

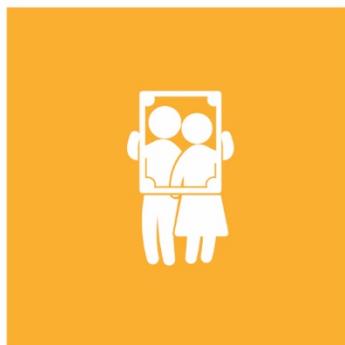
It's My Life: Peer Partners



Self-Directed Social Exploration



Peer Life Coach Handbook



It's My Life: Peer Partners
(Self-Directed Social Explorations)

Peer Life Coach Handbook

Patrick Hendry, Program Director

This document is dedicated to the memory of
Shavonne G. Carpenter, CPRS, Head Life Coach/Trainer

Mental Health America 2017

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Introduction

Mental Health America (MHA)

Mental Health America is the nation's oldest advocacy organization addressing the full spectrum of mental health and substance use conditions and the profound impact they have on public health and our society. MHA was established by former psychiatric patient Clifford W. Beers. During his stays in public and private institutions, Beers witnessed and was subjected to horrible abuse. From these experiences, Beers set into motion a reform movement that took shape as Mental Health America. In all our work, we focus on: prevention for all; early identification and intervention for those at risk; integrated health and behavioral health care for those who need it; and recovery as a goal. Formed in 1909, MHA has an established record of effective national and grassroots advocacy and achievement. With our 200 affiliates across the country, we are a potent voice for healthy communities throughout the nation. The National Headquarters for MHA successfully launched the It's My Life ~ Social Explorations Program in the Northern Virginia area.



Introduction

Program Purpose

The purpose of the It's My Life Program is to improve the lives of people living with Serious Mental Health Conditions (SMHC). It is a highly innovative intervention that combines the two evidence-based practices of Peer Support and Psychiatric Rehabilitation and the emerging best practice Self-Directed Care into an integrated skill and support strategy that is specifically constructed to help people with SMHC build networks of friends and intimate relationships. Success in this area is a major breakthrough for some of the most isolated, misunderstood members of communities. As an essential aspect of recovery, people with SMHC need to be included in their communities as more than just residents. Social exclusion, isolation, and poverty exacerbate disability and are associated with ill health and premature death (Wilkinson, R., Marmot, M., 2003). When people are excluded from the day to day activities of their community, whether by the effects of illness or by societal discrimination, they either lose or never learn the skills necessary to successfully navigate socially or to seek out, initiate, and form new bonds and friendships.

The original pilot program was conducted with people living with schizophrenia or schizoaffective disorder. It is well documented that individuals with these disorders have the most difficulty making friends and participating in the social life of their communities. The It's My Life Program is designed to help build social networks of friends and close relationships, thus creating a strong social support system. This in turn helps the participants to become active members of the community and feel less isolated which also helps to increase self-esteem and self-worth to improve overall social functioning. This contributes to an increase of overall physical health which has been shown to decrease the need for hospitalization as well as aiding in avoiding premature death. Studies have shown that those who live with serious mental health conditions die 10 to 25

years earlier than the general population. Ultimately, the program helps the participants to set and reach social and personal goals that may include going back to school, finding a volunteer position, or even gainful employment. Another essential element to the It's My Life ~ Social Explorations Program is that it is kept non-clinical. All clinical language was taken out except for diagnosis and hospitalization history. The use of everyday language fosters increased trust with the participants. It was made very clear from the start that the Program was about Peer Support and not the traditional doctor/patient relationship. This puts the participants at ease.

Program Overview

The It's My Life Program advances recovery and improves the lives of individuals with psychiatric conditions with a focus on some of the most isolated, misunderstood members of our communities. Participants are accompanied on their recovery journeys by trained Peer Life Coaches who help them bridge the gap to a larger social world. The Program and staff provide a safe place for individuals to learn and practice skills to prepare themselves as they move forward on their chosen recovery path. The Life Coaches assist peers in finding their power to reclaim their place in the community.

While many programs attempt to provide people with social skills training, most have very limited success in really connecting people to friends and community. The It's My Life Program is designed to fill that gap that exists in current systems or "treatment as usual". The Program provides direct skill support and emphasizes that self-direction is not just for those who are "doing well". The ancillary model of the It's My Life Program, Peer Partners, applies the same concepts using a support group format in place of the one-on-one approach. This results in a significant decrease in expenses for operating the Program.

It's My Life uniquely provides each participant opportunities to practice newly learned skills in a safe and non-judgmental environment with feedback from their Peer Life Coach. Recipients of services are given the chance to determine the skills they feel are important to them as well as financial support to participate in activities they would not otherwise be able to afford. The process fosters creative ways to increase self-esteem and self-worth improving overall functioning with networks that include supportive and sustainable relationships that will increase their quality of life. Participants receive a monthly allowance of \$60.00 to be spent on advancing toward three (3) social goals that are set with the assistance of the Peer Life Coach. The amount is pending completion of weekly guided journaling and consistently providing proof of purchase (receipts) for how the money was spent. All expenditures must correlate to the social goals, action plan and spending plan.

The Peer Life Coach meets with the group of participants weekly. Initial meetings include working on goal setting, skill building and budget planning. Each participant will partner with another and go together into the community on outings of mutual interest so they can practice their skills and receive feedback from one another as well as support from their Coach. The Peer Life Coaches are a safe sounding board for participants to express themselves and work through challenges. Coaches also model. When coaches model the qualities that form friendships and how friends interact through conversation and activities, the participants learn not only how to be a friend, but also to recognize when someone is a true friend. They learn that friends are honest, understanding, supportive, and loyal. They learn that having friends is both a gift and a responsibility. When many people talk about their recovery they often say that the most important single thing is to have a least one person who believes in them, one friend. As participants begin to build new relationships, the Peer Life Coach slowly and through discussion begins to lead participants to decrease their

reliance on their peer partner, the group and the coach. The ultimate goal is for peer partners and Coaches to be supporters who are available when needed, but not the only persons participants build friendships with. Evaluation techniques for assessing the success of the program include Analysis of Participants' Guided Journals, anonymous satisfaction surveys, re-hospitalization rates and trends of the Personal Outcome Measures survey results.

Benefits of the Peer Partner Group Model

There are several advantages to utilizing the Peer Partner support group model of the It's My Life (IML) Program. Among the most impactful is the automatic exponential increase in the provision of peer support. Unlike the original model where the primary (and sometimes sole) source of peer support is the Peer Life Coach, participants in IML Peer Partner will be connected to and supported by other program participants. During the piloting of IML, Mental Health America hosted three gatherings for all the participants to get together to share their experiences, interests and ideas. There, three of the ladies discovered they had a common interest in going to the circus. With the assistance of the Life Coach, they coordinated the outing. After the events, several participants expressed appreciation about having the safe place to practice socializing with people they didn't know. Participants in IML Peer Partner will have that opportunity every week. Additionally, they can share their knowledge of available resources and social opportunities.

The shared experience of social challenges promotes a strong sense of compassion. Meanwhile, observing others as they face those challenges tends to normalize the experience. Participants will be giving and receiving feedback from each other. Oftentimes, this generates discussions where participants will highlight the successes of their peers, but overlook their own progress. As the awareness of this practice increases, participants will learn to recognize and

celebrate all of their victories. Generally, the group naturally and gently provides accountability and encouragement in this area.

There are also positive financial implications to using the support group model. The costs of operating the program are greatly reduced by allowing the Peer Life Coach to work with multiple people at the same time. The time and expenses of funding the Coach's travel and participation in outings are nearly eliminated. The monetary benefit also potentially extends to participants as they are able to share the costs of transportation with their Peer Partner, or even receive group discounts if several members attend the same event.

How to Use the Peer Life Coach Handbook

The principles and practices enumerated in the It's My Life – Social Self-Directed Care Program Operation Manual are essential to successfully achieving the desired outcomes. The Peer Life Coach Handbook is to be used in conjunction with the Program Operation Manual. Its focus is on adapting the program to a group format rather than one-on-one services. The lesson plans, structure and skillsets detailed may also be helpful for Peer Life Coaches in a one-on-one setting.

It's My Life is designed to be a year-long program. It should be noted that the length of enrollment for each participant may vary based upon individual needs and other factors. The Peer Life Coach meets with the group of participants weekly. The group needs to have an even number of participants so each person will have a peer to partner with, a "Peer Partner". Having at least six, but no more than twelve is the recommended group size. Each month the meetings will focus on a different theme. Life Coaches will select lesson plans for each meeting that focus on the specified theme based upon the following chart and tailored to meet the needs of the group.

Month	Focal Theme
1st	Introduction & GoalSetting
2nd	Self-Care
3rd	Social Interaction
4th	Communication
5th	Coping Strategies
6th	Thoughts & Beliefs
7th	Social Interaction
8th	Self-Care
9th	Coping Strategies
10th	SocialInteraction
11th	Communication
12th	Coping Skills & GoalSetting (Transitioning Out)

Each 90-minute meeting consists of the lesson on a skillset in the focal category followed by a group discussion on experiences with that skill. Participants will have opportunities to give and receive feedback from the Life Coach and other peers. During each meeting, it is essential that the Peer Life Coach is attentive and in tune with the needs of the group and individual group members. Between meetings, participants are tasked with trying out the skills they have learned about. They partner with a fellow participant who has similar social goals and interests to venture into the community and engage in activities in a variety of social settings. Participants are to journal about their experiences and share them during the support group portion of the meetings. By listening for overarching themes and common threads, the Coach will be able to select the lesson each week that will most benefit the group.

Program Operation

Before initiating implementation of the It's My Life Program, the provider organization needs to be able to ensure fidelity to all of the basic principles of the IML model, especially remaining truly self-directed. This is achieved through proper training of the Peer Life Coach(es) and Program Director. Mental Health America's National Office offers personal training and technical support for organizations implementing this program. It is also helpful for an organization's leadership and supporting staff to be educated about the program.

Program Roles

There are essentially three major roles in the It's My Life Program. Oversight of its operation is provided by the Program Director. This includes providing supervision and support for the Life Coach team as well as approving the Monthly Social Spending Plans for each participant. The Peer Life Coach guides participants through the program with the support of other Program Staff. The Participant plays an active role in their recovery as they journey with their peers through the process. In-depth explanations and guidelines for these roles is provided in the IML Program Operation Manual.

Program Director

Supervision is critical in this program in that not only does a professional need to oversee the program but also in the sense that supervising Peer Specialists is different than other behavioral health positions. It is critical that the Program Director understand recovery and the unique skills and assets provided by peer workers. Supervision includes issues of job role clarification, performance, confidentiality, disclosure, working with other staff, boundaries and others as they arise. Supervision is also important because it provides an avenue to monitor for and address instances of vicarious trauma, compassion fatigue or burnout. It

must be comprehensive, regularly scheduled, and meaningful to the person being supervised.

In addition to providing supervision, the Program Director also serves as a resource and support system for the Life Coaches. Having appropriate support available is essential in peer support because Life Coaches are working their own recovery with day-to-day and job issues while still providing support to participants. It has been demonstrated that the most effective ways to reduce the risk of negative impact on the Life Coach's own recovery are to implement changes at systemic and organizational levels by balancing workloads, giving staff more control over their schedules, establishing supportive teams, limiting exposure to trauma and providing additional training. Additionally, Life Coaches may also benefit from regular debriefing, especially after experiencing a critical or traumatic event. Support groups provide increased potential for work-related stress as Coaches are working with multiple people simultaneously. Thus, it is important that Peer Life Coaches are well trained in understanding group dynamics and managing conflict. As Director, it is vital to be supportive when Life Coaches are experiencing difficulties with a particular participant or vice versa. The Program Director also responds to all "About My Program" (Grievance) Forms available to participants in their Handbook. The Director should also be available to assist if participants call or email expressing concerns about their Life Coach or the It's My Life Program. Overall, it is the responsibility of the organization operating the program to provide the much-needed support to each of their Life Coaches.

The Peer Life Coach will review the goals, plans and budget tracking with each participant monthly. The Program Director has the responsibility of final oversight of each Participant's spending. This includes verifying the social goals chosen by the Participant, assuring that the action/spending plans relate directly

to the accepted social goals and that spending is recorded appropriately on the “Tracking My Budget” Sheet found in the Participant Handbook with proper documentation (receipts) attached. Coaches and the Program Director will confer as needed.

Peer Life Coach

Direct services are provided by the Peer Life Coach. Trained in Peer Support, Psychiatric Rehabilitation, Self-Directed Care, Life Coaching, Motivational Interviewing and Shared Decision-Making, the Peer Life Coach facilitates weekly meetings with the group of participants. During these meetings, the Coach supports participants as they set and work toward their social goals.

The Peer Life Coach teaches a variety of skills and partners with the group of participants to promote successful application of these skills. One of the most important skills the Peer Life Coach teaches is how to set meaningful and achievable goals. Also among the skillsets are emotion regulation, communication, coping techniques, and other skills as determined through the sessions. The Peer Life Coach educates participants about these skills and models appropriate social interaction.

With oversight from the Program Director, the Life Coach will review the action/spending plan of each participant. They will check to make sure each expenditure clearly relates to at least one of the social goals that have been previously set. The Life Coach also supports participants as needed in tracking their spending and collects the “Tracking My Budget” form with associated receipts for proof of purchase. The Life Coach also reviews and collects each participant’s guided journaling. Keeping track of their spending and completion of the journals are contingencies for receiving the Social Activities Budget.

The Life Coach is there to explicate all policies of the program. The requirements and processes for the Social Activities Budget are communicated to participants prior to completing enrollment. Participant Rights, including privacy and voluntary participation, are also made clear from the outset. Peer Life Coaches are to comply with all HIPAA regulations, adhering to the Privacy and Confidentiality practices outlined in the It's My Life Program Operation Manual.

Participant

The It's My Life Program regards self-determination and autonomy as essential principles. These values inform the processes of the program. Participants are encouraged to apply them throughout the program, beginning even before enrollment. Interested individuals contact the service provider directly. This helps mitigate instances of coercion from well-meaning friends, family and other supporters.

Once it is determined that the individual meets the requirements for eligibility, including ability to give informed consent, manage the social activities budget, and complete the journaling, the need for the services is assessed through the Personal Outcome Measures Survey Tool (<https://c-q-l.org/the-cql-difference/personal-outcome-measures>). Participants in IML Peer Partner will also be required to attend the weekly meetings. Additionally, with support and guidance of their Peer Life Coach, they will partner with another member of the group, serving as ally at outings and social events. Each participant will also be expected to adhere to the confidentiality policy and any other guidelines set forth for the group meetings. The rights and responsibilities of IML participants are detailed in the Program Operation Manual.

Participant Handbook

Each participant receives a Participant Handbook. The contents of which will provide them with everything they need for the duration of their enrollment. It includes ten forms/worksheets and the weekly guided journal. The paperwork can be completed independently or with the aid of the Life Coach. Copies of completed paperwork are retained as part of the Participant's file and handled in accordance with Program Privacy and Confidentiality Procedures. The contents of the Participant Handbook are detailed in the IML Program Operation Manual.

Peer Partners

In the original version of It's My Life, participants were accompanied on outings by their Peer Life Coach. The coach served as a source of moral support and encouragement as participants explored their environments and ventured into unfamiliar, and potentially, uncomfortable settings. In the support group model, this role is performed primarily by the Peer Partners.

The first weeks of the program focus on goal-setting and introspection. Through the lessons and activities, participants will get to know themselves better. As they share in meetings, they will also learn about each other. This is important because each participant, with assistance as needed from the Life Coach, will select a member of the group to partner with who shares similar interests and social goals. The Life Coach may need to provide support as the Peer Partners coordinate scheduling and transportation for their social outings. Peer Partners will also need time to provide feedback to one another and explore options for future outings.

There may be times when a Peer Partner team is not working well together. The Life Coach helps mediate to reach a consensus on the best course of action. Changing Peer Partners should be a last resort as it would require the disruption

of another team. Peer Life Coaches must also be aware and prepared to address the potential impact of these issues on group dynamics. The male/female dynamic should also be taken into consideration to avoid transference and counter-transference whenever possible.

As participants begin to progress and grow in confidence, they are encouraged to try going out on their own (without their Peer Partner). If there are teams where an individual's Peer Partner has reached this stage, it may be appropriate in these instances to have them pair up with someone else in the same situation. The purpose of the program is not to simply push people to go outside their "comfort zone", but rather to expand their comfort zones.

End of Program Preparation

Participation in the It's My Life Program is completely voluntary. This should be made clear to participants from the very beginning. Participants can drop out at any time, but are asked to communicate with the Program Director if they are having any problems or conflict with the Program or their Coach. Participants may also choose to withdraw if they feel they have accomplished all their current social goals or no longer have an interest in pursuing them at the given time. Under certain circumstances, participants may be involuntarily dismissed from the It's My Life Program. This can occur if the participant consistently fails to meet their agreed upon obligations of attending weekly groups, completing the Guided Journals and proper use of the social activities budget. In the event of a participant withdrawing or being discharged prior to completion of the program, they will be asked to complete an Exit Interview as outlined in the IML Program Operation Manual.

There is also a transition process for participants who complete the full year of the program. The twelfth and final month of meetings and lessons focus on

phasing out. It is not uncommon for individuals to experience anxiety or similar feelings toward the conclusion of the program. The change in routine, loss of support (including financially) can become major stressors. The Peer Life Coach should encourage participants to continue advancing their efforts to grow socially and explore the free or low-cost opportunities they have learned about throughout the program. During this period, emphasis is placed on setting goals for the future to build upon the progress that has been made and practicing coping skills to help with the adjustments.

Peer Life Coach Guidelines

Getting Acquainted

When people are excluded from the day to day activities of their community, whether by the effects of illness or by societal discrimination, they either lose or never learn the skills necessary to successfully navigate socially or to seek out, initiate, and form new bonds and friendships. It may be difficult initially for participants to connect. The strength of the peer relationship is enhanced through regular meetings and strategic self-disclosure. This builds trust and credibility.

Sharing personal stories must be timely, focused and selective to the participant's (and group's) comfort, situation and needs. Peer Life Coaches will help participants practice appropriate sharing. They will also foster relationship building within the group through "Icebreakers" and through developing trust in a support group environment. Finding others with similar interests is a key ingredient of identifying potential friends and acquaintances. It forms the basis for conversation and continued connection.

Boundaries

Professional and personal boundaries play an important role in peer support. Relationship boundaries are established to promote trust, increase safety, demonstrate respect, develop a working alliance (rapport), and provide structure to the helping relationship. Boundary Guidelines for the Peer Life Coach are provided in the Program Operation Manual. Program Participants will also need to practice good boundaries. The Peer Life Coach provides assistance as needed to help participants identify and maintain personal boundaries with the group and between Peer Partners. Subjects of discussion should include mutuality, respecting one another's time, personal space, how one would like to be addressed, topics considered to be "off limits", cultural/religious sensitivities and other like considerations.

Self-Care

Managing the wellbeing of the Support Group starts with managing the wellbeing of the Peer Life Coach as the group's facilitator. This must be every facilitator's first priority. One of the building blocks of self-care is self-awareness. Facilitating a support group is not as administrative or passive as it may seem. It is often very emotionally involved. This applies intensely for Peer Facilitators. The potential for triggers to arise affects everyone, even the most experienced facilitators. This potential is one of the reasons facilitators must practice the art of self-care.

Included in self-care is Emotion Regulation. This is a broad set of skills and abilities that help keep the emotional system healthy and functioning. Good emotion regulation includes the ability to:

- 🌟 Recognize that you are having an emotional response
- 🌟 Understand what the emotional response is

- ✨ Accept your emotional responses rather than reject them or react to them with fear
- ✨ Access strategies that allow you to reduce the intensity of the emotion when needed
- ✨ Engage in goal-directed behavior when upset
- ✨ Control impulsive behaviors when upset

Peer Life Coaches can benefit greatly from practicing all the skills they teach to participants throughout the program. By practicing these techniques, Peer Life Coaches will be better equipped to handle the challenges of being emotionally involved and impacted. Maintaining a healthy emotional life is important to overall health and sustaining effectiveness as a facilitator.

Emotion Regulation is only one of many facets of good self-care. Physical, intellectual, social and spiritual health are also parts of individual wellness. They entail:

- ✨ Getting proper exercise
- ✨ Maintaining balanced nutrition
- ✨ Having sufficient quantity and quality of sleep
- ✨ Receiving preventative and ongoing medical and dental care
- ✨ Staying home and resting when ill
- ✨ Engaging in creative activities or learning new things
- ✨ Having and utilizing a strong social network consisting of healthy relationships
- ✨ Resources for support and stress relief
- ✨ Taking care of global and personal surroundings
- ✨ Forgiveness of self and others
- ✨ Understanding personal beliefs, values and ethics to guide decision-making and overall approach to life

Some Peer Life Coaches may encounter personal barriers to self-care. These often stem from unhealthy attitudes, habits and beliefs. Some of the most common are:

- ✨ Feeling Overwhelmed – With its multiple components, self-care can seem like an astronomical task. It may feel as if it is too complex or simply too massive of an undertaking. Developing a self-care plan and gradually implementing it will help facilitators adjust and adopt self-care into everyday life.
- ✨ Time – Living in a fast-paced and often demanding society, packed with parent-teacher conferences, work meetings, housekeeping and home improvement projects, leaves little time to stop and relax. Despite tight schedules, Life Coaches must find time to do the things that will get and keep them well. Activities for self-care do not have to be time consuming or done all at once. They can be done in small increments of time spread throughout the day.
- ✨ Minimizing the Importance – The perceived value of self-care plays a major role in the Peer Life Coach’s development and implementation of an effective self-care plan. Many people engage in self-care activities only when they feel they need to. It is much more beneficial to practice self-care as a preventative measure rather than as a reactive response. When the Peer Life Coach develops a habit of taking care of themselves, it also provides an example for participants members to follow.
- ✨ Guilt – Particularly for individuals with low self-esteem, focusing on the self is viewed as selfishness. Thus, they feel guilty about taking time for themselves. On the contrary, self-care is the best thing anyone can do to help another person. When the Peer Life Coach is at their best, both they and the group will benefit. The reverse is also true. When the Life Coach is not well, it will diminish their ability to facilitate effectively and have a negative impact on the group.

🌟 Resources – It is a widely believed myth that self-care is too expensive because the activities always cost a lot of money. In actuality, the opposite is true. There are countless things people can do to take care of themselves that cost very little or even nothing at all. Nature walks, bubble baths and meditation are just a few examples of self-care activities that are either free or inexpensive. Additionally, it may be helpful to set aside a small budget for other activities that do have a cost associated with them.

The consequences of self-neglect can be enormous. They range from wearisome stress that erodes health to burnout so debilitating that Life Coaches are forced to walk away from their position or profession entirely. For the sake of the Peer Life Coach, and the group, self-care is both fundamental and indispensable.

Support Group Facilitating

Facilitator Functions

Group facilitators work to promote the processes that help the group meet its goals while ensuring that the structures, norms, and culture in the group environment are favorable to the accomplishment of the established goals. This includes taking appropriate action in response to the status of the group and its members. As facilitators, Peer Life Coaches also stimulate discussions designed to support and encourage progress for the group as a whole and for each member as an individual. Their main function is to foster communication among the group and to model effective interaction that members can emulate. Facilitators also provide an example of how to share in the group. They:

Maintain a Safe Environment

This involves both physical and emotional safety. The facility that hosts the meeting needs to meet basic needs for the group. As appropriate and available, this includes easy access (including accommodations for members with physical

limitations), comfort (such as climate control, proper ventilation, etc.) and accessible restrooms. Participants should also be made aware of the locations of Emergency Exits and other instructions in the event of an environmental emergency.

Keeping the environment emotionally safe is equally important. Peer Life Coaches will ensure confidentiality is being respected, group boundaries (structure, schedule, roles, etc.) remain intact, and that participants are protected whenever possible from situations that are highly triggering, threatening or otherwise unsafe. If these situations occur, Peer Life Coaches need to ensure the necessary actions are taken to restore safety and support any individuals affected. Peer Life Coaches should defer to the Program Director as a resource whenever needed.

Ensure a Supportive Environment

Diversity can be a great asset for a support group. It allows for a variety of perspectives and ideas to be presented. Diversity can also pose a challenge to group cohesion, particularly if there is a sole individual in the meeting that does not identify with the dominant demographic. Demographic composition elements such as age, social class, education levels and languages can impact a participant's ability to relate to other group members. With a mixed composition, Peer Life Coaches need to plan ways to aid participants to manage concerns about their differences if they arise during meetings or outings with Peer Partners. The Life Coach should use their mediation and communication skills to promote ways of understanding and accepting differences. It is part of the Life Coach's role as facilitator to foster an environment that is inclusive of all participants by highlighting commonalities more than differences.

Bolster Affect Exploration

Support group facilitation necessitates discernment of the inward disposition of group members and aiding participants in exploring, interpreting and reflecting on individual and group affect. Scanning the room, looking at individual members during group interaction, allows the Peer Life Coach to be aware of verbal as well as nonverbal cues. Verbalizing some scans can be a useful tool to inform the group of commonalities the facilitator has recognized.

(Example: “Jack, I noticed you were nodding your head to Jill’s comment. Can you relate to what she shared?”)

Facilitators can support the group’s affect by offering validation of the participants’ feelings. This acknowledges that the Life Coach is attuning to individual and group needs.

(Example: “It makes sense that you would be saddened by that.”)

Peer Life Coaches can help the group by identifying specific feelings. Pointing out behavior changes is a technique facilitators can use to do this. Asking a question rather than making a statement about the person’s affect might prompt a more reserved person to be more involved in the discussion, giving the group an opening to assist the individual in exploring the feeling.

(e.g. “Joe, you seem to be fidgeting more whenever we talk about this. Are you feeling anxious?”)

Helping participants to be more aware of how they are feeling in the meeting can benefit them outside the meetings by encouraging them to pay closer attention to their feelings on a more regular basis. They may even begin to notice patterns of

a reoccurring feeling with particular circumstances or events. This is also true for the group as a whole. In time, Peer Life Coaches may recognize repetitions in the way the group responds to a certain topic. Cognizance of the group's affect will enable the Life Coach to identify areas of concern for the group and provide relevant supports. This information can be used to guide the Peer Life Coach when selecting which lesson to present at each meeting.

Leadership

Participants look to the Peer Life Coach as a leader. The Life Coach serves as a model of appropriate group behavior and as a resource for the group. Peer Life Coaches provide a tangible example of effective interpersonal interaction and relational connections. Since being the facilitator is generally viewed by group members as a leadership position, it is important to remember that accentuating and emphasizing their individual abilities and strengths will increase their own leadership skills and help them take more initiative for themselves.

Required Skillsets

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines a skill as “a learned power of doing something competently: a developed aptitude or ability”. There are various skills that must be developed in order to be an effective support group facilitator. These skills can be adapted to fit the Peer Life Coach's own style and personality.

Effective Listening

A way of showing concern for group members, and that fosters cohesive bonds, commitment, and trust; Effective listening tends to reduce occurrences of interpersonal conflict while increasing the likelihood that when conflicts do emerge, they will be resolved with a solution favorable to all involved.

Effective listening is actively assimilating the information provided by a speaker, showing interest, and providing them with feedback so that he or she knows the message was received. Effective listeners show speakers that they have been heard and understood. In addition, by truly listening to participants in the group, the Peer Life Coach will begin to understand the reasons for the challenges of each member. This allows the Coach to be more effective at motivating them, to be sensitive to and meet the need for encouragement, and to quickly recognize when the individual is experiencing difficulty in the group.

Communication

Defined as the process of imparting knowledge or exchanging opinions, feelings, or ideas through speech, writing, gestures, or other medium; Communication includes listening, speaking with plain language using non-clinical verbiage and appropriate body language. In order to establish clarity in their messages, the Life Coach also needs to make sure their words, gestures, facial expressions and tone match each other.

Problem Solving

As facilitators, the Peer Life Coach will need to use their skills to discuss and explore problems that are experienced on the individual and group level. There are some practical steps they can take, or lead the group through, to help resolve problems.

- 🌟 Identifying – Life Coaches can help participants recognize the existence of a problem and the need to make decisions and take action to resolve it.

- 🌟 Specify the problem – Before a solution can be found, the details of the problem must be understood. Life Coaches partner with the group to figure out what is happening and what should be happening instead.

- ✨ Pinpoint the cause(s) – Addressing only the effects of the problem will lead to repetitions of that same problem. The group may need help to screen out the superficial issues and look for potential underlying causes to what may appear to be obvious.

- ✨ Explore feasible approaches – There is almost always more than one way to solve a problem. When brainstorming for creative solutions, no judgment should be passed on any ideas. It may be helpful to write down the possible solutions as they are collected.

- ✨ Select an approach – When deciding on the best approach for a group issue, the Life Coach and all group members need to contemplate which approach is most likely to provide a long-term solution in a realistic and timely fashion. Any risks or resources associated with the approach also need to be taken into consideration. For problems on an individual level, the final decision must rest with that individual.

- ✨ Mediation – Peer Life Coaches are to be neutral in the problem-solving process. This is particularly important for conflict between Peer Partners. In order to allow alternate options to be explored, Life Coaches suggest to the group, or individuals, that there are multiple ways of looking at an issue.

- ✨ Implementation – Recognizing the problem, identifying options and selecting a solution are just the beginning. Until the resolution is enacted, the problem will remain.

- ✨ Assess Outcomes – Once the plan of action has been implemented, it will be important to follow up to see how well the solution is working. For issues on an individual level, the participants can provide accountability regarding follow-through on the plan, as well as provide helpful feedback. For group

issues, reflecting on its own processes and results keeps the group effective.

It is also important for the Life Coach to note that when evaluating a problem, language can make a difference. Simply changing the term “problem” to “issue” or “situation” will help change attitudes about what is going on. Peer Life Coaches can help participants reframe their “problems” into opportunities and use the group as a tool for problem-solving.

Conflict Resolution

Conflict is generally a group issue. As such, everyone involved needs to take part in resolving it. The Life Coach can aid this process using various strategies.

- 🌟 Prevent conflict (when possible) – While not every problem is foreseeable or preventable, there are some that can be avoided, or at least minimized, before they occur.
- 🌟 Address each issue as it arises. If a solution is not reached right away, it may be appropriate to take a break from it and return a short time later.
- 🌟 Speak in the affirmative, stating what is wanted instead of what is not wanted.
(e.g. “Please limit discussion to those present in the room.” vs.
“Do not talk about people who are not here.”)
- 🌟 Suggest possibilities and recommend ways to move forward. This is often better received than complaints or criticism.
- 🌟 Speaking in first person will be important as participants and the Peer Life Coach share their feelings.

(e.g. “I feel frustrated when I get interrupted. I would like to be able to finish sharing my perspective.” vs. “You make me frustrated when you keep interrupting me. You need to stop it.”)

🌟 Try to engage all participants. Groups and their members are much more likely to implement solutions they had a part in shaping.

Learning to deal with conflict in a positive and constructive way, without excessive stress, is an important way to improve well-being as well as relationships. Conflict can be damaging to the group by leading participants to develop negative feelings for each other and waste energy that could be put to better use elsewhere. It can also deepen differences and diminish group cohesion. Alternatively, well-managed conflict can be constructive by helping participants to release emotions and stress, and resolve any tension. This process of reconciliation allows those involved to use it as an opportunity to increase understanding and find a way forward out of the discord together.

Managing Disruptive Members

Support group facilitators must utilize a balanced combination of control and benevolence. This assertive compassion involves keeping the focus on the disruption itself, instead of the member(s) causing the disruption. It allows the Peer Life Coach to directly address problems with the group without insulting or offending individual members. Initially, Life Coaches may want to simply pose the correction to the entire group without singling out specific participants. Referring to the group’s pre-established guidelines (referred to in the It’s My Life Program as the “Growth Agreement”) can be helpful. For example:

🌟 When a participant is often late to meetings, casually remind the whole group how important punctuality is to maximizing the benefits of the program for every member.

- ✨ When a participant monopolizes the discussion or frequently interrupts others, give the floor back to the original speaker.
(e.g. “I’d like to go back to Sue for a minute. I don’t think she was finished talking. We want everyone to have equal opportunity to share.”)

- ✨ When someone brings up inappropriate subjects that are offensive in nature or otherwise incendiary.
(e.g. “It doesn’t seem like this an appropriate discussion for this group, so, we are going to move on. For those who would like to continue this conversation, feel free to do so after the meeting.”)

- ✨ When triggering language is being used.
(e.g. “I recognize this is a meaningful topic for people to be able to talk about and I am also sensitive to the fact that it may pose a trigger to some. Please be considerate when choosing your words and avoid being overly detailed in your descriptions. It is part of our guideline of respecting one another.”)

- ✨ When a member continuously digresses to irrelevant topics, redirect the focus to the purpose of the meeting.
(e.g. “How does that relate to social anxiety and what we’ve been talking about today?”)

When facilitating, the Peer Life Coach must be able to determine if disruptions can effectively be addressed to the entire group or if speaking to the individual participant(s) in private outside of the meeting is most appropriate. Individuals that become combative or unresponsive to feedback and correction may need to be excused from the room. Sometimes a quick break is sufficient to allow for de-escalation and the participant may be able to return to being a positive,

contributing member of the group. During this break, when the Peer Life Coach takes a disruptive person aside privately, they must firmly, but politely, state how their behavior is disturbing the group. It must be made clear that the disruptions have to cease. Concurrently, the Life Coach should seek to find out what the underlying issues might be that are causing or contributing to the behaviors. They can then see if there are alternate ways to address that individual's concerns. If this is ineffective or does not appear to be a viable option for that particular situation, the participant may need to be excused for the remainder of the meeting. Each situation should be handled individually and include input from the group. Confronting the participant holds them accountable for their behaviors and actions. It also helps attend to how those behaviors might be influencing others in the meeting.

Handling Crisis Situations

Being familiar with a variety of strategies to deal with predictable incidents improves the ability to implement them if and when the need arises. This is especially true for Peer Life Coaches who may have to act quickly in crisis situations. A participant in distress needs immediate support, regardless of what was planned for the group. Timely assistance can prevent issues from progressing further and will build stronger trust within the group.

Things like disclosure can raise feelings in people that the group may not be in a place to handle; therefore, the Life Coach will need to ensure that support is readily available for both the group and themselves. There will be times when the facilitator may need to ask for help from the Program Director, counselor or other resource. It is important to recognize that even with the most thorough plans, not every possible problem can be predicted. The main thing is to prepare for the most common problems and have resources available for the rest. In the event of an emergency, the Peer Life Coach should refer to their agency's policies.

Additionally, many organizations such as Mental Health America are also available to direct Program Staff and group members to the appropriate resource(s).

Mental Health America
500 Montgomery Street
Suite 820
Alexandria, VA 22314
1-800-969-6642
www.mentalhealthamerica.net

Self-Reflection

Every good Life Coach and facilitator knows there is always room for improvement. Through reflective practices, the Peer Life Coach will be able to build upon their strengths and progress in areas of difficulty. It requires them to:

- ✨ Be open to group reviews and suggestions from the Program Director or organization leadership (as applicable).
- ✨ Be aware of when they need to step aside from their role. If the Life Coach is not well or too upset, it will hinder their ability to be effective and will likely impact the participants also. At this point, it is best to have a co-facilitator or other designee step in.
- ✨ Embrace mistakes. As facilitator, the Peer Life Coach's willingness to look at and admit their mistakes will strengthen the group's trust in them while also providing a model of resiliency.
- ✨ Support and learn from each other. This can be done even without a formal structure by simply attending groups facilitated by someone else. Networking will also provide an avenue for learning.

In order to be successful and effectual, all Peer Life Coaches need to identify resources that can help them grow as individuals and as Support Group Facilitators. Having a constant evaluation of process, complete with debriefing

and feedback from the group, will produce progress for the Life Coach and advancement for the group toward its goals.

Conducting Meetings

Preparation

When getting ready for support group meetings, facilitators need to arrive early enough to set up the room and make sure other logistics are taken care of.

🌟 Chairs should be arranged in a shape wide enough for latecomers to enter with minimal disruption and with sufficient space to accommodate members with wheelchairs or service animals.

🌟 If refreshments are provided, they should be placed on a side table.

Consideration should be given to the types of refreshments provided as some options are not well suited for all groups. For Example:

- Crunchy snacks, such as chips, that come in bags that rustle can be distracting or make it difficult for the group to hear what someone is saying.
- Drinks that contain stimulants like alcohol or caffeine can impact a person's behavior or ability to participate in the meeting without causing disruption or discomfort to other members.
- Foods with lots of spices can affect those with sensitivity to strong odors.

🌟 Care should be exercised with all reading material or worksheets distributed to protect them from damage in case spills occur.

🌟 It is also helpful if facilitators familiarize themselves with the documents they are providing to the group. These materials need to:

- Have concepts presented in a format that is easy to understand
- Be based on the most current information available
- Be applicable to the demographics of the group (age, gender, etc.)

- Work for different literacy levels
- Have their contributors/sources acknowledged
- Provide sources for further information, when possible

Getting prepared for the meeting also goes beyond the logistics. Peer Life Coaches must also prepare themselves mentally and emotionally. Lesson plans should be selected and studied in advance of each meeting. A well-organized meeting environment coupled with facilitators who are grounded and focused sets the atmosphere for a productive meeting and a healthy support group.

Starting the Meeting

The It's My Life Support Group is formatted and structured to meet the needs of the group. Included at the beginning of the meeting are:

- 🌟 The Welcome –Start the meeting by simply welcoming the participants and, at the first meeting, allowing for participant introductions. This is also a good time to remind everyone of what the Life Coach's role is and is not. The Peer Life Coach should also explain the purpose/mission of the group. The meeting agenda, as well as the start and end times for the meeting and any other “housekeeping” announcements may also be included in the welcome portion. Let participants know where to find materials for the meeting, extra literature, restrooms, water fountains, emergency exits, etc.
- 🌟 Review the Guidelines – The “Growth Agreement” need to be clearly stated at every meeting. Everyone needs to know the guidelines and everyone is responsible for following them. Peer Life Coaches may find it helpful to display or distribute written copies of the guidelines. The guidelines should be read aloud before beginning any discussion. The Life Coach can ask the group for a volunteer to do this. If a particular participant seems to have problems remembering the guidelines, it may be a good reminder if they are tasked with reading them for the group.

🌟 Icebreakers - These activities can be used to get folks focused, settled in and to start connecting with the group. A simple game or introduction prompt can bring members together as they learn more about each other. These activities are best when focused on something positive. Icebreakers will be particularly influential as participants select their Peer Partners.

(e.g. “Please tell us your name and two things that make you unique.”)

Ending the Meeting

As the facilitator, Peer Life Coaches also bring closure to the meetings. Ending a meeting includes:

- 🌟 Providing 10-15-minute notification before discussion is scheduled to end
- 🌟 Inviting participants to make any final comments
- 🌟 Having the group share how they feel the meeting has helped them
- 🌟 Encouraging participants to practice using the skill taught in the lesson
- 🌟 Reminding participants to complete their Guided Journaling and retain records for their social activities budget
- 🌟 Making mention of the literature or other materials that have been used in the group or provided for reference
- 🌟 Briefly summarizing what has happened at the meeting and any conclusions or consensuses the group has reached
- 🌟 Announcing the location, date and time of the next meeting

The Peer Life Coach concludes each meeting by expressing appreciation to the group for their presence and participation. They should also encourage participants to connect with their Peer Partner or other group members throughout the week and reach out when needed.

Group Guidelines

Every support group must have guidelines for individual and group expectations. It is the Peer Life Coach's responsibility as facilitator to ensure that everyone in the group understands and adheres to them. The guidelines that govern the support groups in the It's My Life Program are known as the "Growth Agreement". Its purpose is to ensure an environment where each participant is supported and encouraged to grow socially and as an individual. Each person's presence and participation in the group is understood as an agreement to adhere to the guidelines.

🌟 Confidentiality and Its Limitations – The general rule for support groups is that group members are prohibited from disclosing anything that is shared in the meetings. This includes divulging the identity of members who were present. Confidentiality also extends to the personal data of the participants. Participants may decide to share their addresses, phone numbers and email addresses with their Peer Partners or other group members. This information must be protected. Some members may not be comfortable sharing their contact information with others, so this should be left to their discretion. (The Peer Life Coach is to follow agency policy and the procedures outlined in the Program Operation Manual to safeguard participants' personal information.) The group also needs to discuss what will happen if confidentiality is breached. Limitations to confidentiality occur in the event of:

- A participant expressing intent to harm themselves or others
- Suspected child abuse or neglect
- Suspected elder abuse or neglect
- Suspected abuse of a disabled individual

🌟 Safety Requirements – Based on the nature of support groups, many possibilities exist for individuals to become triggered or feel unsafe. Clear guidelines about what can and cannot be said or done in meetings will aid the Peer Life Coach in maintaining a positive atmosphere. Providing graphic descriptions or "war stories", being in possession of weapons and attending meetings (or social outings

with a Peer Partner) under the influence of alcohol or illicit drugs are prohibited.

🌟 Group Etiquette – It is imperative for everyone to understand the expectations for respect and personal responsibility. The following common courtesies are expected:

- Listening without interrupting
- Avoiding personal or side conversations during the meeting
- Acceptance of differences (including social, cultural, linguistic differences or where an individual is in their recovery journey)
- Respecting each other's opinions
- Refraining from judging people
- Using first-person language ("I" statements)
- Sharing the group's time so that everyone who wishes to share get an opportunity to do so

In addition, the Peer Life Coach is to facilitate a discussion at the first meeting for participants to identify guidelines that they feel would benefit the group. These items will be added to the Growth Agreement and cited at each meeting. Together, the group needs to decide on guiding principles pertaining to areas such as:

- 🌟 Cell phone use in the meeting room
- 🌟 Taking breaks
- 🌟 Understandings reached about giving and receiving support, instructions or advice
- 🌟 Consuming food or drink in meetings

As the foundation for the safety and efficacy of the group and program as a whole, the significance of the Growth Agreement cannot be stressed enough; yet it is also vital that Peer Life Coaches apply them with understanding and compassion.

Additional Recommendations

Connecting with group members is crucial. How the Peer Life Coach approaches and responds to different scenarios can help strengthen the group bond. As facilitators, there are fundamental concepts they may benefit from invoking.

- ✨ The most important factor in any support group is access to support for the facilitator(s) as well as the group. Professional and reliable supports should be identified before starting the support group.
- ✨ Lists of resources and contact persons should be reviewed frequently and kept up to date.
- ✨ Sources of additional information should be easily accessible.
- ✨ Peer Life Coaches need to have a process in place for following up with participants who stop attending the group. This process should be respectful and non-invasive.
- ✨ In a healthy support group meeting, the facilitator starts the conversation and makes sure it stays focused, but the members do not respond solely to the facilitator. The discussion should have a natural, conversational flow. Participants will respond to other group members and even help start or guide the conversation.
- ✨ Addressing people by their names helps everyone learn each other's names and conveys that the facilitator cares what happens to each person. Name tags might be a useful tool for the first few weeks.
- ✨ Facilitators need to stay aware of when added structure is needed. They are to summarize or explain when necessary and decide when to extend a discussion or when to move on to the next topic.
- ✨ When noticing who talks and who doesn't, the Peer Life Couch is to be careful not to press people too much, particularly while everyone is just getting to know each other. If someone who has been quiet does share something, encourage more discussion at that point and be sure to include participants who appear bored in the discussion.
- ✨ Facilitators are to practice self-regulation. Knowing when to talk and when to let others talk is significant. Facilitators will make space for participants to engage in the conversation and provide feedback to one another. This allows for increased participation of group members and it is often more meaningful when participants

receive feedback from their peers in the group, rather than just the facilitator. Self-regulation also applies to facilitators in being comfortable with periods of silence in a meeting.

- ✨ Facilitators possess a distinctive ability to inspire. Encouraging participants to remember and focus on their victories, no matter how small they may seem, can help make for a stronger and more confident group.
- ✨ Exemplifying pertinent characteristics and proper preparation will ensure successful facilitation and a successful support group.

Lesson Plans

Each month the meetings will focus on a different theme. Life Coaches will select lesson plans for each meeting that focus on the theme scheduled and tailor them to meet the needs of the group. Peer Life Coaches may identify resources to present to the group to use in addition to the lesson plans provided. The program structure allows a sufficient amount of flexibility to do this. The key is to make sure the lessons are relevant to issues the group is dealing with and are taught in a manner that makes the skills easy to understand and practice.

The Lesson Plans for Goal Setting come from the worksheets included in the Participant Handbook. They will help participants in evaluating their current social involvement, understanding barriers and exploring potential interests. This lays the groundwork for developing the social goals they will pursue throughout their enrollment and beyond. Some of the material in the lesson plans have been created by Mental Health America. Other have been compiled from various sources which are cited in the References section.

My Social Starting Point

Name: _____ Date: _____

Please answer each question the best that you can. You don't have to use all the blanks provided. If you need more space to answer a question, please feel free to use the back of page # 2.

1. Do you have any health concerns that could keep you from participating in social events?

2. Do you feel as though you are able to participate in the hobbies or interests that you have? If not, what prevents this? _____

3. What is your proudest accomplishment? Why? _____

4. If you feel that you haven't accomplished something important to you, what do you think got in your way? _____

5. Who are the people in your life that you can really depend upon for support?

6. How often do you have contact with your friends and/or your family (this includes seeing them in person)? _____

7. Besides seeing your friends and family in person, what other ways do you stay in contact with them?

8. Are you involved in any emotionally close relationships? If so, how do you communicate with these people (in person, e-mail, phone calls, etc.)? How often? _____

9. Name some things that you would like to see improve in your life:

10. Sometimes things happen that make life better. Has this happened to you? If so, what? _____

Thank you for taking your valuable time to fill out this form.

Setting Social Goals

Name: _____ Date: _____

Please answer each question the best that you can. You don't have to use all the blanks provided. If you need more space to answer a question, please feel free to use the back of page # 2.

1. What do you enjoy doing in your free time?

2. List some things that make you the happiest in life.

3. Where do you enjoy spending your free time?

4. Is transportation available when you want to go somewhere? YES NO

5. How do you know what there is to do (internet, read papers, friends tell you)?

6. List some interests or hobbies that you have:

7. How do you follow or participate in these interests or hobbies? _____

8. What would you like to do in the future that you do not currently do now?

9. List some things that you do for fun and how often you do them. For example: "Go out to see the movies-5 X's a month":

10. What do you do to stay healthy (lift weights; go for a run, swim, or dance)?

11. What do you do in the community, how often (shop, church, synagogue, school, or hair/nail salon)?

12. Is there anything that you think would be fun to do in the community that you don't do now?

13. What do you like to do at social events?

14. List 3 goals you have for yourself in the near future (the next 30-90 days):

Thank you for taking your valuable time to fill out this form.

Making Social Strides

Name: _____ Date: _____

Please answer each question the best that you can. You don't have to use all the blanks provided. If you need more space to answer a question, please feel free to use the back of page # 5.

1) List 3 goals you have for yourself in the near future (the next 30-90 days):

2) What steps can you take to reach your first goal? _____

3) What do you think could challenge you in reaching your first goal? _____

4) Are there any special things that you will you need to reach this 1st goal such as: is transportation available; do you need tickets; do you have to sign up before you go? _____

5) How will you be able to find out how to overcome any obstacles that you have discussed in Question 3? _____

6) What have you already done to reach this first goal? _____

7) What is the next step to reaching this first goal? _____

8) What do you hope will be the results of accomplishing this first goal? _____

9) How do you think you might feel if you accomplish this first goal? _____

10) If there are negative consequences to accomplishing this first goal, how do you think you can overcome them? _____

11) What steps can you take to reach your second goal? _____

12) What do you think could challenge you in reaching your 2nd goal? _____

13) Are there any special things that you will need to reach this 2nd goal such as: is transportation available; do you need tickets; do you have to sign up before you go? _____

14) How will you be able to find out how to overcome any obstacles that you have discussed in Question 12? _____

15) What have you already done to reach this second goal? _____

16) What is the next step to reaching this second goal? _____

17) What do you hope will be the results of accomplishing this 2nd goal? _____

18) How do you think you might feel if you accomplish this 2nd goal? _____

19) If there are negative consequences to accomplishing this second goal, how do you think you can overcome them? _____

20) What steps can you take to reach your third goal? _____

21) What do you think could challenge you in reaching your 3rd goal? _____

22) Are there any special things that you will need to reach this 3rd goal such as: is transportation available; do you need tickets; do you have to sign up before you go? _____

23) How will you be able to find out how to overcome any obstacles that you have discussed in Question 21? _____

24) What have you already done to reach this third goal? _____

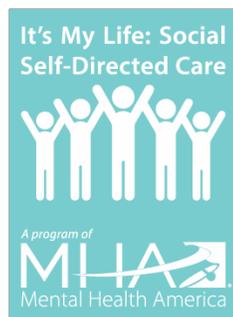
25) What is the next step to reaching this third goal? _____

26) What do you hope will be the results of accomplishing this 3rd goal? _____

27) How do you think you might feel if you accomplish this 3rd goal? _____

28) If there are negative consequences to accomplishing this third goal, how do you think you can overcome them? _____

Thank you for taking your valuable time to fill out this form.



You and Your Provider

Some people find it really hard to say what they want and don't want from their treatment. But over the years, more and more people with mental health conditions realize it's their right to speak up. In fact, some people call themselves mental health "consumers" to show that they can choose what services to purchase and where.

There are lots of ways you can team up with your provider:

- **Study up on your condition and possible ways to feel well.** The more you know, the better you will be able to discuss your care.
- **Tell your provider your goals for treatment.** Think about questions like: What are your main life goals, and what are your goals for treatment? Are there certain behaviors you want to work on most? Is relief from symptoms extremely important, or are you willing to live with some symptoms to avoid medication side effects?
- **Be honest.** Your providers can't really help you if they don't know the whole picture. Don't say you're fine if you're not.
- **Keep your overall health in mind.** It makes sense that you should work with your provider on overall health issues because your mental health and overall health are so closely related. Too often, people with mental illnesses develop other health conditions, such as heart disease or diabetes. It's a good idea to tell your providers that you want to focus on all aspects of your wellness.
- **If you get treatment in a community clinic,** ask to see the same provider each time since an ongoing relationship can help build recovery.

If You're Not Satisfied with Your Care

Feeling comfortable with your provider is very important to the success of your treatment. Of course, few situations are completely peaceful or perfect. In therapy, for example, even though talking about upsetting concerns can be helpful it also can feel very uncomfortable. But if you feel you are not getting results or don't feel comfortable with the therapist, it may be because the treatment you are receiving is not the best one for your needs.

You can raise concerns about your care:

- **Discuss any problems with your therapist.** A competent therapist will be eager to discuss your reactions to therapy and respond to your feelings about the process.
- **If you disagree with your provider about your care,** state your concerns calmly. Then try to suggest some possible solutions.
- **If you feel your concerns aren't being dealt with,** try to arrange a consultation with another therapist to help you decide whether to change therapists. You can also try discussing your concerns with a peer counselor, social worker, or members of a support group. They might be able to offer suggestions of other therapists to seek out.
- **If you are dissatisfied with the services you are receiving from a community mental health center,** you can request a consultation with another therapist. If you are still not satisfied, you can ask to speak with the

center's administrator. Sometimes, a clinic's patient advocate or ombudsman can help.

- **If you feel your therapist is violating professional standards or ethics**, government offices in every state assist in these situations. The Protection and Advocacy (P&A) office investigates complaints about mental health treatment in public and private facilities. Find your P&A office by selecting your state on the right side of the page at <http://www.ndrn.org/en/ndrn-member-agencies.html>.

Remember that you have a right to express your goals for treatment, and you have a right to be treated with respect and dignity. For more information on your rights regarding your mental health, contact your state protection and advocacy office at <http://www.ndrn.org/en/ndrn-member-agencies.html>.

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SDM: Things to Share with Your Doctor

Name: _____

Date: _____

How am I doing?

Mood _____

Anxiety _____

Thoughts _____

Sleep _____

Appetite _____

Exercise _____

Relationships _____

Work, school or recreation _____

Tobacco, alcohol or drug use _____

Medicine side-effects _____

Physical health _____

Other problems in my life _____

How am I helping myself?

What are my goals?

For the next two weeks _____

For the next two months _____

For the next year _____

What do I want the doctor to do for me today?

Name _____ Date _____

Communication Comfort

1. How well do you communicate your thoughts and feelings to others?
2. What do you enjoy about speaking?
3. What areas do you feel comfortable talking about?
4. What gives you this level of comfort?
5. Would this work when you speak about unfamiliar or uncomfortable topics?
6. What would you need in place to make that happen?

Role Playing

Making Requests

1. A good friend of yours has borrowed money from you on several occasions in the past. You believe that the amount they have borrowed has become too much. This person owes you \$50.00, and it is becoming difficult for you to keep lending money to them.

You decide to ask for re-payment of the amount owed to you.

2. At the end of a church service you see another person who you would like to meet. It is around lunch time and all services are done for the day.

You decide to go over to this person and ask them if they would join you for lunch at a nearby cafe.

3. Every Saturday morning you spend time reading outside on your patio. One of your neighbors is shifting a stepladder around. They have bumped into a ceramic pot-plant and damaged it. You recently decorated this pot.

You decide to speak to your neighbor about this.

Beginning and Continuing Conversations

4. You have been taking part in a group which goes bowling and swimming. Two weeks ago, a new person joined the group, but you have not spoken to them yet. This morning you think you would like to talk with them.

You sit next to them on the bus on the way to the bowling alley. You say...

5. You are talking to a friend at a lunch time BBQ. While you are talking to them, you see an old friend you have not seen for a while.

You would like to catch up with them and you see that they are about to leave, so you say...

6. At your last appointment with your psychiatrist, you were told that you will have a new case manager from now on. An appointment for this person to come over and see you at your house was set up. It is now two days later. You are at home and expect the new case manager to arrive soon.

You hear a knock on your door. You...

Ending a Conversation

7. At the local McDonald's, you are having lunch with a friend. The conversation with this friend is going well. Suddenly you remember that you are going on an outing with a group from church. You realize that you are running late and must leave straight away to get there in time.

You say to your friend...

8. You are having a conversation with the neighbor who lives next door to you. You think they are a nice person, but you know from past experiences, that they like to talk for a long time.

You decide that you have other things to do, so you say...

Talk-Time Clean-up

9. You are talking with someone you live with. You have been talking for a few minutes about a movie they have just seen. You find it interesting since you have been wondering what movie to go see for quite some time. In the middle of the conversation, they begin talking about the weather.

They seem to have gone "off track", so you say...

10. You are listening to someone tell you how they have "figured out" how to get to the newest COSTCO's. Recently, you have tried to find it, but haven't been able to.

You are not sure you have understood their directions. You say...

Emotional Regulation: Observing and Emotions

Name: _____ Date: _____

Emotion Name: _____ Intensity {0-100}: _____

Prompting Event for my emotion: /What started the emotion?)

Interpretations /beliefs, assumptions, appraisals) of the situation:

Body changes and sensing: /What am I feeling/sensing in my body?)

Body language: /What is my facial expression, posture or gestures?)

Action Urges: /What do I feel like doing? What do I want to say?)

Actions Taken: (What, specifically, did I do or say about the situation?)

Function of the emotion:

- What did the emotion communicate to others?
- How did the emotion influence others and/or their behavior?
- How did the emotion organize or motivate you to do something?
- What information did the emotion give you? (How did it color your perception or lead you to any conclusions?)

Deep Breathing

Exercise:

Sit up straight. (Do not arch your back) First exhale completely through your mouth. Place your hands on your stomach, just above your waist. Breathe in slowly through your nose, pushing your hands out with your stomach. This ensures that you are breathing deeply. Imagine that you are filling your body with air from the bottom up.

Hold your breath to a count of two to five, or whatever you can handle. It is easier to hold your breath if you continue to hold out your stomach. Slowly and steadily breathe out through your mouth, feeling your hands move back in as you slowly contract your stomach, until most of the air is out. Exhalation is a little longer than inhalation.

After you get some experience you don't need to use your hands to check your breathing.

You can also do the above breathing exercise lying on your back. Deep breathing exercises can help you to relax before you go to sleep for the night, or fall back asleep if you awaken in the middle of the night.

You can also practice deep breathing exercises standing- e.g. while sitting in traffic, or standing in a lineup at the grocery store. If you are really tense and feel as if you are holding your breath, simply concentrate on slowly breathing in and out.

Grounding*

Grounding is a way of helping yourself cope with stressful periods in your life. While the intrusive symptoms of traumatic stress – like flashbacks, memories, and upsetting thoughts – cannot always be stopped, you can learn techniques that will minimize their impact. Grounding techniques can help you regain a sense of safety and control in your life. They can help you anchor yourself in the here and now and keep you from getting lost in the past.

Below you will find a description of several grounding techniques.** One (or more) of these techniques is likely to suit you better than the others. Choose the technique that you would like to focus on and practice it regularly, especially when you are feeling well. If you become good at using the technique during *non-crisis* times, you will be better equipped to use it when you *are* in crisis.

Seated Grounded Posture: This is a posture in which both feet are on the floor and your spine is straight, but not rigidly so. In this posture, you are actively aware of your body's existence and its connection to the ground. Your legs should be uncrossed – this allows the flow of energy to pass freely through the body. Your hands may be resting on your thighs or on the arms of the chair. Your head is held high. Notice the way your body rests in the chair; notice the way your feet are resting on the ground. This is a posture that can allow you to feel both strong and at ease.

Mindful Walking: Walk carefully, mindfully around the room. Mindful walking can be slow or brisk. The goal is to be fully present with each step as you take it. Bring your attention to the actual sensations of walking. Notice how the heel, then the ball of your foot makes contact with the floor as you walk. Notice the bend in your knees, the flex in your toes, the shift in your weight with each step you take. When your attention wanders, bring it back to your walking. Center yourself in your body and be present in the moment. Count ten steps, and ten more, and ten more, until you feel calmed.

Writing / Saying Grounding Statements: Develop several grounding statements that remind you that you are safe and provide you with comfort. You may want to write the statements on a small piece of paper or "flashcard" and carry them around in your wallet. You may want to write the statement on a larger piece of paper that you will hang on a wall in your home. Write your statements in a color that represents safety and strength to you. You can say the statements out loud, or simply read or think them. Examples of grounding statements include:

- "This feeling will soon pass."
- "You are no longer a child. You are an adult now, and you are safe."
- "You are strong; you are safe now."

Develop your own grounding statements, ones that have special meaning for you.

Grounding Through Breathing: The breath serves wonderfully as a focus for your attention. Think of it as an anchor that holds you in the present moment and guides you back to the here and now when your mind wanders to the past. By bringing awareness

* Prepared for the Trauma Center by Allyson Pimentel, Ed.M., March 2001

** taken from Susan L. Simonds, *Bridging the Silence; Nonverbal Modalities in the Treatment of Adult Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse* And Jon Kabat-Zinn, *Wherever you go, There You Are*

Grounding, p.2

to your breathing, you are reminding yourself that you are *here now*. Breathe in and attend to the feeling of breathing in; breathe out and attend to the feeling of breathing out. You may want to focus on the air coming in and out of your nostrils or on your abdomen expanding and contracting as you breathe. You may want to count ten breaths on the exhale, and keep counting groups of ten breaths until you feel calmed. You may also want to use calming, grounding statements as you breathe, like:

- Inhaling, "I am breathing in calm." or "I am breathing in good energy."
- Exhaling, "I am breathing out anxiety," or "I am breathing out bad energy," or "I am safe."

Other Grounding Techniques

- Dance and/or sing to a song that makes you feel good.
- Stamp your feet. Feel the power in your legs.
- Visual grounding
 - Make eye contact with a safe person.
 - Scan the room to remind yourself that you are *here now*.
 - *Don't* direct your gaze downward: Look up, look out, look around.
- Hold, look at, listen to and/or smell a grounding object. Grounding objects may be distinguished by their smell, shape, weight, sound, or texture. Any object that comforts you, that helps you to remember that you are in the present, rather than the past, can be a grounding object. Some examples are:
 - A smooth stone that you've found on the beach
 - A bell that, when you ring it, has a soothing sound
 - A piece of sandpaper with a course texture
 - A photograph of a beautiful scene or of loved ones
 - A small vial of a pleasant fragrance
 - A piece of jewelry, like a ring or bracelet
 - A picture that you've drawn of a scene that represents safety and comfort.

You may want to hold, look at, smell, listen to your grounding object while engaged in one of the other grounding techniques. For example, you can hold your stone while repeating your grounding statements, while walking mindfully, or while doing grounding breathing. This way, you strengthen the grounding properties of your grounding object because it becomes associated with other experiences of comfort and safety. If your grounding object is small enough, you can carry it with you wherever you go. Knowing that you have access to a small oasis of calm and comfort right there can help.

The Seven Pillars of Mindfulness

Non-Judging

Mindfulness is developed by being an impartial witness to our own experience impartially. This requires standing back and observing our own thoughts. A great way to practice this is observing your own breathing.

Patience

Patience is considered to be a form of wisdom. It demonstrates that we understand and accept that sometimes things must unfold in their own way and in their own time. Take for example the Butterfly chrysalis if someone were to interrupt the process of the butterfly emerging from the chrysalis, even with the best intentions, the butterfly would never have the strength to fly.

Beginners Mind

Often what we 'already know' can get in the way of seeing things as they really are. Try attempting to experience everything as a new experience even if it is the old same activity. Even routine activities are a new experience because every moment is a brand-new moment. This prevents us from getting stuck in the rut of our own expertise. Try this experiment with a spouse or partner, a co-worker, or even on the drive home from work. ..

Trust

Cultivating trust in your own inner wisdom is an essential part of mindfulness practice. Learning to honor your feelings and intuition when something does not feel right is a fundamental aspect of cultivating inner wisdom. When practicing mindfulness, you are taking responsibility for yourself and learning to listen and trust your own being. The more you trust yourself the easier it will be to trust others. This is particularly useful in the practice of yoga, or any other form of exercise you do. You need to pay attention to your body, back off or stop particular stretches.

Non-Striving

There is purpose in almost everything we do. Either striving to get something or somewhere. In meditation, this attitude is actually an obstacle. It involves practice and energy in non-doing, there is no other goal other than for you to be yourself where ever you are at. This paradoxical thinking may sound crazy, especially because most people embarked on the mindfulness journey to reduce pain and/or stress. However, if you were to actually sit down and say, 'Now I am going to now reduce my stress and pain, or both by doing this meditation', you have introduced the idea into your mind of where you should be as opposed to just being where you are.

Acceptance

Acceptance means seeing things as they truly are in the present moment. Quite often we deny or resist what is - especially if we don't like it. Unfortunately, by not accepting we are spending much of our energy trying to force something to be different. This can create more tension and prevent positive things from occurring. Acceptance does not mean you must take a passive attitude towards everything and abandon your principles and values. It simply means you are no longer resisting.

Letting go

Often our minds get caught up on a certain thought or idea, despite our knowledge of that no good can come of these particular thoughts, we continue to focus on them. Alternatively, there can be certain thoughts or emotions that we try to avoid. In Mindfulness, we try to just experience things as they are. Letting go is a way of letting things be as they are. Consider what outcomes you are attached too, and see if you can practice non-attachment. Try letting the experience be what it is and just experience it moment by moment. A good example of letting go is falling asleep. We have to let go of our thoughts and our tension in our body in order to go to sleep.

AFFIRMATIONS

An affirmation is a positive statement you say to yourself over and over to help you become more of who you want to be and achieve what you want in life. You can create affirmations about anything you want to improve about yourself or your situation. You can also use affirmations to change negative messages you hold about yourself. If you think you can't, you won't. Similarly, if you say, "I can do it!" you will.

There are many reasons why people develop negative beliefs about themselves and others. Some of your negative or limiting thoughts may come from the type of images you saw or the stories you heard when you were growing up. Some may be things that you were told about yourself as a child. Some may come from stereotypes of attractive or successful people that don't match the way you look or feel. Sometimes, biases or omissions in the history you learned in school can shape the way you look at your role in the world.

When you hear a negative message in your mind such as, "I'll never succeed!" or "Why am I such an idiot?" pause, and ask yourself where that message came from. Is that your thought, or are they the words of your mother, grandfather, or first grade teacher? Understanding where these thoughts started can help you change your negative thinking.

When you first begin to confront your negative beliefs, it may sound strange or awkward to say an affirmation because you do not yet believe it. For instance, if you have always had trouble with math and you believe that you'll never be able to learn it, it may sound false or odd to say: "I enjoy learning math" or "I am capable of learning math." But by replacing the negative thought with a positive, you make it possible to do anything. And the more often you repeat your affirmations, the more likely they are to become true for you.

It is impossible to change past events and people that planted negative thoughts or beliefs in your mind. The important thing to remember is that you have the power *now* to create positive inner messages for yourself.

TIPS

1. Choose a limiting thought or belief that you really want to change.
2. Create a short, simple statement using ALL positive words and the present tense to express what you would rather believe about yourself.
3. Remember to use an affirmation that sounds authentic to you. What sounds right for one person may sound unrealistic to someone else.
4. Write your affirmation on a card to put on the refrigerator, use it as a bookmark, or keep it anywhere you will see it and remember to say it.
5. Practice saying your affirmation as often as you can - out loud in front of a mirror, or before falling asleep and when you first wake up.
6. Focus on just a few affirmations at a time until you notice changes in those areas of your life.
7. Be persistent and have patience.
8. Share your affirmation only with people who will support your success.
9. Create an image or symbol in your mind to give power to your words.
10. Use affirmations to improve all aspects of your life: mental, emotional, physical, financial, social, etc.
11. Be aware of changes in how you feel about yourself. Recognize and reward yourself for your results.

Decatastrophizing

What is the catastrophe that I am worried about?

Clearly state: What am I worried will happen? What am I predicting will happen?

Change any "what if..." statements into clear predictions about what you fear will happen

Rate how awful you believe this catastrophe will be (0-100%)

How *likely* is this event to happen?

Has anything this bad ever happened to you before?

How often does this kind of thing happen to you?

Realistically, is this likely to happen now?

How *awful* would it be if this did happen?

What is the worst case scenario?

What is the best case scenario?

What would a friend say to me about my worry?

Just supposing the worst did happen, what would I do to *cope*?

Has anything similar happened before? How did I cope then?

Who or what could I call on to help me get through it?

What resources, skills, or abilities would be helpful to me if it did happen?

What positive & reassuring thing do you want to say to yourself about the 'catastrophe' now?

What would I like to hear to reassure me?

What tone of voice would I want to hear that reassurance in?

Rate how awful you believe this catastrophe will be now (0-100%)

SOCIAL SKILLS COMFORT

Name: _____

Date: _____

These are social skills we will be working on together. Please look at the following skills and decide how comfortable you are in using them **now**. Please use the following scale for describing how comfortable you are in using the social skills:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all comfortable		little comfortable		somewhat comfortable			quite comfortable		very comfortable

Making Requests _____

Listening to Others _____

Beginning and Continuing a Conversation _____

Understanding a Conversation _____

Ending a Conversation _____

Getting Your Positive Feelings Across to Others _____

Getting Your Unpleasant Feelings Across to Others _____

Reaching a Solution Together _____

Turning Down Unwanted Requests or Actions _____

Examining the Rules of Friendship

1. We all have a mental image of what a good friend is supposed to be. We make or lose friends because they do or do not live up to our standards. What has experience taught you about friendship?
2. How does a friend differ from an acquaintance?
3. How does an ordinary friend differ from a best friend?
4. What should a friend do if you have a bad idea?
5. When, if ever, should a friend break a promise?
6. Should your coach or care providers be a friend?
7. Can a friend be much older or much younger?
8. Does a friend have to consider you also to be a friend?
9. What do we owe to our friends?
10. When does a friendship end?

Friendship

Things That Bring Friends Together

- neighborhood
- sports
- family
- books
- religion
- age
- hobbies
- pets
- school/work/volunteering
- movies

Write each thing on the list in the order of its importance to you. I

1.

6.

2.

7.

3.

8.

4.

9.

5.

10.



Qualities That Keep Friends Together

- funny
- healthy
- quiet
- understanding
- smart
- brave
- creative
- loyal
- honest
- loving

Write each quality on the list in the order of its importance to you.

1.

6.

2.

7.

3.

8.

4.

9.

5.

10.

Conversation Etiquette

by CLAIRE VALENTY on JULY 24, 2010

in [BUSINESS & OFFICE ETIQUETTE](#), [EVERYDAY ETIQUETTE](#)



Want to be thought of as a great conversationalist? Aren't sure how to get that title? Here are some easy steps:

Conversation etiquette is essential. There is nothing worse than trying to talk to someone who is completely clueless when it comes to conversation etiquette. It can feel as if you are not communicating with each other at all, and isn't communication the point? Take care of your part of the conversation by brushing up on your conversation etiquette.

- 1) The #1 rule in conversation etiquette is: **don't interrupt**. Don't think that what you have to say is so much more important or correct. It's the other person's turn to talk and what they have to say is just as important (although, probably not as correct as you, right?). Wait calmly until they have finished what they want to say; then you can talk. And don't sit there with a look on your face while you're waiting that clearly implies you don't give two cents about what they're saying and you just want them to shut their yap so you can say your piece.
- 2) **Use the right amount of eye contact**. Maintaining the appropriate amount of eye contact when having a conversation shows you are interested. However, don't confuse this for thinking an outright staring competition is in order. That's uncomfortable and a little creepy for the other person.
- 3) If you want to earn bonus conversation etiquette points with your friends or

acquaintances, if there is a group conversation going on that you can tell someone wants to join in, but, they aren't finding the appropriate moment, **ask them a direct question**. The person will be thankful you want to hear their opinion!

4) Conversation etiquette dictates that everyone has opinions; **agree to disagree**. It's natural.

5) If someone has an idea, even if you feel the need to play devil's advocate, conversation etiquette means you **don't laugh in their face**. If you honestly believe it's a horrible idea, nicely point out issues with the person's idea and help them come up with solutions. You don't like it when people say your ideas are dumb; don't do it to someone else.

6) Those with excellent conversation etiquette **don't monopolize the conversation**. If the other person doesn't have much to say, ask them questions to either draw them out of their shell or turn the conversation topic into something they have more interest in.

7) If you are with a group of people that are discussing something you know nothing about, that doesn't mean you have to fake your way through the conversation or meekly step out; it is perfectly acceptable conversation etiquette to **show your interest in learning more by asking questions**.

8) **Respect personal space**. Don't be a close talker. If you don't know what that is, watch the Seinfeld episode. Yes, it is a real problem and yes, if you're branded as one of those, word spreads fast.

At the end of the day, if you are polite, engaged, ask questions and respect everyone's space, even if you don't spout off Shakespeare quotes and discuss technological breakthroughs, everyone will still be impressed at what a great conversationalist you are thanks to your superb conversation etiquette!

<http://etiquette-guide.com/conversation-etiquette/>

Etiquette Guide - United States Dining Etiquette Guide

Use one of two methods when using the fork and knife:

American Style: Knife in right hand, fork in left hand holding food. After a few bite-sized pieces of food are cut, place knife on edge of plate with blades facing in. Eat food by switching fork to right hand (unless you are left handed). A left hand, arm or elbow on the table is bad manners.

Continental/European Style: Knife in right hand, fork in left hand. Eat food with fork still in left hand. The difference is that you don't switch hands-you eat with your fork in your left hand, with the prongs curving downward. Both utensils are kept in your hands with the tines pointed down throughout the entire eating process. If you take a drink, you do not just put your knife down, you put both utensils down into the resting position: cross the fork over the knife.

General Social and Dining Etiquette

Rules:

Dress Code: Follow whatever dress code is requested on the invitation or suggested by the host/hostess.

Arrival: Arrive at least 10 minutes early unless otherwise specified. **Never arrive late!**

Hostess Gift: It is proper to bring a small hostess gift, one that the hostess is not obliged to use that very evening. Gifts such as flowers, candy, wine, or dessert, are not good hostess gifts, as the hostess will feel that it must put it out immediately. **You must not ever expect your gift to be served at the dinner party.**



Seating: At a dinner party, wait for the host or hostess sits down before taking your seat. If the host/hostess asks you to sit, then do. At a very formal dinner party, if there are no name cards at the table, wait until the host indicates where you should sit. The seating will typically be man-woman-man-woman with the women seated to the right of the men.

Prayer: A prayer or 'blessing' may be customary in some households. The dinner guests may join in or be respectfully silent. Most prayers are made by the host before the meal is eaten.

Serving food:

Food is served from the left. Dishes are removed from the right. Always say please when asking for something. At a restaurant, be sure to say thank you to your server and bus boy after they have removed any used items. Butter, spreads, or dips should be transferred from the serving dish to your **plate before** spreading or eating.

Passing dishes or food:

Pass food from the left to the right. Do not stretch across the table, crossing other guests, to reach food or condiments. If another diner asks for the salt or pepper, **pass both together, even** if a table mate asks for only one of them. This is so dinner guests won't have to search for orphaned shakers. Set any passed item, whether it's the salt and pepper shakers, a bread basket, or a butter plate, **directly on the table instead** of passing hand to- hand. **Never intercept a pass.** Snagging a roll out of the breadbasket or taking a shake of salt when it is in-route to someone else is a no-no. Always **use serving utensils** to serve yourself, not your personal silverware.

Etiquette Guide - United States Dining Etiquette Guide

Eating:

Do NOT talk with food in your mouth! This is very rude and distasteful to watch! Wait until you have swallowed the food in your mouth. Always taste your food before seasoning it. Usually the host(ess) has gone through a lot of work making sure the food served is delicious to their standards. **It is rude to add salt and pepper before tasting the food.** Don't blow on your food to cool it off. If it is too hot to eat, take the hint and wait until it cools.

Always scoop food, using the proper utensil, **away from you.** Cut only enough food for the next mouthful (**cut no more than two bites of food at a time**). Eat in small bites and slowly.

Do eat a little of everything on your plate. If you do not like the food and feel unable to give a compliment, **just keep silent.** It is acceptable to leave some food on your plate if you are full and have eaten enough. If the food served is not to your liking, it is polite to at least attempt to eat a small amount of it. It is never acceptable to ask a person why they have not eaten all the food. Don't make an issue if you don't like something or can't eat it.

Do not "play with" your food or utensils. Never wave or point silverware. Do not hold food on the fork or spoon while talking, nor wave your silverware in the air or point with it. Try to **pace your eating so** that you don't finish before others are halfway through. If you are a slow eater, try to speed up a bit on this occasion so you don't hold everyone up. Never continue to eat long after others have stopped.

Table Manners:

Keep elbows *off the* table. Keep your left hand in your lap unless you are using it.

Do not talk with your mouth full. Chew with your mouth closed. Guests should do their best to mingle and make light conversation with everyone. **Do not talk excessively loud.** Give others equal opportunities for conversation. Talk about cheerful, pleasant things at the table.

Loud eating noises such as slurping and burping are very impolite. Do not blow your nose at the dinner table. Say "Excuse me," or "I'll be right back," before leaving the table. Excuse yourself to visit the restroom. Wash your hands before returning to the dining room. If you cough, cover your mouth with your napkin to stop the spread of germs and muffle the noise. If your cough becomes unmanageable, excuse yourself to visit the restroom. Wash your hands before returning to the dining room.

Turn off your cell phone or switch it to silent or vibrate mode before sitting down to eat, and leave it in your pocket or purse. **It is impolite to answer a phone during dinner.** If you must make or take a call, excuse yourself from the table and step outside of the restaurant.

Do not use a toothpick or apply makeup at the table.

Once used, your utensils, including the handles, **must not touch the table again.** Always rest forks, knives, and spoons on the side of your plate or in the bowl. When you are finished with a course, place your utensils (silverware) used on your place in the 4:20 position.

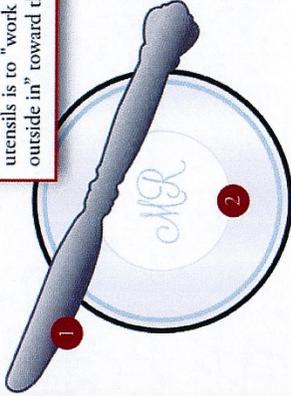
Eat to your left, drink to your right. Any food dish to the left is yours, and any glass to the right is yours.

Starting with the knife, fork, or spoon that is farthest from your plate, work your way in, using one utensil for each course. The salad fork is on your outermost left, followed by your dinner fork. Your soup spoon is on your outermost right, followed by your beverage spoon, salad knife and dinner knife. Your dessert spoon and fork are above your plate or brought out with dessert. If you remember the rule to work from the outside in, you'll be fine.

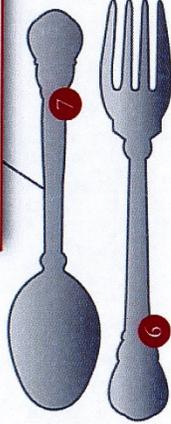
HOW TO Properly SET YOUR TABLE

1. Butter Spreader
2. Bread Plate
3. Salad Fork
4. Dinner Fork
5. Dinner Plate
6. Dessert Fork
7. Dessert Spoon
8. Dinner Knife
9. Salad Knife
10. Soup Spoon
11. Wine Glass
12. Water Glass
13. Cloth Napkin

The general rule when using utensils is to "work from the outside in" toward the plate.



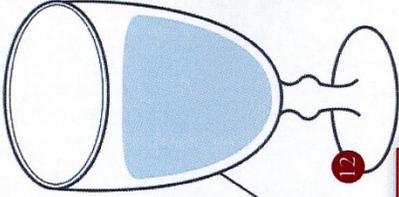
If you're using more than one spoon, such as a soup spoon and a dessert spoon, the dessert spoon (or teaspoon) can be placed horizontally at the top of the plate.



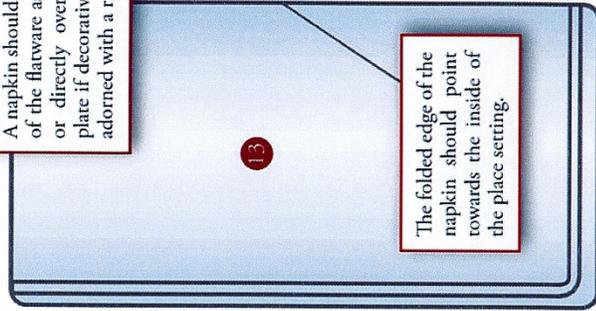
Make sure plates are far enough apart to provide guests sufficient elbowroom—about 2 feet apart from plate center to plate center.



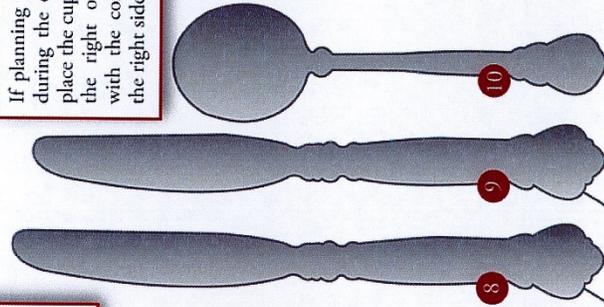
Not sure which glass to fill with what? The dinner knife will typically point to the water glass and the wine glasses will be slightly more on the outside.



A napkin should go to the left of the flatware as shown here or directly over the dinner plate if decoratively folded or adorned with a ring.



The folded edge of the napkin should point towards the inside of the place setting.



Space all flatware about .5" apart from each other.

To dress up a table setting, place a colorful charger under the dinner plate.

Make sure to always keep the blades of the knives pointing in toward the plate.

If planning to serve coffee during the dessert course, place the cup and saucer to the right of the setting, with the coffee spoon on the right side of the saucer.

Name _____

Date _____

Self Esteem/ Self Concept

Self-awareness is essential for success in our lives. We need to know ourselves from the inside out. We must develop a clear picture and understanding of our Self Esteem and Self Concept.

1. How do you see yourself?
2. What are your strengths?
3. What makes you unique?
4. What are your weaknesses?
5. What do you expect/demand of yourself?
6. What can keep you moving forward?

SLEEP HYGEINE TIPS

* **Sleep only when sleepy**

This limits the time you are awake in bed.

* **If you can't fall asleep within 20 minutes, get up and do something boring until you feel sleepy**

Sit quietly in the dark or read the warranty on your refrigerator. Don't expose yourself to bright light while you are up. The light gives cues to your brain that it is time to wake up.

* **Don't take naps**

This will ensure you are tired at bedtime. If you just can't make it through the day without a nap, sleep less than one hour, before 3 pm.

* **Get up and go to bed the same time every day**

Even on weekends! When your sleep cycle has a regular rhythm, you will feel better.

* **Exercise regularly during the day and refrain from exercise at least 3 hours before bedtime**

Regular exercise is recommended to help you sleep well, but the timing of the workout is important. Exercising in the morning or early afternoon will not interfere with sleep.

* **Develop sleep rituals and routines**

It is important to give your body cues that it is time to slow down and sleep. Listen to relaxing music, use lavender oils, read something soothing for 15 minutes, have a cup of caffeine free tea, do relaxation breathing exercises.

* **Only use your bed for sleeping**

Refrain from using your bed to watch TV, pay bills, do work or reading...So when you go to bed your body knows it is time to sleep. Sex is the only exception.

* **Stay away from caffeine, nicotine and alcohol at least 4-6 hours before bed**

Caffeine and nicotine are stimulants that interfere with your ability to fall asleep. Coffee, tea, cola, cocoa, chocolate and some prescription and non-prescription drugs contain caffeine. Tobacco products contain nicotine. Alcohol may seem to help you sleep in the beginning as it slows brain activity, but you will end up having worse sleep.

* **Have a light snack before bed**

If your stomach is too empty, that can interfere with sleep. However, if you eat a heavy meal before bedtime, that can interfere as well. Dairy products, bananas, nuts, turkey contain tryptophan, which acts as a natural sleep inducer. Tryptophan is probably why a warm glass of milk is sometimes recommended.

* **Take a hot bath 90 minutes before bedtime**

A hot bath will raise your body temperature, but it is the *drop* in body temperature that may leave you feeling sleepy.

* **Make sure your bed and bedroom are quiet and comfortable**

A hot room can be uncomfortable. A cooler room along with enough blankets to stay warm is recommended. If light in the early morning bothers you, get a blackout shade or wear a slumber mask. If noise bothers you, wear earplugs or get a "white noise" machine.

* **Use sunlight to set your biological clock**

As soon as you get up in the morning, go outside and turn your face to the sun for 15 minutes. Bright light during the day helps your body produce melatonin (sleep hormone).

Other Tips from Professionals:

- rub your feet with lotion and/or wear socks to bed
- turn your clock away from bed
- take electronic equipment out of the bedroom or move it away from your bed.

Behavioral Techniques:

Sleep restriction: decrease the amount of time you are in bed down to no less than 6 hours. Example (10pm to 4am) When you can't sleep for 35-40 minutes you get out of bed and do your relaxation exercises. When your amount of sleep increases to 5 to 5 ½ hours of the 6 hours of the time you are in bed (or 85-90%), you increase the amount of time you are in bed by 15-20 minutes (in general do not increase the amount of time in bed by more than 30 minutes a week).

Breathing: breathe deeply in through your nose for five seconds. Exhale through your mouth for five seconds. Repeat until feeling relaxed.

Natural Sleep Aids

(Note: Always check with your doctor before starting any new medicines)

Mild: (a good place to start)

Chamomile, Passion Flower, Hops, Chinese Skullcap, Lemon Balm:

Can usually be found in 'sleepy time' or 'bedtime' tea

Stronger:

Valerian, Kava Kava (ask your doctor before starting)

Natural Hormone:

Melatonin 0.3mg-6mg about 1hr before bed. Use the lowest effective dose.





The Importance of Developing a Support System

On 10 Dec 2014, in [stress](#), [mental health](#), [self-improvement](#)

by [Cathy Williams, MSW, LCSW, CEAP](#)

Part of life is experiencing ups and downs. We want people who understand us and can be depended upon

during tough times. We need people who will listen to us and give us honest feedback. Research has proved that having a support system has many positive benefits, such as higher levels of well-being, better coping skills and a longer and healthier life. Studies have also shown that social support can reduce depression and anxiety. Some people do best with a large support group, while others need a small support system. Giving and receiving support from others is a basic human need.

The goal of social support is to decrease stress. If you are looking to decrease stress by developing a support network, start with people who are already in your life. You may want to make a list and determine who is healthy and positive and who is not. You may want to limit contact with the negative people in your life. Negative people can drain your energy and bring you down. Watch for these types of people who may be negative: blamers, liars, alcoholics, drug abusers and those who put you down. Your time and energy need to be invested on those who make you feel good about yourself.

Support can come from family, friends, pets, neighbors and clergy. Support can be emotional or financial. Support can come from a mental health professional. There are also support groups that provide education and an opportunity to be with others who are experiencing a similar situation. Support groups may be led by a professional or a member of the group. There are also support group websites. These are useful because you do not need to leave your home to get help. Support comes in many forms, and it is helpful to have a variety of different resources to lean on.

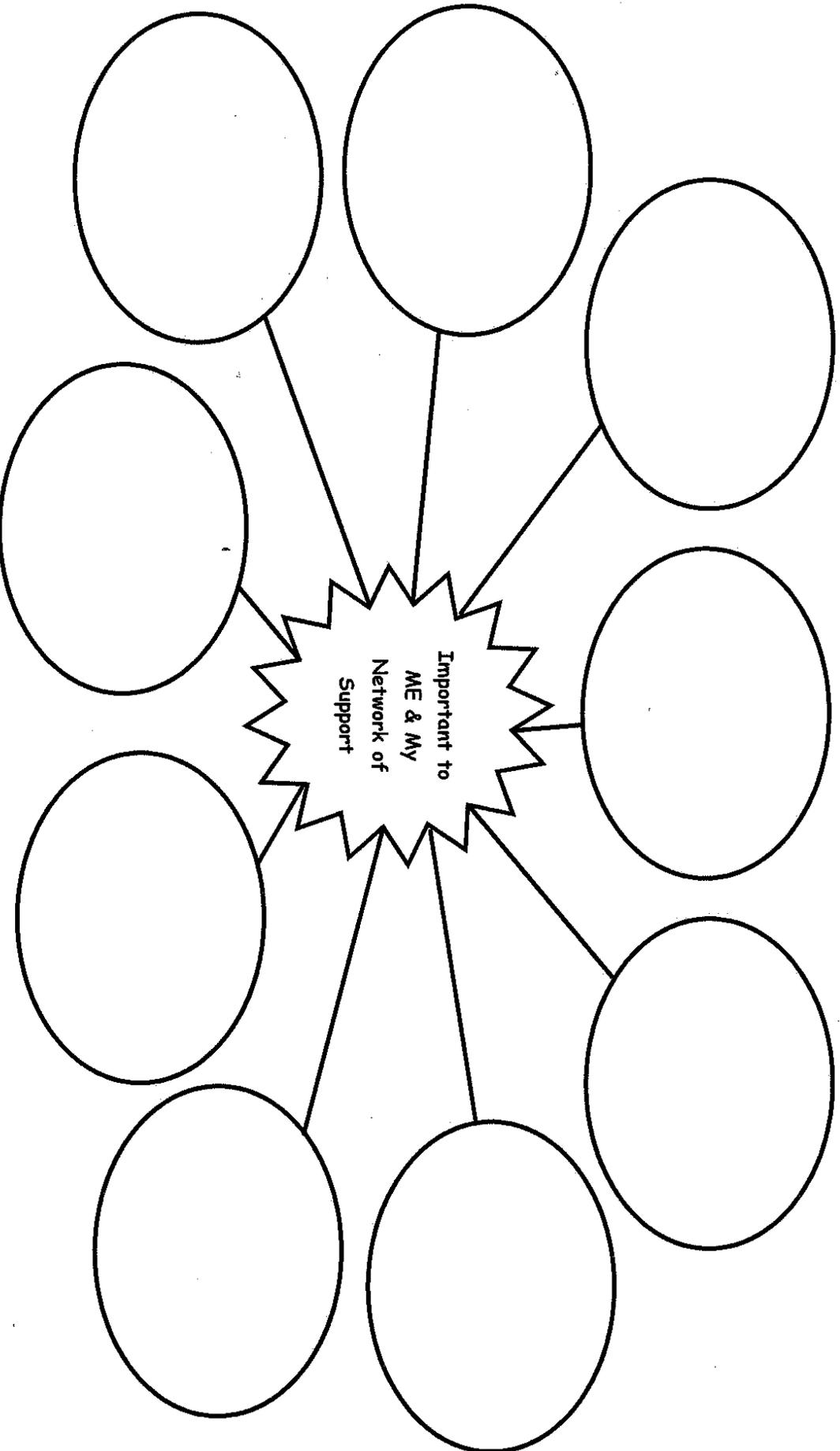
Helpful Tips

1. Review your current family and friends; evaluate who may be helpful.
2. Try new activities to expose yourself to different people.
3. Join a book club.
4. Get active with being on a sports team.
5. Let important people in your life know that you appreciate them.
6. Be willing to ask for help.

<https://www.bjceap.com/Blog/ArtMID/448/ArticleID/139/The-Importance-of-Developing-a-Support-System>

NETWORK OF SUPPORT MAPPING WORKSHEET

- A. Think about all the areas of your life that are important to you. Label the circles with those important areas, for example: having friends, my family, how I look and feel, getting an education so I can be successful, etc. Add circles as you need to.
- B. In those areas/circles, write in the names of people or activities that support you. You might use different colors to indicate different things - which may also help you see interesting patterns.
- C. Next, examine your Network of Support Map. Do you have enough support in all the areas that are important to you?





Self-Awareness Worksheet

Who I am?

Our Self-Awareness worksheet (Who am I?) is the first worksheet in a series of worksheets we use for Self-Discovery and Goal Setting. This Self-Awareness worksheet focuses on discovering “Who am I?.” It is an all-encompassing worksheet that address talents, qualities, values, perception, and self-reflection. The other worksheets in the series focus on a specific aspect of self-Discovery.

The other Self Discovery Workshops/worksheets in the series include:

1. Personal Attributes
2. Values and Principles
3. Emotional Awareness
4. Tendencies and Habits
5. Needs Assessment

Self-Awareness Worksheet

Self-Awareness happens through reflection. You can have numerous experiences in your life, but still lack self-awareness. You need to take the time to step outside of your experiences and reflect on them. The key areas for self-awareness include our personality traits, personal values, emotions, habits, and the psychological needs that motivate our behaviors.

Self-awareness and/or Self Discovery is about knowing and understanding:

- your beliefs and principles
- What you value and what is important to you
- what motivates you
- your own emotions
- your thinking patterns
- your tendencies to react to certain situations
- what you want out of life

Who I am?

To get you thinking about your personal development plan and your mission statement, spend some time contemplating the following:

TALENTS

What are your greatest talents or skills?

Which of your talents or skills gives you the greatest sense of pride or satisfaction?

What talents or skills do you admire most in others?

TRAITS/QUALITIES

What are your five greatest strengths?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

What do you feel are your two biggest weaknesses?

- 1.
- 2.

What are your best qualities/characteristics?

What qualities do you wish you had?

What qualities or traits do you most admire in others?

What behaviors, traits, or qualities do you want other people to admire in you?

Do you spend enough time on/with the things you most value? Why or why not?

REFLECTION

List three (3) things that you are:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

List three (3) things that you are not:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

What is something that represents you? (e.g. song, animal, flower, poem, symbol, jewelry, etc....) why?

What do you like best about yourself?

What do you like least about yourself?

Conclusion

Loneliness and social exclusion destroy health and happiness. Research has shown that the lack of connectedness to friends and community worsens psychiatric problems and leads to chronic illness and early mortality. In surveys conducted, with people living with severe psychiatric disorders, asking what factors contributed most to their recovery, the number one answer is some variation on “having at least one person who believes in me, having at least one friend”.

Social inclusion is about being able to participate in and contribute to social life – in economic, social, psychological, and political terms. To do this requires having personal capacity as well as access to a range of social roles. (Merton, R., Bateman, J. (2007)) It’s My Life is an innovative, fun, supportive, and effective tool for building relationships in the community and discovering meaningful and productive activities.

Additionally, savings in the reduction of emergency services, increased overall health, and lowered re-hospitalization rates make this an affordable service for managed care and state funded programs. It is highly relevant to any whole health approach to behavioral health.

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