



Joyful Life Institute, Inc.  
Discover your joy for life!

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**Group Informed Consent Form**

“Groups that can transform your life!”

**CONFIDENTIALITY**

Information you share with your group leader(s) is confidential unless otherwise required by law. For example, information may be released to:

- protect the client or someone else (e.g., suicidal or homicidal intent, child abuse, elder abuse, or harm to someone in your dependent care),
- file insurance for services rendered to client,
- respond to a subpoena for client’s record or testimony in court case, and
- provide information to others once the group member has given written permission.

Emails and cell phones are not confidential methods of communicating. They are used sparingly by the group leader(s) (e.g., when away from the office and after hours). Group leader(s) will not respond to emails containing clinical complaints. When using these methods of contact, weigh your need for contact with your need for confidentiality.

In addition, group members are expected to keep confidential the in-group disclosures by other participants. This means what is said in group stays in group. You may share personal stories disclosed about yourself while in group with others outside the group. However, you may not share the stories of other group members. You may share with your individual therapist any interactions you have in group that need further processing as long as it does not identify other group members. Between-session contacts are discouraged in the early phases of group formation. Later, each group will develop a policy for between-session contact between group members. The group will decide what constitutes appropriate and inappropriate kinds of contacts. If a group decides to engage in between session contact, contacts between group members should be disclosed in the next group meeting.

**I will keep confidential the disclosures shared by group members. Initials \_\_\_\_\_**

**COORDINATION OF CARE**

It is best to coordinate the care you are receiving from JLI staff, your individual therapist, physician, psychiatrist, and any other treatment provider. Information such as symptoms, improvement, and relapse will be valuable information to your group leader(s) and other treatment providers. Therefore, it is requested that you provide your group leader(s) permission to collaborate with other professionals with whom you are working. To do so, sign a Release of Information form.

**GROUP FORMAT**

Each group meeting is for 75 minutes. Groups are conducted on consecutive weeks excluding holidays. Groups will have a structured format. We will discuss one topic per week.

**ATTENDANCE**

The order of the topics is deliberate. The goal is to systematically provide you with the building blocks to understand and conquer trauma. Each topic builds on the previous one. Missing a session may leave gaps in your trauma recovery knowledge and skills. Therefore, attendance is very important. The early weeks of group are very important to developing group trust and cohesiveness. At the end of the early phase of group, individuals must commit to regular and timely attendance.

Chronic lateness and absence can disrupt the group process. You will soon realize that a healthy group will count on its participants for support. You will be missed. Missing sessions not only impacts your growth, it also effects the progress of the other group members. We will discuss this openly and respectfully in the group.

## FEES

Fees are due on a monthly basis. Therefore, all scheduled meetings for the month will be paid at the first session at the beginning of the month. Sessions can be paid using check or cash. Group fees should be paid to the receptionist or administrator of the center.

## REFUNDS

Prepaid group fees are nonrefundable. Each group member has the right to avoid or miss sessions. However, the fee for missed session is the same as for sessions attended. Therefore, the no-show and cancellation fees equal the full fee for the group session.

## WHO MAY NOT BENEFIT

Those who have not mastered self-soothing, symptom containment, and mindfulness skills may find group content distressing. Those who have difficulty staying present and grounded may not fully benefit from group. Those experiencing actively severe life-threatening symptoms such as eating disorder, suicidal, or homicidal intent, and alcohol and substance abuse may not be a good fit for some groups.

Group members may have to suspend group attendance to address these symptoms. These individuals may resume group after absence of a few sessions. If the group member will be absent for an extended period, it is recommended he or she start over with a newly forming group.

Distressed group members may need to discontinue their group sessions until they have stabilized. Once again, these distressed group members may benefit from supplementing their group work with participation in another group (e.g., Stress Reduction group).

## ALCOHOL AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE OR ADDICTIONS

Individuals currently *in treatment* for abuse or addiction to drugs or alcohol may attend group. Alcohol or substance abusing group participants may relapse due to the emotional intensity of the group. The safeguards of individual therapy, detoxification, alcohol/drug treatment, and the *Thriving with Trauma* group are resources for relapse prevention. A group member high on drugs or alcohol at the time of the group meeting will not be allowed to attend that session. In addition, (s)he will not receive a refund for that meeting.

**I will not drink alcoholic beverages or be intoxicated prior to come to group meetings. I further understand that I forfeit my fee, if I come to session in this state and have to leave. Initials \_\_\_\_\_**

## ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS

Paper and pencil assessments may be administered to ascertain the level of your symptoms prior to being accepted into group. These assessments will be repeated periodically. They will be used to track your progress overtime. Joyful Life Institute, Inc. (JLI) must purchase these assessments. Therefore, there is a fee for the assessments used.

## QUALITY ASSURANCE AND RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT.

Information collected from you may be used for quality assurance, research, and development. In all cases, your data will be pooled with that of others. No identifying information will be attached to data. Group outcomes will be sought. The data will help JLI and its staff track the effectiveness of our services, continually improve the quality of our services, and develop products and services that our clients need. In some cases, and with your written consent, data collected and treated in a similar manner may be used for research, publication, presentation, and for advancement of the field.

## WEEKEND RETREATS

Periodically, JLI will conduct weekend retreats to enhance the group process and cohesiveness. They also provide opportunities for reunion of former group members. Retreats are a place and time for self-reflection, spiritual connection, bonding with those experiencing similar life events, re-examining life's purpose and goals, reclaiming personal power and unique identity, self-soothing, healing, goal attainment, and fun.

They will be hosted in a scenic retreat center that invites one to commune with nature. The retreat experience may include mini-lectures, small group interactions, music, movement, and experiential exercises on educational, practical, and spiritual topics. During free times, participants may enjoy simple pleasures such as walking, hiking, bird watching, massage, or simply admiring the sunrise and sunset. More vigorous activities such as swimming, horseback riding, exercise, and sport may also be available.

## SAYING GOODBYE

Good goodbyes are important. So many times we have unfinished or incomplete business with others who have left our lives or we have cut out of our lives. Good goodbyes benefit both the departing member and the members who remain. The group process aims to model good goodbyes.

Each group will have a defined beginning and end date. At the end date of the group, the group members will participate in a goodbye ritual, "graduation." Individuals who desire may go to the next phase of treatment or repeat a group previously taken. (The more you practice your trauma recovery skills, the more your self-knowledge and ability to self-soothing will improve). Participants will have opportunities for reunions at future retreats.

### Premature Goodbyes

To get the best results from this group, you are encouraged to stay the course. However, for various reasons, a member may decide to discontinue group prior to graduation. In order for this to be a good goodbye, it is requested that goodbyes be a four-session process. Why four sessions? It sometimes takes that long for participants to acknowledge and process the meaning of the goodbye to themselves. The first session you will announce your intention to discontinue the group. The second and third session, your decision to leave the group is shared for the benefit of any group members not present at previous announcement(s). At the fourth session, you and the other group members will say goodbye to each other. At that time, you may share the impact you have had on each other.

**I commit to having a good goodbye with participants in group. Initials \_\_\_\_\_**

### GROUND RULES:

- Participants are responsible for claiming their time to speak in the group. They are also responsible for listening to and providing speaking time for other group members.
- Members of the group will treat each other with respect. Those in the group need to feel emotionally and physically safe. This is accomplished when members listen and speak courteously to one another. Participants may express their anger. However, you may not threaten, frighten, or bully other members. Ridiculing or screaming at another group member will not be tolerated. You may instead leave the group session temporarily to regain your composure. An alternate treatment strategy may be recommended for repeated offenses.
- Group members who do not have a sexual relationship prior to the group start date will not engage in sexual relationship with group members during the course of the group and for 2 years after the group is completed.
- Group members will seek to resolve conflicts directly with the person with whom they have the issue.
- Group members will not discuss other group members outside of group.

I read and understand the policies for attending group. My questions have been answered satisfactorily. I will adhere to the policies for the trauma groups.

**Participant Signature** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date** \_\_\_\_\_