

THE POWER OF PEER SUPPORT

Peer support is a giant leap forward in mental health and substance use health care. It can spark real change in a person's life, offering different kinds of help than other mental health care professionals can provide.

What is peer support?

Peer support happens when someone with their own experience of a mental health or substance use health issue joins forces with you in your recovery. A peer supporter is trained to support you by listening, sharing strategies and helping you to problem-solve. See: *What is Peer Support Exactly?*



“It’s having someone to sit with so you can talk, or vent or cry. Or just be. They’ve been there, so they know what to say, and they really hear you. It changes everything.”

Peer support has the power to transform both people's lives and the mental health care system.

We know from extensive research that peer support works. More and more studies show that people's distress decreases when they get peer support, and so does their need for more expensive treatments.

Here's how:

→ Peer support helps people feel better.

It is a non-judgmental space, so people can open up and feel they're understood. It recognizes and celebrates a person's strengths, so it boosts confidence and self-esteem.





It counters loneliness and isolation.

At the core of peer support is a relationship based on shared experience and acceptance, so it helps build a sense of belonging. It helps people build social connections, and communication and social skills.



It helps people get better.

With the support of a peer, people can bounce back faster. They learn strategies to cope with challenges and how to problem-solve. They are more comfortable seeking – and sticking with – other mental health care.



It can relieve the strain on our healthcare system.

Peer support can reduce the need for care and treatments that take more time and are more expensive. For instance, receiving peer support can reduce the days a person stays in hospital and the need for readmission later.



It can help fill the need for mental health care.

Mental health and substance use health care can be hard to find. It is often costly, and waitlists are long. If it is funded right, peer support can be there for people when they need it and be there sooner than other kinds of care.

Peer supporters have the time to sit and listen, and to problem-solve with you. Their experience and training equip them to provide effective emotional and social support.

And while it is being offered more and more, formal peer support deserves a higher profile and more funding. In addition, fair pay and recognition are essential for those doing this important work.

For more information, see *What is Peer Support Exactly?* and *Peer Support in Action*.



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