Trauma-Informed Peer Support webinar series
Session 2: Peer Support Basics / Trauma-informed Practices
September 16, 2014

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The TIPS webinar series

Session 2: September 16, 2014
• Peer Support Basics / Trauma-informed Practices

Session 3: September 23, 2014
• Applying Trauma-Informed Practices to Peer Support

Archived:

Session 1: September 9, 2014 : Intro to Peer Support/ Trauma & its Impact / Cultural Considerations
PEER SUPPORT BASICS
What is Peer Support?

• Some organizations define it as a “helping relationship” like the top-down roles of professionals

• We define it as a flexible approach to building healing relationships among equals, based on a core set of values & principles.
Peer Support is NOT

- A “program model”
- Focused on diagnoses or deficits
- About “helping” in a top-down way
- Being a “counselor”
- Pressuring people to comply with treatment
- Monitoring people’s behavior
Peer support staff are NOT:

– Junior case managers
– Medication enforcers
– The “conscience” of an agency
So what IS Peer Support?

- A natural human response to shared difficulty
- People with shared experiences come together to learn and grow
What is Peer Support?

A system of giving & receiving help in relationship with others with shared experience, based on values of:

- Respect
- Shared responsibility
- Mutual agreement of what is helpful

- Shery Mead, founder, Intentional Peer Support
Practices based on the proven idea that people who share common experiences:

• Are best able to understand and empathize with each other

• Can offer each other the benefit of what they’ve learned
Peer Support is a unique discipline with its own values and principles.
Principles of Peer Support

Peer support is voluntary

– Cannot be mandated: people enter peer support relationships because they’re interested in connection

– Peer support is for people who want it rather than people who “need” it.
Principles of Peer Support

Peer Support is Non-judgmental

- A non-assessing, non-professional relationship
- Awareness of own biases and privilege
- Honest, direct, but respectful communication; open to other views
Respecting one another

- Value differences & unique abilities
- Keep people’s confidences
- Respect people’s right to make their own decisions, even “wrong” ones
Principles of Peer Support

Reciprocity

– The importance of give and take
– Re-claiming “help” as a natural process between two or more people
– No one is more “recovered” than another
Principles of Peer Support

Mutual responsibility

– Each person takes responsibility for their actions
– Negotiation of “responsibility”
– Shared power
– It’s not your job to fix anyone!
Principles of Peer Support

Integrity

- Believing in one another
- Holding hope for each other
- Building relationships that focus on one another’s well-being
- Confidentiality
SAMHSA’s Key Principles of Trauma-Informed Approaches

1. Safety
2. Trustworthiness and Transparency
3. Peer Support
4. Collaboration and Mutuality
5. Empowerment, Voice and Choice
6. Cultural, historical and gender issues
Non Trauma-informed Approaches

• Recreate the fear and helplessness of the original trauma

• Cause distrust, sadness, anger, frustration and confusion

• Survivor reactions are seen as “symptoms” which increases the rationale for “management” and potential for coercion
Based on the universal expectation that trauma has occurred

Focused on understanding “What happened to you?” not “What’s wrong with you?”

Seek to understand the meaning people make of their experiences.
All staff and people who use services are educated about trauma

Incorporate knowledge about trauma in all aspects of service delivery

Minimize revictimization – “do no more harm”

Take particular care to create a welcoming environment
Trauma survivors often have sensitive “radar” for detecting dishonesty and good reasons to be sensitive to misuse of power and authority.
Trauma-Informed Approaches

- Strive to be culturally responsive
- Focus on resilience, self-healing, mutual support, and empowerment
- Ensure voice, safety, autonomy, choice, trustworthiness, and the elimination of coercion
- Trauma treatment is different: specific techniques to treat manifestations of trauma (works best in a trauma-informed setting)
Those working with survivors “have a tendency to deal with their frustration by retaliating in ways that often uncannily repeat the earlier trauma.”

- Basel van der Kolk, 2003
What Does Help Look Like?

Not Trauma-Informed

- Needs are defined by staff
- Safety is defined as risk management
- The helper decides what help looks like
- Relationships based on problem-solving and accessing resources
- Help is top-down and authoritarian

Trauma-Informed

- Needs are identified by survivor
- Safety defined by each survivor
- Survivors choose the help they want
- Relationships are based on autonomy and connection
- Help is collaborative and responsive
Next webinar in the TIPS series

Session 3: September 23, 2014
Applying Trauma-Informed Practices to Peer Support