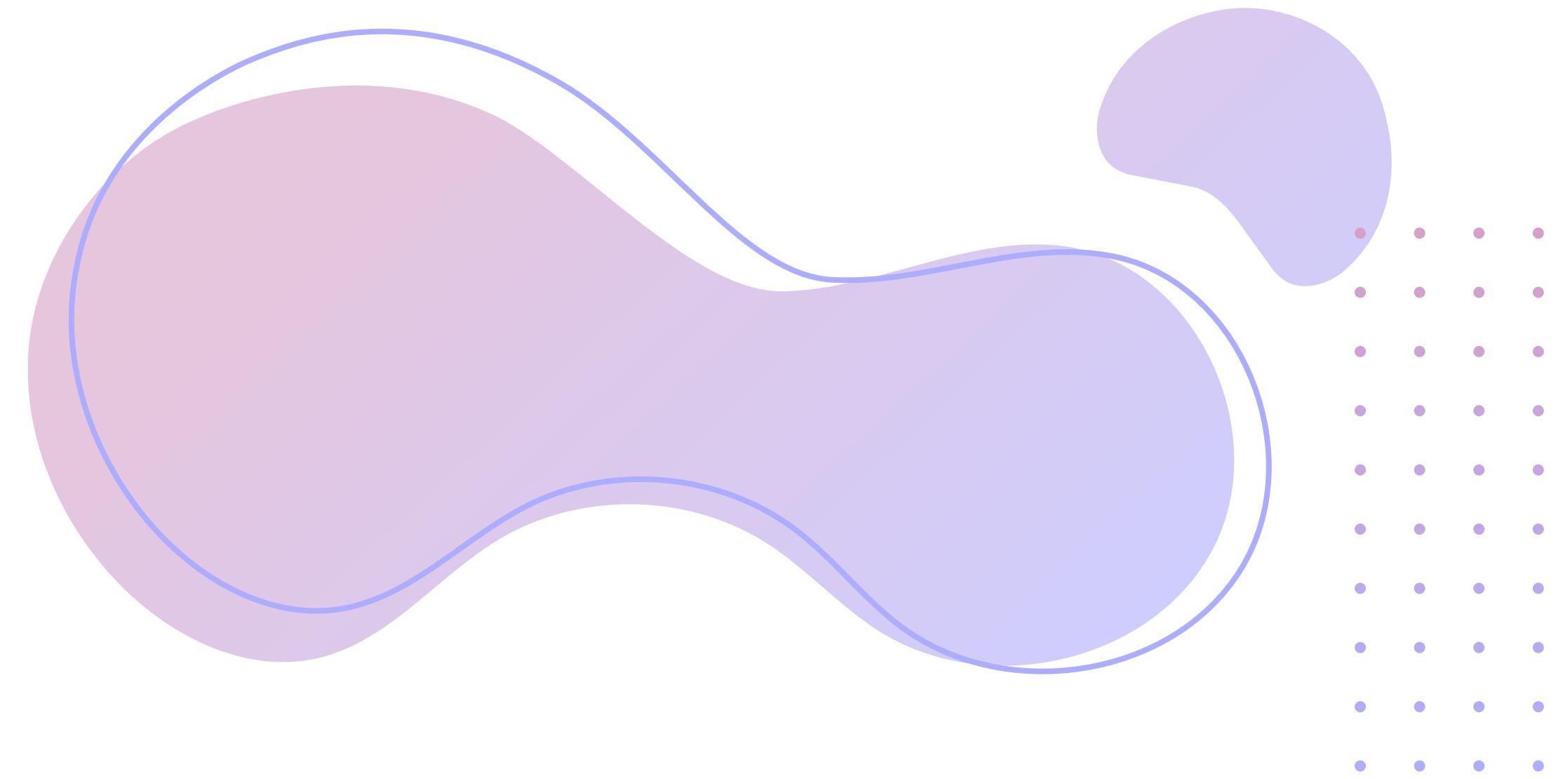

A CLL EMPOWERMENT GUIDE

Peer support groups





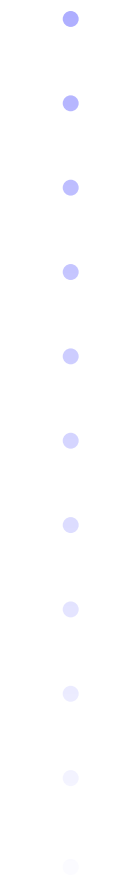
Peer support groups are formed by people who share similar experiences, such as CLL diagnosis. They are a safe space for all attendants. People who participate in peer support groups meet regularly to discuss certain topics, or perform joint activities such as painting, reading poetry or sculpting.

Support groups can take place in person or online. During group meetings, participants are free to share their emotions, thoughts and experiences with others. Taking part in such meetings can be really helpful to you.

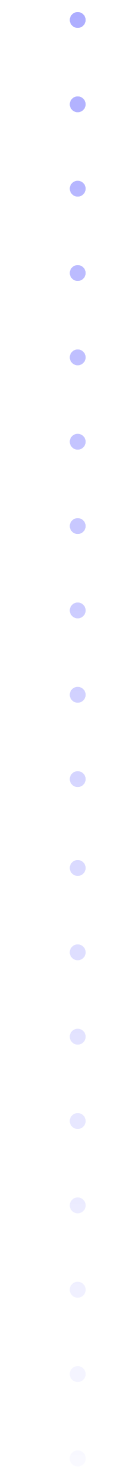


Below you can see some of the benefits of peer support groups.

- 1 Talking to others who stand in your shoes makes it a lot easier to express your emotions and to feel heard and understood. The other participants have probably been through similar situations and can really get how you feel.
- 2 People who have participated in such groups say about them that **"you hear your thoughts coming out of the mouth of someone else"**. This can be very comforting. As you hear the experiences of others, you may find out that emotions and thoughts you might have are not that uncommon. Rather, you may see them in a new light and realize they are a normal part of the CLL journey.
- 3 You can also see that it's not all bad. People with CLL sometimes **grow emotionally** as a result of their diagnosis. Such meetings are a great place to discuss such growth.



- 4 Going to peer group meetings and interacting with peers may help you feel part of a wider community, and thus **develop a sense of belonging**. In addition, connecting with others can make you feel that you are not alone.
- 5 You can meet people living with CLL at different stages of the CLL journey. Seeing others who have been diagnosed with CLL a while back and listening to their stories can **reduce your fears and give you hope**.
- 6 In addition, **getting more information** about issues that worry you, may make you feel more certain and more in control of your future. You may, also, feel more empowered to communicate better with your physician and ask more about what worries you.



7

Discussing not only the challenges of living with CLL, but also the different ways in which every person copes can be inspiring. You may become more open and get motivated to **try new ways of addressing difficulties** and to find your own balance.

8

Further to receiving support in such groups, you can also offer it to others. **Showing empathy and kindness to others** may offer you joy, a sense of purpose and fulfillment. Your journey is important too and there are people who will find your experience valuable. On top of that, building a mutual relationship and bonding with others can lead to true and long-lasting friendships.



Overall, peer support groups can be really helpful to people living with CLL. Yet, if joining a group does not feel comfortable, you can also get peer support on one to one basis. There are people who have been living with CLL for years and are willing to provide support and guidance.

To get the peer support that is best for you, you can ask your physician, contact a local patient society, or search for patient organizations online.



This leaflet was created within the context of the "Patient Empowerment" Program, which is designed and implemented by the Institute of Applied Biosciences at the Center for Research and Technology Hellas (INAB|CERTH) and approved by the Hellenic Society of Haematology (HSH) and the European Research Initiative on CLL (ERIC)

