

Health InfoNet of Alabama

Guide to Finding Support Groups

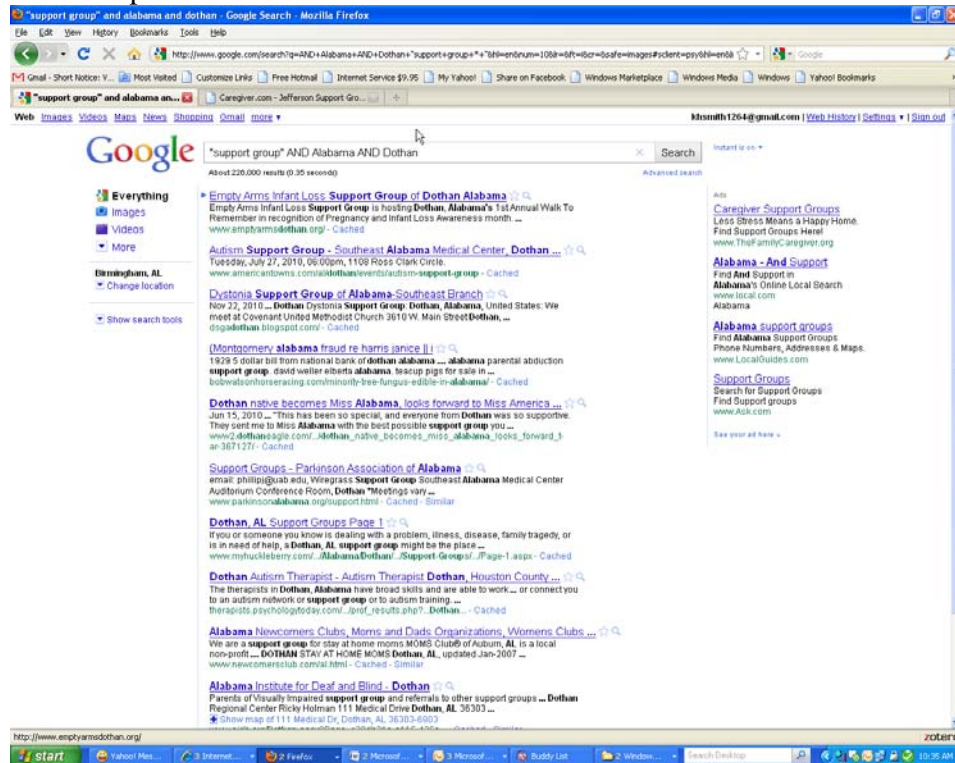
Finding information about a disease or treatment can be hard, but often the hardest thing is finding someone to talk to who understands your real concerns. This is where a support group can help. Fortunately, it is easier than ever to find the right support group for you!

Support groups have been around for a long time wherever a group of people dealing with similar issues got together to discuss their experiences. Now the Internet makes it easier for those whose locations or other circumstances might limit their participation in a "live" local support group to find help via Web message boards and email discussion list groups. The following tips are for people looking for live groups, online groups or trying to start their own support group.

◆ Local live support groups

[Alabama Live Health and Fitness News Page](http://www.al.com/health-fitness/) (<http://www.al.com/health-fitness/>) – Includes entries for local support groups and events.

Searching for local support groups on [Google](http://www.google.com) (<http://www.google.com>) – In the search box, type in “support group” AND Alabama [AND name of town, if desired]. See example below.



The screenshot shows a Google search results page in a Mozilla Firefox browser window. The search query is "support group" AND Alabama AND Dothan. The results list several support groups, including:

- Empty Arms Infant Loss Support Group of Dothan Alabama** - hosting Dothan, Alabama's 1st Annual Walk To Remember in recognition of Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness month ...
- Autism Support Group - Southeast Alabama Medical Center, Dothan** ...
- Dystonia Support Group of Alabama-Southeast Branch** ...
- Montgomery Alabama fraud re harris janice** ...
- Dothan native becomes Miss Alabama** ...
- Support Groups - Parkinson Association of Alabama** ...
- Dothan, AL Support Groups Page 1** ...
- Dothan Autism Therapist - Autism Therapist Dothan, Houston County** ...
- Alabama Newcomers Clubs, Mums and Dads Organizations, Womens Clubs** ...
- Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind - Dothan** ...

The browser's address bar shows the URL: <http://www.emptyarmsdothan.org/>. The taskbar at the bottom shows several open applications, including Internet Explorer, Firefox, and a file explorer.

◆ **Online support groups**

*Tip: Check the dates and content of some of the messages posted on a bulletin board or discussion list to see if the group is currently active and a good "fit" for you. This is known as "lurking" before you become an active participant in the group - and it's perfectly acceptable!

American Self-Help Clearinghouse Self-Help Sourcebook Online
(<http://www.mentalhelp.net/selfhelp/>) - The Self-Help Sourcebook Online contains a searchable database of over 800 national and international support groups. For more information, point your browser to the URL above or call the American Self-Help Clearinghouse at 973-625-3037 (TTY 625-9053 for hearing impaired).

WebMD (<http://www.webmd.com>) - A variety of message boards and "communities" on various health issues are hosted on the WebMD site. Registration is required, but it is free.

◆ **Starting your own support group - some things to remember:**

Try to find out if there is already a similar group in your area - check the resources listed above.

Don't try to do it all yourself. Enlist other interested persons in helping to set up the group right from the start.

Think about the overall purpose of the group (emotional support, education, advocacy or a combination?) and who you would like to include as members (those facing the health problem or their families and caregivers? any interested party?)

What will be the format of the meetings? Where will you meet? Who will be the main contacts for the group? How will you publicize the meetings?

Expect ups and downs in attendance and interest.

[Note: these tips were adapted from the American Self-Help Clearinghouse Self-Help Sourcebook Online, "Starting a New Self-Help Group." For more information see <http://www.mentalhelp.net/selfhelp>]

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