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/* ----- The CSS rules offered here are just an example, you may use them as a base.
Shape your 'expand/collapse' cont so that it meets the style of your site. ----- */ #cont {
width:100%; margin:0 auto; padding-bottom:20px; overflow:hidden } .demo {
/*margin:0; padding:1.5em 1.5em 0.75em; border:1px solid #ccc; position:relative*/ }
.collapse p {padding:0 10px 1em} .top{font-size:.9em; text-align:right} #switch, .switch
{margin-bottom:5px; text-align:right} /* --- Headings --- */ .expand{padding-bottom:.75em}
/* --- Links --- */ a:link, a:visited { border:1px dotted #ccc; border-width:0 0 1px;
text-decoration:none; } a:hover, a:active, a:focus { border-style:solid; /*
background-color:#f0f0f0;*/ outline:0 none } /*a:active, a:focus { color:red; *// .expand a {
display:block; padding:8px 8px } .expand a:link, .expand a:visited { border-width:1px;
background-image:url(images/img/arrow-down.gif); background-repeat:no-repeat;
background-position:98% 50%; } .expand a:hover, .expand a:active, .expand a:focus {
text-decoration:underline } .expand a.open:link, .expand a.open:visited { border-style:solid;
background:#eee url(images/img/arrow-up.gif) no-repeat 98% 50%; }
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What is the difference between the support groups led by professionals like doctors or psychologists and those started by shubhankars themselves?

There is no difference in the purpose of both kinds of support groups. In some groups they may like to draw upon the expertise of the professionals more often. For lack of initiative from family members it is possible the support groups were started by enlightened professionals. In other groups, professionals may like the members themselves to take lot more of initiatives in matters concerning them, yet make their expertise available whenever required by the members.

On every fourth Saturday of the month interaction with professionals is organized.

In the second type, more self-help and more self-reliance get nurtured. Shubhankars, used to being independent, feel motivated to network with other similar support groups and even boldly lobby for their rights and privileges. In a way, that is an advantage of a support group formed by shubhankars on their own initiative.

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Is it not necessary to have support and guidance of the professionals in running a mental health care support group?

Mental health care is certainly an important issue affecting shubhankars. And the part played by the professionals in this is also very important. But support - group activity of shubhankars though important is not a substitute but complementary to what the professionals do. So, one may say, shubhankars' group activities go parallel to medical treatment of shubharthis by the

professionals. If and when there are any topics or problems for which expert opinion or advice of professionals is needed, it must be sought during talks or personal visits.

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Are professionals like psychiatrists, psychologists, counsellors etc. invited to your group meetings.

How does inviting them serve the cause of support groups?

Professionals are not present at every support group meeting. Mostly the shubhankars themselves exchange ideas, share their experience and information. This in itself has been found very informative, motivating and therefore very valuable. However, occasionally experts are invited to address the group members. They may talk on topics like medication, marriage etc. suggested by shubhankars. Or, the professionals may share information on new developments in medication, therapies etc. These occasions also give you shubhankars a chance to get many of your doubts cleared. Possibly, shubhankars find discussions with the professionals stimulating and inspiring.

Shubhankars should ideally avoid being overly dependent on these extremely busy professionals for routine functioning of the support group. This helps to focus on one's own initiatives, self-help for greater self-reliance. You will agree, greater self-reliance in turn provides greater self-esteem and confidence. Don't you think this is what the shubhankars need so badly? Time-starved professionals too are delighted to find shubhankars and shubharthis become more and more self-reliant.

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