum of 4 group members and a maximum of 8 or 9. Group
members have a history of trauma, currently view that as an important concern in their
life, and will have expressed a desire to talk about their recovery with other survivors.
Group members may have experienced sexual abuse as a child, a recent sexual
assault, or both. It is important to know that the facilitators will create an atmosphere
where everyone’s truth is respected, and where group members do not compare their
experiences with each other in a way that minimizes others’ (or their own) experiences.
We firmly believe that there is no one “right way” to heal from a trauma, but that we can
support each other along the way.

What if I don’t like it, or discover that it isn’t the right time for me to be in this
group?

We don’t ask that you make a commitment to participate in group for the entire
semester. We are aware that the first few groups are often the most difficult, so we ask
that you make a commitment to yourself to continue coming past that point. We are also
very open to input from group members and want to make it a positive and helpful
experience for all members. However, if you decide at any point that group is not a good
fit, we will see if there are other services or supports we can connect you with. We only
ask that you keep communication open with other group members. It has been our
experience that the survivors in this group develop a connection with each other, and
that they would want to hear about your decision to leave.

Is participating in group going to make things worse by bringing up difficult
memories?

The first few group sessions may be particularly difficult, and there will be hard days.
We openly discuss this in the group, and talk about ways to support ourselves after group and during the week. Also, since this is not a structured group, you can pace yourself so that you don’t experience a flooding of emotions. (But of course, we would encourage you to ?lean in? and participate in group as much as you are able, in whatever way you are able).

**Does participating in group really help?**

We have received consistent positive feedback from group members about their experiences in the Courage group. They have primarily pointed to the connection piece as the most important part of the group (hearing someone else who has gone through a similar experience describing similar reactions, feeling supported, seeing their own resilience mirrored in others). However, like we outlined above, this group may not be a good fit for everyone, and we’re happy to help survivors connect with other resources.

**This sounds great. How do I sign up?**

Use the [Group Interest Form](https://caps.unc.edu/services/group-therapy/how-join-group) to indicate interest. After we receive the form, one of the group facilitators will contact you to schedule a screening appointment with you to make sure group is a good fit. You will not be asked to share details of your trauma during the screening appointment (nor in the group!). If you are not sure you want to participate but want more information, we are happy to meet with you.

Friday 1:30 - 3pm  
**Theme/Support**  
Full  
Sarah Lewis, LCSW and Janie Cole, LCSWA

**Source URL:** https://caps.unc.edu/services/group-therapy/courage

**Links**  
[1] https://caps.unc.edu/services/group-therapy/how-join-group  
[2] https://caps.unc.edu/group-therapy-types/themesupport