

Correspondence to GROW members 17-07-2020

Dear members,



First off, we would like to acknowledge your patience and understanding, particularly in recent weeks, as we work together to ensure GROW groups can re-convene safely and in line with new Covid specific guidelines and protocols. These are unprecedented and challenging times and it has been amazing to observe the strength of human spirit and the resilience of members as you have continued to support each other since the closing of face to face groups back in March.

As a country, we are in phase 3 of re-opening services, shops and restaurants. You will be aware that due to an increase in cases, phase 4 has been delayed. We understand that a number of you are anxious to get back to the comfort and support of your group and that you want to meet together again. For now, we hope that you will continue to avail of the option of Twelve Step work and meet socially, within current guidelines, to maintain connections with each other – have a coffee, go for a walk, and keep in touch. ***“You alone can do it, but you cannot do it alone”***. Zoom will remain the platform for groups for now, and this is under constant review.

At this time, GROW are not in a position to have staff return to face to face groups but we are working on implementing the necessary steps to ensure everyone can return safely to meetings. We currently have over 50 staff operating out of, at last count over 100 locations. The number of locations to be made safe, I’m sure you can appreciate, makes this process all the more complex.

At the beginning we mentioned the strength and resilience of GROW members. We are also acutely aware that at times, mental health issues can take hold of the strongest of us. We understand that despite supports, despite what we know, sometimes the challenges faced are too great to manage and we know that some of you have found it quite distressing that face to face groups are not available. GROW have always operated as part of a much bigger mental health system and we are grateful that primary care mental health supports have remained available throughout this period.

Covid-19 remains a risk to our communities. For many, this might not be what you had hoped to hear, but face to face groups will not re-convene at this time. We have estimated that mid-September will be when the organisation has completed all necessary training, completed all safety checks, and developed and implemented Covid specific protocols that meet the needs of GROW, its members and staff. This is an estimated date – we will update you, the members, if there are changes either side of this.

We know this is frustrating, it is for all of us. That said, staff are still available, Zoom groups will continue (albeit for a longer period than any of us predicted), we are available to each other for support as always. We hope to have staff available to join 12 step work in coming weeks. Stay in touch with your Area Co-ordinator. Stay in touch with each other. In the absence of face to face groups, we will endeavour to support you as best we can. We understand this is different. We understand the work that you have put into your mental health recovery. We understand you are re-negotiating what worked for you before as some of your reliable supports suddenly became unavailable. These are different times and different ways of working for us all, but together we will get GROW back on track. In the meantime, take care. Stay safe.

Sandra McGrath (on behalf of The Return to Groups and Work Committee)