



Group Meeting Guidelines

Cal Open groups offer a safe, confidential environment where persons within the adoption triad (adoptee, adoptive parents, birth parents) come together to share with, learn from each other, and effect change in our lives and through our state.

Unlike a traditional therapy or activist group, our search and support groups give members the opportunity to devise and determine their own strategies out of personal difficulties, thereby experiencing the empowerment of their own healing.

The following ground rules were created in order to keep our meetings safe and supportive for everyone participating.

Meetings begin on time.

To make the most of our time together, our groups begin at their scheduled time. If you wish to enter a meeting that is already in progress, please do so quietly, as not to disturb the group's concentration or that of the person sharing. The facilitator will acknowledge your presence and welcome you between speakers.

If you know in advance that you may arrive late, please notify your group's facilitator, so that your speaking time may be allotted at the beginning of the meeting.

Meetings have two components.

Cal Open meetings have two functions: Search & Support and Activism. We believe one without the other cannot lead to personal empowerment and community change. Our meetings are divided in time by these two goals.

Meetings provide a safe setting for all.

Members shall not attend Cal Open group meetings under the influence of alcohol or illegal substances. We honor this responsibility to one another and to our community, in order to maintain a safe and supportive environment for sharing and change.

A "welcome" and brief introductory begins each meeting.

Please tell us: your name, your place in the triad or interest in adoption, your length of time with Cal Open, are you involved in a search or reunion, if an adoptive parent, age(s) of your children and whether their adoption(s) are open or closed. For example: "My name is Maggie. I'm a birth mother. I met my daughter three years ago and we have an ongoing relationship. I've been a member of Cal Open for seven years."

Every person is assured equal time to speak.

Cal Open values what you have to say, and believes that everyone present will learn from you by hearing about your individual "process". The meeting time will be divided equally according to the number of persons present. If you would prefer to just listen, that's fine too. We ask that there be no "questions" or "cross-talk" while members are speaking, unless requested by the member sharing during their allotted time.

Cal Open group meetings offer our members the often rare opportunity to be genuinely heard by a roomful of people who seek to understand the adoption experience. Your time is your own to benefit from our undivided attention.

Do not offer "advice" or "feedback", unless it is individually requested.

If you feel stuck on an issue and want to hear from others, please ask. Your allotted time is your own to use as you wish. When asking for input, it is a good idea to be specific, such as "I'd like to hear from adoptive parents how they felt when....". You may also indicate that you'd like to talk with others following the close of the meeting.

We ask that "I" statements are used.

No generalizing or bashing of a triad group or specific individuals is allowed. Especially saying things like "all adoptees" or "most birthparents" feel or act a certain way, etc.

Confidentially is assured. Each meeting's content is held in strictest confidence.

Some members have experienced a lifetime of secrecy regarding their "adoption triad" status. Our meetings may be the first and/or only "public" setting in which this information is revealed. For this reason, it is very important to keep what is shared in groups in confidence. Only when confidentiality is ASSURED, can our meetings be supportive and truly safe for all.

Meetings end at their prearranged time.

This makes it easier for members to plan their schedules ahead of time. If you will need to leave the meeting early, please let the facilitator know so that you can be one of the earlier speakers. Your voice is important! We also ask that if leaving early, to do so between speakers.

Guests or Support Persons.

The facilitator should be notified in advance of the meeting if you plan to bring a guest or support person.

Donation.

Cal Open meetings are FREE to attend. We do ask that, if able, members provide a small donation to assist with costs involved in managing California Open activities.