



Depression and Bipolar
Support Alliance

Peer Support Works

Here are 10 Reasons Why

1. Use of Personal Experience

Having personal experience with serious and persistent mental health issues is a primary aspect of being able to relate to others with depression and mood disorders, especially to individuals who shun the traditional mental health system. It is widely known that peer specialists complement and increase the effectiveness of traditional mental health service models by enhancing engagement, rapport, and advocacy based on common experience (SAMSHA, 2012).

2. Use of Example

Peers in the process of recovery are excellent role models and have much experiential knowledge of dealing with common concerns and problems to offer other peers. When provided with a peer role model, consumers show significant gains in expanding participants' social network and reducing their isolation (Chinman, 2001), increasing physical activity, and promoting health-enhancing behaviors (Cook J., 2009, Druss, 2010).

3. Services are Voluntary

Individuals who use peer support services, show significant growth in self-esteem and personal empowerment because they are participating by choice (Davidson and colleague, 2004).

4. Use of Natural Supports

Research shows that peer support group members experience a significant decrease in family stress, improvement in interpersonal relationships and an increase in the number of identified support persons (Thompson DR, Norman I, 2008).

5. Ownership of Recovery

Consumers who have access to peer support show greater gains in confidence and self-advocacy skills (Cook, J., 2009), knowledge and management of illness (Lucksted, A., McNulty, K., Brayboy, L., and Forbes, C., February 2009), medication adherence and problem solving (Druss and colleagues, 2010), when compared to individuals receiving traditional services only.

6. Accessibility of Services

Peer support helps provide geographically dispersed services such that they are easily accessible to more people (Barrett, Pratt, Basto & Gill, 2000). A recent estimate suggests that groups and programs run by and for people with serious mental illness and their families, outnumber professionally run mental health services by a ratio of almost 2 to 1 (Lucksted 2009).

7. Reflect the cultural diversity of the community

The range of cultural diversity in peer support services, helps the consumer to feel comfortable, and results in expanded social networks, reduced isolation and improved feelings of overall well-being (Davidson, 2001).

8. Use of Partnership with Traditional Services

Programs with a peer provider on their team have better consumer gains in quality of life, self-image, outlook, and social support and fewer major problems (e.g., Felton et al., 1995).

9. Use of Mutual Benefit

Peer specialists report significant personal gains from helping other consumers in the recovery process including: greater interpersonal competence, social approval, professional growth and management of their own recovery (Salzer & Liptzin-Shear, 2002).

10. Experience with mental health system

Drawing on their own life experience, peers can provide a unique perspective on the mental health service system, and are particularly adept at negotiating on the behalf of others (www.pillarsofpeersupport.org; January, 2010). Peers are often more proficient with the technical aspects of benefit acquisition and provide the rapport to keep consumers engaged with the process (Kristin Lupfer, 2012).