

To Whom It May Concern,

I have been a co-facilitator of CDSMPs for over five years now, including the Chronic Disease, Chronic Pain and most recently the Caregivers workshops in our rural area of Northern California. The Chronic Pain and Caregivers workshops have been the most rewarding for me as I have witnessed participants change significantly in the course of the six weeks from isolated, depressed individuals on the cusp of giving up to self-directed, empowered, hopeful and successful people dealing with very difficult situations around health care for themselves or loved ones. These people have also found support and help from the others in their workshops, and have found they are not alone in their difficult/stressful lives. Most of these people are also stressed financially due to health care costs, hospitalizations, and need for or lack of support services. Many, especially the disabled or the elderly are unable to work full time if at all, so the free workshops are another boon to their ability to cope and learn new skills. Most recently one of the three caregivers workshops I co-facilitated started their own support group at the conclusion of the six workshop sessions. I have gone to three or four of their monthly meetings and observed the support they are giving each other - strangers before the workshops. I started facilitating these workshops as a volunteer, and would go back to the volunteer position just to assure the continuation of this program.

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