

Peer Support Tip Sheet: Principles of Peer Support

This tip sheet briefly outlines the principles of peer support. PeerNetBC offers resources and training sessions focusing on a peer support approach to allow learning to be applied to any issue, community or project. To learn more, give us a call.

What is Peer Support?

People come together to form peer support groups because they share a common experience or concern. Some groups focus on education and information while others centre on emotional support and sharing. Others offer an opportunity to socialize and form friendships. Each group forms and then changes according to the members' needs.

Many peer-led groups and organizations, whether they focus on community issues or provide services to their members or the broader community, use these same fundamental principles to guide their work and establish working relationships. A peer support approach nurtures social support networks and supportive communities. When it comes to community health, connectivity is crucial.

Sharing Equal Status

A peer support group operates with all members committed to equal involvement and to sharing responsibility for group tasks and maintenance. Groups value the input from each person. Everyone shares the common ground of having the same issue, difficulty or experience and in this sense, everyone is the same.

Giving and Receiving

Group members cultivate a give-and-take attitude. Each individual may receive support but also offers support to others. People benefit as much from helping as from receiving. Participation enhances confidence and self-esteem, from the opportunity to help others and from accepting help.

Knowing From Experience

The knowledge and understanding people gain from experience is valuable and different from that gained from study or research. Group members find the practical information and emotional insights from a shared experience both useful and comforting.

Sharing knowledge, working together and helping to shape community makes people healthier in body, mind and spirit!

