

# ILLNESS SUPPORT GROUP

A significant illness, accident or chronic pain can impact one's life with numerous disruptions, unexpected fears and painful experiences. Yet, these life events have hidden within them new challenges and possibilities for self-discovery and personal growth.

## What are the signs of needing support?

The emotional reactions as well as one's vision of reality impacted by a significant illness, accident or chronic pain must be addressed if personal growth and more than bodily healing is to be achieved. Persons struggling with one or more of the following symptoms may benefit from this group experience:

- frequent irritability and anger
- feelings of self-pity, guilt/shame
- loss of spiritual faith and connection with God
- non-compliance with treatment recommendations
- feelings of despair/helplessness
- dwelling on the unknown
- absence of emotional responsiveness
- withdrawal from family/friends
- feelings of worthlessness
- frequent thoughts of death
- disturbing fear of dying.

Many persons just endure the journey through such an illness, accident or chronic pain, seeking to keep the inner struggles out of sight and out of mind. They may prefer, where possible, to submit to surgery, take the potent medications or radiation, and then pretend that such disruptive, fearful and painful experiences only need to be blotted out with anti-depressant or anti-anxiety or sleep or potent pain medications.

Yet, such unpleasant life events may be the most pregnant moments one might experience for personal and relational growth. This group experience is designed for those persons who need emotional and spiritual support during their recovery journey and who seek to gain new meaning for living in spite of these unintended life events.

Healthcare institutions in today's culture, impacted significantly by insurance companies decision making, are admitting patients at later stages of their illness, and then are discharging them much sooner than they can function without continued medical home care. These recent evolutions in institutional caregiving have noticeably reduced the personal support patients receive during their illness. The priority on "prompt high-tech" has diminished "consistent high-touch." Patients not only have to struggle more on their own without an active, present support group of doctors, nurses, and allied healthcare professionals, but so do the patient's family members. Sometimes these family members receive little or no support.

Preferable qualities desired for optimizing the benefits of this Illness Support Group experience for a "patient group" or a "family member group" are the following:

- eagerness to grow emotionally and spiritually
- desire to optimize one's own efforts toward healing recovery, where this is possible
- desire to discover new meaning from their illness experiences
- openness to learn about mind-body-spirit interactive energies

Others may not have the time, patience, or ability to hear one's struggles. Too often, family members and friends cannot tolerate our pain and then become unavailable. We receive the message that we should "count our blessings." Such reactions cause feelings of abandonment, confusion, and isolation. Led by a qualified therapist, a community of persons who share similar experiences is frequently what is needed for many to promote and guide a growth process for those struggling with a significant illness, accident or chronic pain.

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For more information, contact Roy Nash at **BELIEF-FOCUSED CARE & HEALING** at 217-546-9800. To learn more personal information about Roy Nash, visit to [roydash.com](http://roydash.com) and click on **Roy B. Nash**

In addition to the Illness Support Group experience, Chaplain Nash also is available to provide individual counseling and therapy for persons needing more personalized help in coping and managing their situations due to illness, accidents or supporting a loved one in such a situation.