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# Peer Support for Substance Use Recovery

When you are struggling with a substance use disorder, it's easy to feel like no one else understands. But you don't have to go through recovery alone. A peer support worker is a key member of your treatment team. This is someone who has successfully gone through their own recovery. They understand what you are dealing with right now—and they are there to support you on your journey.

## What is a peer support worker?

A peer support worker is someone who has also gone through a struggle with substance use disorder. They have made it through recovery and are trained to help others.

Peer support workers are not therapists or healthcare providers. But they play a very unique, personal role on your team. They are trained to listen and be supportive to both you and your family members. They have been on your journey. They will connect you to helpful resources and provide practical coaching. And they can share their own personal experiences to help inspire you in your recovery.

Depending on where they work, peer support workers may go by different names, such as:

- Peer specialist
- Peer recovery coach
- Peer advocate
- Peer recovery support specialist

But their goal is the same: To help you on your recovery path by providing acceptance, understanding, resources, and support.

## How can a peer support worker help me?

There are many ways that a peer support worker can help you on your path to recovery. Here are some of the things they may do:

Provide understanding and support. A peer support worker knows exactly what you're going through. They've been there, too. They will:

- Listen to you, be supportive, and offer suggestions
- Respect you and accept you as you are, without any judgment
- Validate your feelings and concerns
- Be available to meet when it's convenient for you
- Offer support for your family members

Help you manage your treatment and recovery. A peer support worker can help you on your recovery path by:

- Showing you how to access services

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- Helping you to communicate well with the rest of your treatment team
  - Helping you make healthy choices for physical and emotional wellness
  - Coaching you to set goals for the future and provide strategies to help you reach them
  - Offering support to help prevent a relapse

Help you connect to others in your community. Dealing with substance use disorder can make you feel very alone. A peer support worker can:

- Locate helpful resources and services in your local area
- Go with you to appointments or activities if you would like
- Find ways for you to help others in your community, such as by volunteering
- Help you to improve your personal relationships
- Help you create a positive social network that offers you friendship, love, and support

Encourage you and give you hope. It's important to have positive examples in your life of people who have gone through recovery. A peer support worker can:

- Share strategies that worked for them
- Show you that recovery is possible
- Inspire you to make the changes needed in your own life
- Cheer you on and celebrate with you when you reach milestones

Support you if there's a crisis. If a relapse or crisis occurs, a peer support worker is there to:

- Understand when you are showing signs that you need additional help
- Make sure you know when you need to get medical care
- Be there for you with resources and support
- Help you to get through the situation and back on your recovery path

## **How do I find a peer support worker?**

Reach out to your healthcare provider, substance use counselor, or support group. They can help you find a peer support worker in your area.