

# Peer Support

A PUBLICATION OF THE TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE COMMITTEE AT LANCASTER BEHAVIORAL HEALTH HOSPITAL

## Why's It So Important?

Eric Berne based his theory, Transactional Analysis, on the principle that sustained support, or strokes as he called them, between people is as necessary for life as water, food, shelter, rest, and air. That's a fact.

Similarly, the South African philosophy, *Ubuntu*, stresses the paradox that however you or I define ourselves as individuals, it's only ever in the context of others. The word *ubuntu* is often translated as, "I am because we are."

Actionizing these principles and paradoxes might seem impractical in a healthcare setting, but **Peer Support offers a blueprint for healing-centered organizations.** They embody a spirit of personal medicine; a healing environment for everyone there.

The work can appear as simple as checking in with a friend, but as a practice, there's a bit more to it than that. Shery Mead, founder of multiple Peer Support programs, describes three key principles of Peer Support:

### ABOUT THIS PROGRAM

1. Safety
2. Trustworthiness and Transparency
3. Peer Support
4. Collaboration and Mutuality
5. Empowerment, Voice and Choice
6. Cultural, Historical and Gender Issues

These are the *Six Principles of Trauma-Informed Care*, identified by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). As a part of LBHH's commitment to trauma-informed care, our hospital pays special attention to one principle each month.

# Peer Support

1. Respect
2. Shared responsibility
3. Mutual agreement on what is helpful

Since a well-recognized study in 2002 (Salzer), there has been ample evidence\* to reinforce a common sense point: people generally don't want to participate in plans made about their lives that didn't have their input. This doesn't only apply to healthcare. It's true in any workplace.

Without the principles of Peer Support undergirding each encounter and every plan, people are bound to overstep their roles. The evidence is clear: this results in unhappy people and failed plans.

\*Tracy, Wallace, 2016; Bellamy et al, 2017; Young, 2006; Solomon, 2004

## Peer Support Looks Like...

- Asking for someone's input when making plans that impact them
- Taking responsibility before placing blame
- Celebrating small accomplishments in someone's life
- Listening *and* holding space for the possibility that your mind may be changed

## Word of the Month

**self de·ter·mi·na·tion** *noun*  
the process through which a person or a group is in control of their own life

For  
More  
Info

# collaboration