What Can Peer Support Do For You?

How does it benefit YOU?
Introductions

• What are you hoping to get out of this course?

• To what extent do you currently work with peer support specialists?
What Is Peer Support?

- A system of giving and receiving support based on shared lived experience

- Founded on respect, shared responsibility, and mutual agreement

- Shifts the balance of power in the healing relationship in subtle but significant ways.
What Is Peer Support?

Not based on psychiatric or diagnostic criteria.

Based on understanding and being “like”.

People challenge each other to try out new behaviors. This is mutual empowerment.

Empowerment is contagious—it spills over into all areas of life!

Stiver & Miller, 1998
What Is Peer Support?

- Lived experience of recovering
- Requires training & certification – and practice
- “Peers are experts at not being experts, and that takes a lot of expertise.”
- Career ladder now possible
- Natural peer support the most mutual
What Peer Support Did For Me

Taught me I could recover!

Saved my life

Supported me on hard days

Helped me turn worst trial into hope for self and others.

I was not alone in all the in-between’s.*

Celebrated with me on great days
Old Things New Again

- 1730’s. Native American abstinence groups
- 1840’s. Recovery Circles of the Prophet movements
- 1870’s-1890’s Keeley Leagues and Goodwin Association Support Groups
- 1999 Peer Support reimbursed by Medicaid in GA
- 2014 Apache Peer Specialists trained as Community Health Workers working on reservation
Old things new again

Sick individual: Support from a group of recovered individuals

Sick tree in sick forest: Healing Forest needed to house healing tree

“The community is the treatment center”

Peer support specialists are free to bring individual, family, community, culture, geography, social, spiritual and biological determinants of health into the picture.
New? Old things new again

WELLNESS

EMOTIONAL
Coping effectively with life and creating satisfying relationships

ENVIRONMENTAL
Good health by occupying pleasant, stimulating environments that support well-being

INTELLECTUAL
Recognizing creative abilities and finding ways to expand knowledge and skills

PHYSICAL
Recognizing the need for physical activity, diet, sleep and nutrition

FINANCIAL
Satisfaction with current and future financial situations

SOCIAL
Developing a sense of connection, belonging, and a well-developed support system

SPIRITUAL
Expanding our sense of purpose and meaning in life

OCCUPATIONAL
Personal satisfaction and enrichment derived from one’s work

New? Old things new again
New? Old things new again!

Recovery → Whole Health → Dimensions of Wellness

Sobriety → Wellbriety

- **Emotional**: Coping effectively with life and creating satisfying relationships
- **Environmental**: Good health by occupying pleasant, stimulating environments that support well-being
- **Intellectual**: Recognizing creative abilities and finding ways to expand knowledge and skills
- **Physical**: Recognizing the need for physical activity, diet, sleep, and nutrition
- **Occupational**: Personal satisfaction and enrichment derived from one’s work
- **Financial**: Satisfactory with current and future financial situations
- **Social**: Developing a sense of connection, belonging, and a well-developed support system
- **Spiritual**: Expanding our sense of purpose and meaning in life

“Let’s say that you’re drinking but you’re also a jerk. If you simply stop drinking, you will now be a sober jerk. Wellbriety is more than not drinking. When we talked to the Elders about what this meant, they said that each of us is surrounded by water like a cocoon that is before me, below me, above me and around me. This cocoon represented the directions in which the human being develops itself emotionally, mentally, physically, and spirituality. Wellbriety is sobriety enhanced by all of these other dimensions of growth, and it embraces the individual, the family and the community.”

Coyhis, 2007
The Past, and for some, the Present

Deficit Based:
Identify problem
Research solutions
Apply solution
A Bright Future

Strengths Based:
Identify strengths
Build on strengths
Support individual
Create future
Old paradigm: What’s wrong?

What’s \textbf{STRONG}?
“Congress declares, in fulfillment of its special trust responsibilities and legal obligations to Indians...to ensure the highest possible health status for Indians...and to provide all resources necessary to effect that policy. 25 U.S.C.A.§1602
Introduction to Strengths Based Thinking

• What’s strong?

• How can I support you in building on your strengths?

Peer Support
Mindy’s Story

“…doesn’t have long to live, she’s diagnosed with HIV and Hepatitis C.”
Ben’s Story

“I’m going to stop ALL my medications RIGHT NOW!”

What are Ben’s strengths?
Annie’s Story

How do I stay sober?

What are Annie’s strengths?
Reviewing Strengths Based Thinking

• What did you observe in the stories?
• Do you have questions?
You are...

A direct behavioral health service provider
A behavioral health services administrator
A recipient of behavioral health services
The family member or supporter of a recipient of behavioral health services
A medical provider or administrator
Perhaps You are...

Comfortable in deficit based problem solving

Accustomed to deficit based human resources and quality policies

Unaware of the impact of social determinants on wellness

Emotionally exhausted and drained from a lifetime of caring

No longer personally involved with the people you serve
Holistic approach to Recovery – person, community

“I got better, I’ll be with you as you get better”

Instead of seeing what’s wrong, we see what’s strong.
There’s more to it...Peer Support Specialists

- Constantly work on their own recovery, they model what they say.
- Have awesome listening skills: the ability to listen without judgment.
- Know the stages of recovery and how to meet a person where they are, not where they wish they were.
- Learn behavioral and medical language so they can collaborate with their co-workers.
There’s more to it...Peer Support Specialists

Learn to navigate systems so they can help people get what they need.

Educate themselves in areas the people they serve are interested in: housing, employment, physical wellness, law enforcement and more.
There’s more to it... Peer Support Specialists

Hope of one outcome - highest possible health status.

Only a health activated person can obtain and maintain highest possible health status.
What Peer Support Can Do For You

Direct behavioral health service provider

Peer Support does not replace your service. People do better when they have both!

Corrigan, 2006
What Peer Support Can Do For You

Direct behavioral health service provider

- Case manager: assist
- BHT: make your job easier
- Counselor/Nurse/Psychiatrist:

Activated people practice healthier lifestyles.
What Peer Support Can Do For You

Behavioral Health Services Administrator

- Fewer hospitalizations
- Shorter lengths of stay
- Fewer high utilizers
- Fewer Emergency Room visits
- Engage with community health providers.

Research, year
What Peer Support Can Do For You

Recipient of behavioral health services

Peer Support is not just a service, it’s a person.

A person who can offer authentic empathy and validation to help you through difficult situations.

Mead & MacNeil, 2006
What Peer Support Can Do For You

Recipient of behavioral health services

- Companionship
- Support
- Coping Skills
What Peer Support Can Do For You

Family member/supporter of recipient of behavioral health services

- Relief knowing your loved one is supported
- Respite
- Mitigate family conflicts
- Help reunite families as individuals improve
- Model recovery, information & referrals
What Peer Support Can Do For You

Medical provider or administrator

- Fewer hospitalizations
- Shorter lengths of stay
- Fewer Emergency Room visits
- Lifestyle change skills
- More visits to PCP and community mental health
- Likelier to be health literate and health activated
Peer Support is Evidence-Based


- SAMHSA Kit – The Evidence Consumer Operated Services, 2011
Questions & Comments

Thank you!

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