

# About Balint Groups

## What is a Balint Group?

A Balint Group is an experiential, small group educational activity in which clinicians discuss cases from their practices with a focus on the professional relationship. Instead of focussing on clinical updates or specific psychotherapeutic or biological treatments, Balint Groups use case presentations to explore and understand the felt experience of the patient, the clinician, and what might be going on between them. Importantly, Balint Groups are not therapy groups, although they are often therapeutic in a wider sense; the growth in participants' personalities occurs through a focus on their professional interactions and not through explicit disclosure about personal lives.

The Balint Group method is named after Dr Michael Balint, a psychoanalyst who pioneered peer-group discussion for doctors to help understand and manage the psychological aspects and the emotional content of clinician – patient relationships.

## What to expect?

The task of a Balint Group is to pay attention to the clinician-patient relationship and the group process. To fully experience the group, we encourage attendees to bring a case where they have recently experienced a strong emotional response. After the group convenes, the group leaders would call for a case. The case presentation is spontaneous and done without referring to clinical notes and usually takes 2-3 minutes. Following this, the presenter listens in whilst the group 'works the case'.

## A Balint Group is:

A focus on the doctor/patient relationship

A focus on the less conscious, less obvious aspects of the relationship

## A Balint Group is not:

A psychotherapy group; a traditional case consultation group; a topic discussion group; a teaching or advice-giving group

**Ground rules:** confidentiality, respect, no criticism, or advice

**Presentations:** spontaneous, no notes needed

**Cases:** heart sink patients, patients on our minds, cases we feel conflicted or ambivalent about

**The Group:** reflects, speculates, wonders, helps presenter to consider other understandings of the case

**The Leaders:** create and maintain a safe space, protect the presenter, encourage reflection, empathy, and compassion

**Results:** Doctors feel less isolation and helps to avoid burnout, develop new ways of thinking about cases, refine doctor/patient relationship skills, connect, and learn from others

**More information:** [balintanz.org](http://balintanz.org)

Join the VACCHO Balint Group!

We meet monthly on Monday

nights, 6.30pm – 7.30pm

Contact [gwynl@vaccho.org.au](mailto:gwynl@vaccho.org.au) to register.



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