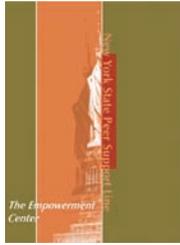




*The Empowerment
Center*

New York State Peer Support Line





Peer Support Line **Training**

Introduction

What the Peer Support Line Is

What is Support?

Support Line Don'ts

Peer Support: Applying Your Expertise

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Role Playing

Top Ten Most Difficult Calls



Introduction

- The best introduction to the Peer Support Line is to provide a working understanding of what the Peer Support Line is not and cannot be as well as what it is and what its purpose serves within the community:
- What the Peer Support Line **is not** and **cannot be** is a crisis line. Although the Westchester County Crisis Team has endorsed the Peer Support Line, we neither have the resources nor the desire to be a crisis line. The services we provide are based on the principles of sharing a common bond and how peers can help one another through this common bond of mutual understanding, respect and dignity.
- There are a number of crisis lines that are in operation throughout New York State and the nation, including, but not limited to, suicide lines, rape lines, domestic violence lines, etc. The Peer Support Line is not intended to compete with, or detract from, the good work as established by these existing crisis lines; rather, if a caller could benefit from these crisis line numbers, our Peer Support Line staff will have them available as a community resource.



What the Peer Support Line Is

- **The Peer Support Line is a resource that provides:**
- **People who are in a hospital with a toll-free number to ask for advocacy services.**
- **Empathy and support to people by people who have been through the system.**
- **A free and private telephone contact.**
- **Help to a peer through a difficult time.**
- **Encouragement to callers to help him/her find resolution to a problem without infringing on the caller's entitled right to choose their own destiny.**
- **Reinforcement and support that no one has to go through anything alone.**
- **Information and resources to callers,**
- **A deep level of respect in the trust that someone places in you when sharing the personal details of their lives.**



What is Support?

- Listening
- Compassion
- Hope
- Understanding
- Ears
- Receptive
- Not Alone
- Validating
- Identifying
- Options
- Antidote
To
Loneliness
- Empowerment
- Sense Of Humor

How would you define support?



Support Line Baker's Dozen Don'ts

These are some of the “don'ts” that we have used on the Peer Support Line since its inception; also, there are some “don'ts” that we have learned from experience. These “dozen don'ts” are basic, generally accepted workplace policies that are in place to protect both yourself and the caller.

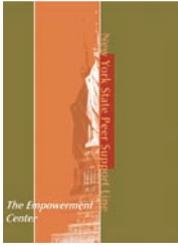
- Do not be judgmental of a caller.
- Do not provide a caller with personally identifying information, such as your last name, home address or home telephone number.
- Do not put the caller in an awkward position to give YOU support.
- Do not agree to call anyone back later.
- Do not tell a caller that they may call the line back and ask for you.
- Do not under any circumstances; agree to meet a caller anywhere.
- Do not share the content of any call in such a way that it might identify the caller.
- Do not gossip about the calls you receive.
- Do not get into a car with a caller; do not offer to take the caller in your car.
- Do not stay on the telephone with a caller for more than 15 minutes.
- Do not allow yourself to be abused on the telephone by any caller.
- Do not proscribe or prescribe to callers on the Peer Support Line.



Peer Support: Applying Your Expertise

- We are all experts when it comes to our own testimony; testimony being the experiences and things we each have been through and experienced. No one else has our acquired knowledge or has experienced our feelings.
- It is with our experiences and knowledge that we are each able to provide support to each other. Any one of us can remember at least one time when we really wanted someone to understand some part of what we were going through – the reality is that there were many people who could not identify with or understand our circumstances.
- It is the voyage and journey that we each need to take that helps us to help others and ourselves.
- Peer support gives us a gift that we can pass on to others. Without peer support, we would not know that someone else can tell us, “I know how you feel and I understand. You are not alone”.

When have you used your past to connect with another person?



What It Takes To Be On The Peer Support Line

- Sharing

- Empathy

- Compassion

- Understanding

- Detaching

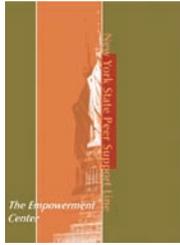
- Paperwork

*What obstacles are there
to a Support Line?*



Tips For Working On **The Support Line**

- Let the caller know that he or she is not alone – that you have also been through the system.
- It is imperative that anyone answering a Peer Support Line call remains non-judgmental.
- Assess the situation on the telephone.
- A good listener knows that there is much more to communication than just words alone.
- Responding to a person's statements is an extremely important part of being a good listener.
- Honesty is so important.
- Take care of yourself prior to sitting down and taking calls.
- Calls should not be more than 15 minutes long.



Effective Listening on a Support Line

"If we were supposed to talk more than listen, we would have two mouths and one ear."

-- Mark Twain

I. Do's - Listening with Empathy – Our Expertise is our Experience

- A. Be aware of yourself, know your weaknesses and limitation
- B. Listen and respond to your heart: tempering emotional responses
- C. Use humor when the time is right
- D. Remain earnest, interested and understanding
- E. Share your experience (without over burdening) when the time feels right
- F. Focus on the person's feelings: they are a gift
 - 1 Respect and cherish those feelings
 - 2 Wrap a warm blanket around their feelings give support and validation
 - 3 Express your feelings having received a heart felt personal gift
- G. Be brief in your response pull it from the heart
- H. Allow a person to go at their own pace

II. Don't s-

- A. Comparing yourself (whose smarter)
- B. Mind Read
- C. Planning an argument before they are done talking
- D. Judging statements
- E. Daydreaming not paying attention: dismissing
- F. Prescription for advice
- G. Pigeon holing: talk from experience
- H. Debating
- I. You are always
- J. Placating
- K. Changing the topic
- L. know better godly advice
- M. Premature assurance
- N. Rushed intimacy
- O. Gossiping
- P. Questions: fact finding
- Q. Telling your own untempered story
- R. Not listening to your own limitations
- S. Mini counselors/psychiatrist
- T. Leading the conversation
- U. Telling others about particular "cases"
- V. We are not cases and don't need management
- W. Taking notes while listening
- X. Rushing people
- Y. Giving shallow promises
- Z. Giving shallow clichés
- AA. Impersonating staff of the past
- BB. Not paying attention for their clues regarding intimacy



Meeting a Person's Expressed Interest

The Three Questions Every Phone Line Worker Must Ask themselves

1. Does the person who is asking for support and/or help want to handle their situation on their own?
2. Does the person who is asking for support and/or help want assistance from the Peer Advocate?
3. Does the person who is asking for support and/or help want the Peer Advocate to handle the situation on their behalf?

Best Interest is, someone tries to tell you what is best for you. They do this by trying to put their own beliefs about what is best for you over what you yourself would choose to do for your own self.

Expressed Interest is stating your own ideas and beliefs as to what you believe is best for your own self based on knowledge of who you are, what your mind and body can handle, your own spiritual beliefs and acquired knowledge throughout years of personal experience.

Informed Consent People require information in order to make a wise decision based on their own needs as to whether or not to use a specific medication, mode of “therapy” or “procedure”. Whether you are inpatient or outpatient, you have the right to be given all information regarding your “treatment”.

What are some examples of expressed interest vs. best interest?



Ethics and Privacy

- **Ethics and Privacy**

People calling the Peer Support Line are reaching out and trying to share their feelings and current situation. In no way are we to share the information they share with us with other people. The understanding that occurs between a caller and a person working on the Peer Support Line is that there is an unwritten code of trust. We each must honor this trust.

- We believe that “In Good Faith” speaks for itself; additionally, the “Golden Rule” of “Do Unto Others As You Would Have Done Unto You” fits the ethical protocol when working on the Peer Support Line.

- **Breaking Privacy (Confidentiality): The One and Only Instance**

The only time an operator would break privacy is when an individual says they are SUICIDAL OR HOMOCIDAL. In this situation AND ONLY in this situation, would you break confidentiality. If you are working on an inpatient unit or on the Support Line, and hear a person tell you that he or she is suicidal, that is when you would contact a supervisor and explain all that is going on – including the person’s exact words, tone, and mention of a plan or other information that would lead you to believe that a person is suicidal. Once the information is given to a supervisor, let him or her handle the situation or give you specific instructions as to what to do.

- At the point that someone says I feel like hurting myself or someone else, that’s when you say, I may have to go to my supervisor with this. We are a support line, not a crisis line or a suicide prevention line. You can tell a caller, very gently that they were strong enough to call us; that they can call the crisis line number or suicide prevention number. Always remember: it is the responsibility of the caller for making the call to crisis or suicide prevention line.
- Establishing an administrative emergency on-call line is important and is contingent upon which supervisors are available and can be on call. Staff should know who is on call.



Gift Within

You all want to give back to others,
and you moved toward it by regaining your health.
Ironically, as you became healthy, your role
in the health of others naturally moves toward you.
With that comes great responsibility.
When we were in need of support and nobody out
there knew about it. We were scared and
wanted to stay within. In your own world.
Though we all knew that isolation
fed the demons. Then one day others knew and though
initially a relief, we were expected to change.
How, well there were no directions, no manual.
It was a far greater pressure than isolating
and we fought within ourselves to stay the same,
rather than make a change.
But you all know this.
Then something happened,
You reached out and someone was there for you.
A turning point. A new light shined on you.
Someone believed in you.
Its time now to turn the tragedies
of the past into the gifts of the future.
Its a gift you've earned,
now use it and cherish the moment when
a person lets you into their frightening seclusion,
respect that space. You all have been there.
Relish the gift you have to offer.
Your experience is your expertise
let your spirit lead you. You have the manual,
the directions within you to lead a person to the
land we were all promised at birth
and shine a new light on them
shine on you crazy diamonds...



Lessons Learned

Offering Assistance When None is Wanted

There have been instances when we have taken calls from individuals who posed problems to us that can be easily remedied; for example, there are locations where individuals can receive food. We can offer the information and hopefully it will be accepted so that the individual on the phone can get their needs met. If they choose not to meet their needs with information you provide, then that is their choice.

Crisis: Knowing That You Have Assistance

There have been times when an individual has stated that they were suicidal, had a plan and had taken pills or did something to try to hurt themselves. There are people who have called the Peer Support Line in these instances; it can sometimes be tricky to determine if a person is really doing this or is saying this. Don't play games with whoever is calling. Also, there is no need to panic. The most important thing is to find out if the person is willing to talk to you, if they need help, and how you can help them. If it is not possible for you to help them using your own resources, you can always ask them if they want you to call someone else who can physically be there for them. Always refer to a supervisor for assistance when getting this kind of call as they may be more familiar with the caller and have a better idea of their needs and how to handle a specific situation.



How to Document a Call

- Never push someone to give you his or her name or their location. You can always ask, but if they are not willing to share this information, do not push for it. Everyone has the right to remain anonymous.
- Most people who call the Peer Support Line just want to talk – they need to share or vent or just have someone to listen to them. That is what we are here for; so the majority of people would fall into the “just talk” category.
- Some people are in the hospital and require the assistance of someone to help advocate for them or answer questions about the hospital, discharge planning or require something that the hospital is not/has not been willing to give to them. Take the person’s name, unit number and telephone number down and then contact the advocacy service.
- Other callers need information on benefits and entitlements. It is important to refer these individuals to resources that can provide them with the assistance that they want and need.
- Document the following for a call:
 - Caller’s Name
 - Caller’s Location (city, county or state – you don’t need their address)
 - Duration of Call
 - Type of Call (did someone just want to talk or did they want to see an advocate)
 - Referrals (if any and to whom)
 - Crisis Type (if any)



A Successful Call

Empowerment

Validation

Reconnection

Support line Meanings

Empowerment– create an environment that gives a person the opportunity to gain power or authority

Validation-corroboration, verification, substantiate

Reconnection-assurance of a return to a balance perspective

Examples of

Empowerment statement: “...you had the strength to call.”

Validation statement: “...that is a horrendous thing to have happen.”

Reconnection statement: “...I’m glad you are feeling better.”



Reception Training

Responsibilities

- Peer Support Line training includes being trained to work at the Reception Desk. Our Support Line operates out of Dimensions, a busy Peer Support Center. People working at the Reception Desk take peer support line calls, business calls, take messages, provide support to Dimensions' members, and offer referrals to those in need. Those who work at the Reception Desk must be familiar with our membership and project their best image as a working member of our peer run organization.
- Before someone who is working reception even sits at their desk, they can get a pretty good idea of the tone of the day, tone of the moment. Look around the room, and know who is at Dimensions. Find out who is on staff that day, find out what is scheduled on the calendar for that day, and check out the white board in the back office to determine who will be out of the office and where they will be that day. Being aware of who is available to support you is vital for being effective at your job.

Telephone Etiquette

- Always remain courteous, polite and understanding.
- Always take name of person, name of organization and phone number to be reached.
- Always answer confidently
- Always allow the caller to hang up first
- Always Project your best image
- Always remember you represent The Empowerment Center
- Always say, "Hello, this is the Alliance Empowerment Coalition"
- Always retain detailed messages and repeat the message back to caller
- Always remember the caller is right.
- Members: Who is and Who isn't
- Members of The Coalition are groups and organizations governed by people who identify themselves as people who have first hand experience in the mental health system
- Being Observant and Aware
- Stay awake and alert. Stay in the conversation do not do two things at once like sleep and take a phone call.



Role Playing

Define Objectives
Choose Context & Roles
Introducing the Exercise
Preparation/Research
The Role-Play
Concluding Discussion
Assessment

Define Objectives

Empowerment

Validation

Reconnection

Choose Context & Roles

Person 1 = telephone caller

Person 2 = support line operator

Introducing the Exercise

Preparation/Research

The Role-Play

Concluding Discussion

Assessment



Top Ten Most Difficult Calls

1. Person says they want to commit suicide.
2. Person is making sexual connotations.
3. Frequent caller over five times a day.
4. Person is abusive.
5. Non-stop talker.
6. Superficial complainer.
7. Person talks about other operators.
8. Person talking in mental health language.
9. Ending a conversation with a person.
10. Person is talking in absolutes.



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