

# Intentional Peer Support and Warmline

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*A Curriculum of Shery Mead*



Is all Peer Support in our Mental Health System the same?

“NO”



There are many different ways to practice peer support and each offers a different outcome.

# Let's take a look at 3 different kinds of Peer Support in our Mental Health System

- **Natural Peer Support**
  - The peer support that 'naturally' occurs when people with similar life experiences get together
    - Clubhouses
    - Drop-in Centers
    - Peer/Consumer Conferences

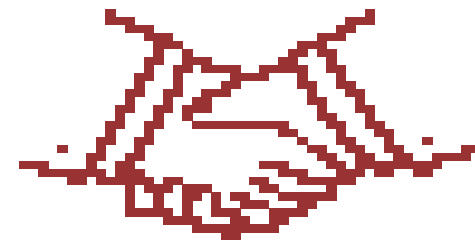


# Let's take a look at 3 different kinds of Peer Support in our Mental Health System

- **Certified Peer Support Services**

- A paid peer support service where two people with similar life experiences purposefully get together to focus on one person's journey toward recovery and community integration.

- Medicaid billable peer support services
- Civil Service Classification



# Let's take a look at 3 different kinds of Peer Support in our Mental Health System

- **Intentional Peer Support (our focus for the day)**
  - Intentional Peer Support occurs when peers come together for the intended purpose of taking the primary focus off the 'I' and 'my' stories and focus on 'we' and 'us'.
  - There are no BIG 'I' and little 'u' in Intentional Peer Support (IPS)...there is no 'Helper' and 'person being helped'
    - 100% Peer-run organizations
    - Crisis alternative services\*\*
    - Can occur in natural peer support relationships and environments

## Why Warmline?

- **Warmline gives people a safe confidential place to call when they are feeling they just want to be heard.**
- **Warmline operators provide a listening ear without judgments or criticism.**
- **All Warmline Operators are people who have lived experience who are there to listen, learn and grow with you.**

## Why Warmline?

- Relationships are built with both people learning and growing together
- Help goes both ways
- Living well (Recovery) ideas are shared and explored together
- Validation of one's experiences and views of the world

## Benefits of Warmline:

- Reduces isolation by building connections/relationships with others in and out of current community
- Reduces need for more costly services ie: emergency rooms, Crisis lines, 911, Case Managers, Dr. offices etc.
- Calling the line offers mutual support from a peer
- Working the line offers mutual support with a peer and a way to give back to the community
- Provides and ongoing opportunity to form multiple relationships with others around the state

# **Intentional Peer Support is the Values-Based Practice within an outcome-based service**

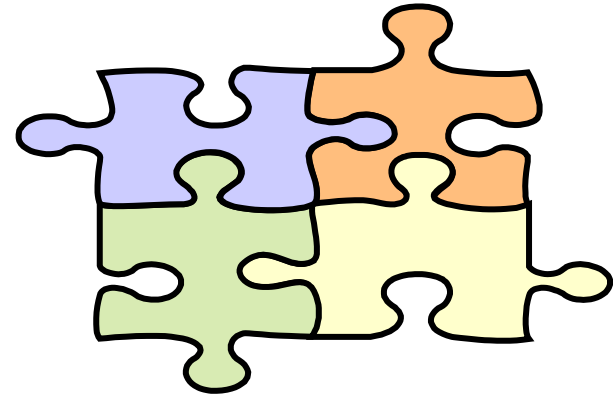


# Intentional Peer Support (IPS)

- Intentional Peer Support utilizes four basic principles or tasks
  - Connection
  - Worldview
  - Mutuality
  - Moving Towards

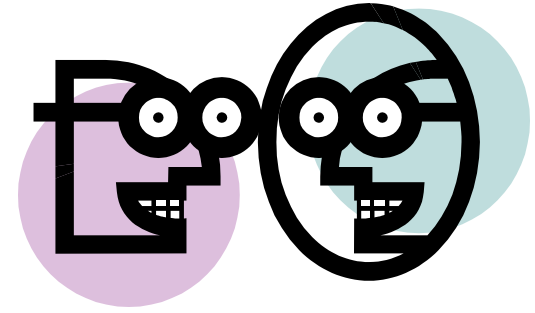


# Connection



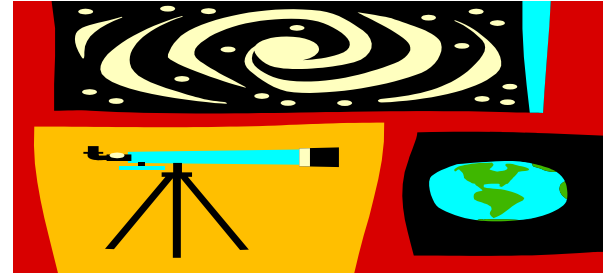
- **Connection is defined by the presence and openness of the relationship. It is a bonding experience and when working produces and shares energy**
- **Connection is purposefully focusing on shared communication for a deeper understanding in the relationship**

# Worldview



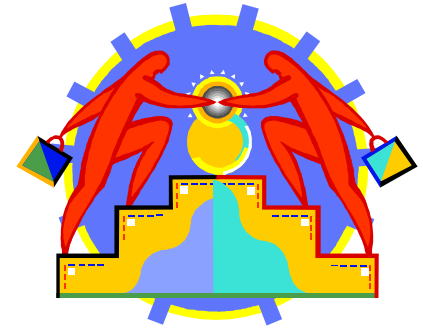
- Worldview is becoming aware of how we learned to think about and understand our experiences in the world around us...while being curious and interested in the worldview of others.
- When a trusting and open relationship develops (which takes time...don't rush it!), we gently begin to challenge the ways each of us have learned to make meaning of our experiences
- IPS allows both people to stretch their mindsets and grow in new ways of thinking.

# Worldview



**We are NOT a culture that has a lot of patience and acceptance for 'BIG' feelings. We tend to want to calm people down or 'make it stop' because WE are uncomfortable. In intentional peer support 'BIG' feelings are welcome because they provide rich, valuable information!**

# Mutuality



- It is in a relationship that is based on mutual respect and trust that we allow ourselves to 'try on' new ideas and take risks to learn and grow
- There are no BIG I and little u in Intentional peer support. One person is not more important than the other...because the relationship is based on 'we' or 'us'.

# Mutuality

- In this mutual relationship we consider each person to have needs and expertise, thus we learn from each other and create a story of 'us'. It is not a power over or working to support one person in the relationship...it is 'we' creating a new story that has the potential to change both persons lives.



**In Intentional Peer Support, we ask:**

**What are we here to create or do**

**NOT**

**What are we here to avoid or stop**

**Moving Toward...**



As people practice new ways of being together, even through the most difficult times, possibilities for breaking old patterns and creating new opportunities are endless.

In 'crisis' situations, Intentional Peer Support practices relationships by changing the language of fear to conversations of hope

*Shery Mead*





The concept of 'crisis' in our mental health system is puzzling. In spite of the fact that many traditional theorists have viewed crisis as an opportunity for growth and as an essential experience in one's development (Erikson, 1976), we in the mental health system STILL respond to crisis with fear!



# What happens when we respond out of 'FEAR'

- When we are afraid we become uncomfortable; therefore we try to control the situation so we feel 'safe'.
  - This response leads to seeing ourselves as 'helpers'- I'm here to assess and 'control' your safety. *Who feels safe when professionals 'take control'?*
    - Thus the action taken is based on a fear-based assessment and a fear-based response.
      - This often leads to the overuse of forced treatment and people being hospitalized against their will.

## Fear-Based Response vs. Hope-Based Response

- When we're afraid we want to contain or control the situation. We want things to feel comfortable.
- Large Group Reflection
  - When we respond out of fear we take power.
    - In what ways has power been taken away from you?
    - What was the result to the relationship?

# Fear-Based Response vs. Hope-Based Response

- Fear is sometimes generated by outside forces and stories (such as by our community).
  - News media
  - “Appropriate Behavior”
  - Prevalent Cultural norms



# Hope-Based Responses

- Hope-Based Responses see every situation as an opportunity to learn and grow
  - Hope-Based dialogues are created through two people's willingness to seek out different ways of talking about experiences
  - Hope-based responses look for relationship and connection
    - With this mutual connection and trust; both people seek out new possibilities
    - Both people challenge beliefs and assumptions
    - And both people take on the risk of 'trying on' new ways of thinking and behaving.

## Hope-Based Response



- A hope-based response is a non-judgmental and avoids assumption about what people's experience mean.
- A hope-based response is contingent on both people's needs

## Your Turn



Name a 'crisis' situation where you tend to respond with fear.

How can we create a hope-based conversation given the same situation?



For More Information:

Check out Shery's website:

[www.mentalhealthpeers.com](http://www.mentalhealthpeers.com)

*Photographed: Shery Mead*

