

In nature, a mesa is an isolated elevation similar to a plateau. The metaphor aptly symbolizes the need for all involved with mental illness to reach a higher level of understanding, acceptance, and adaptability.

The image also represents the isolation families of persons with mental illness often experience, and the feelings of being alone in the fight against mental illness and its associated stigma.

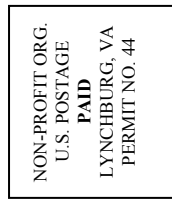
**This free program is
offered by
Mental Health America
of Central Virginia
as a public service.**

Our Mission Statement

Our mission is to promote mental health and eliminate the stigma associated with mental illness through advocacy, education, research and service for the residents of Central Virginia.

For more information about this and other MHACV services, please contact:

**Program Director
Mental Health America of
Central Virginia
(434) 847-9055**



**Mental Health America of Central Va.
1010 Miller Park Sq.
Lynchburg, VA. 24501**

A United Way Member Agency

MESA

Family Support Groups
for family members of persons with
mental illness

M**utual** – Families and professionals working together

E**ducation** – Learning about mental illness

S**upport** – Sharing experiences, strengths, and hopes

A**dvocacy** – Understanding the issues which impact the quality of life of persons with mental illness

Sponsored by



1010 Miller Park Square
Lynchburg, Virginia 24501

Phone (434) 847-9055
FAX (434) 847-3600
www.mhacv.org

About MESA

MESA Family Support Groups is a series of classes designed to provide education on mental illnesses and to reduce the stress that parents, siblings, spouses, other relatives, and friends experience as they support their family member who has a mental illness.

The informal and interactive learning environment fosters an alliance of support and advocacy among workshop participants. The sessions include short lectures, group discussions, and learning exercises.

Classes are co-facilitated by family members and mental health professionals who serve as group leaders. Participants gain a better understanding of mental illness, learn effective coping strategies, and discover community resources for themselves and their loved one. Professionals can learn from family members' experiences as much as they teach. The emphasis on "**Mutual**" acknowledges that families and professionals working together "**Educate**" and "**Support**" each other, which fosters a growing respect and appreciation for the contributions, strengths, and perspectives of the other. The alliance that develops among families and professionals creates a stronger voice for "**Advocacy**" for the needs of persons with mental illnesses.

Program Goals

- *Increase family members' understanding of mental illness.*
- *Improve families' ability to cope with the stress of mental illness.*
- *Keep the trauma of mental illness from controlling the family.*
- *Increase awareness and use of community resources.*
- *Establish a network of support among families and friends of persons with mental illness.*
- *Develop an alliance among families, professionals, and service recipients.*
- *Increase advocacy efforts for the needs of those with mental illness.*

Weekly Topics

What is Mental Illness?

Impact of Mental Illness On the Family

Schizophrenia

Mood Disorders

Sense of Self Before and After Mental Illness

Special Concerns: Substance Abuse and Suicide

Effective Communication

Problem Solving

The Diagnostic Process

Putting MESA Key Concepts to Work

Overcoming Stress and Preventing Relapse

Medications and Research Updates