

# Personal Wellness Strategies to Sustain our Connection and Empathy in Peer Support

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# What does wellness mean to you?

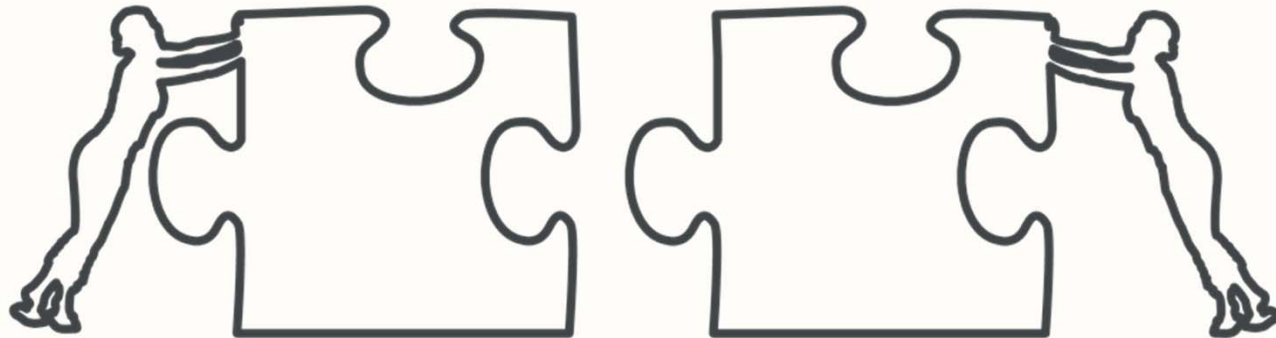


# Wellness is:

- An active process of becoming aware of and making choices toward a healthy and fulfilling life
- A state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being
- A conscious, self-directed, and evolving process of achieving full potential
- More than being free from illness, it is a dynamic process of change and growth

# Why Focus on Wellness in Peer Support?

What is the connection?



# Peer Support Work

- Peer support is valuable and has purpose
- Peer supporters are on the front line for themselves and people they support
- Sharing involves life's success, learning, stress, hardship, tears, trauma, and of course -

## RESILIENCE



# The Essence of Peer Support



- Choice
- Kindness
- Respect
- **Mutuality**
- Dignity
- Empathy
- Attunement
- And Much More

# Peer Support Skills

- Person-centered
- Recovery-oriented
- Relationship-focused
- Culturally-responsive
- Trauma-informed



# Make the Connection

**What is the impact of what peer supporters encounter in their work, their own stress and distress, and individual healing processes on empathy and other qualities?**





# Self-Awareness



**“In the thick of this work we often forget about our own needs until they are so big we can no longer meet them in simple ways.”**

**- Shery Mead**

# How is Peer Support Affected?



**How do you know when wellness strategies need a boost?**

# Consequences of Not Tending To Your Own Needs

When over-extended and overwhelmed, you may lose touch with your empathy or become:

- Inconsistent
- Unreliable
- Uncomfortable
- Disempowering
- Unavailable physically, emotionally, spiritually
- Disconnected from yourself, family, and community

# Dysregulation: What May Be Happening Underneath

- Thoughts
- Emotions
- Physical Connection (body awareness and movement)
- Energy
- Felt sense of safety
- Felt sense of connection
- Presence in the here-and-now



# Wellness Tips and Tools: Strategies for Self-regulation and Co-regulation



# Enhancing Personal Capacities



# Mind-Body Practices

- Are empowering
- Are FREE!
- Calm the central nervous system, address dysregulation and impacts of stress and distress
- Further connections with others
- Increase trust in yourself
- Increase opportunities for self-management
- Support general wellness and serve as preventive measures and practices

# Mind-Body Resources

- Breath work
- Movement
- Mindfulness
  - Meditation
  - Self-soothing
  - Grounding
- Visualization or imagination
- Take breaks, redirect attention
- Attend to the sensory environment





# Cultivate Self-awareness



- Sustain empathy and compassion for self and others
- Enhance reflection, increase self-awareness, and facilitate self-care

# Mind-Body Healing Approaches

What do you already do?

What are you open to learning?

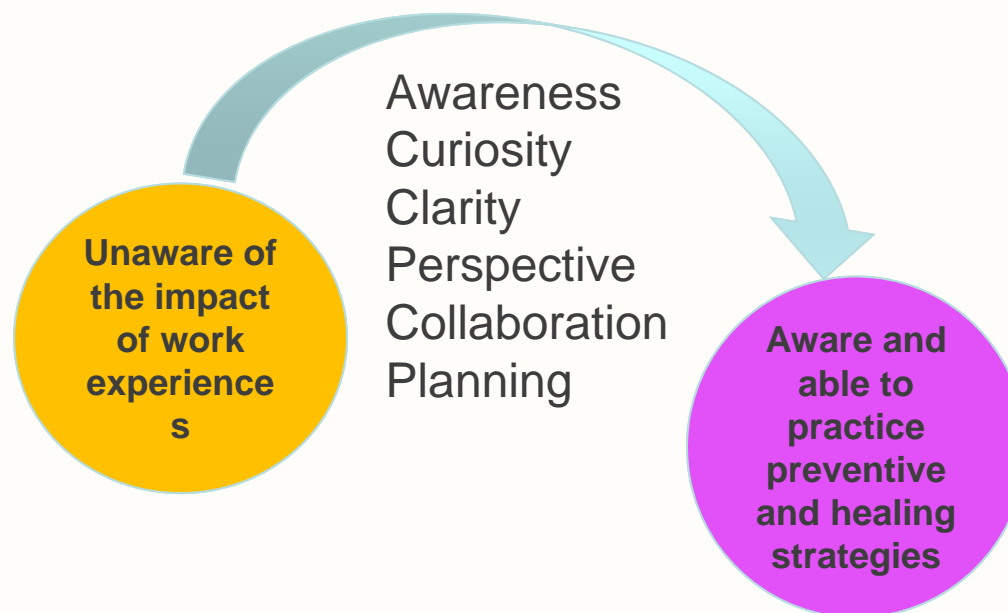
What are you willing to try yourself and then share with others?

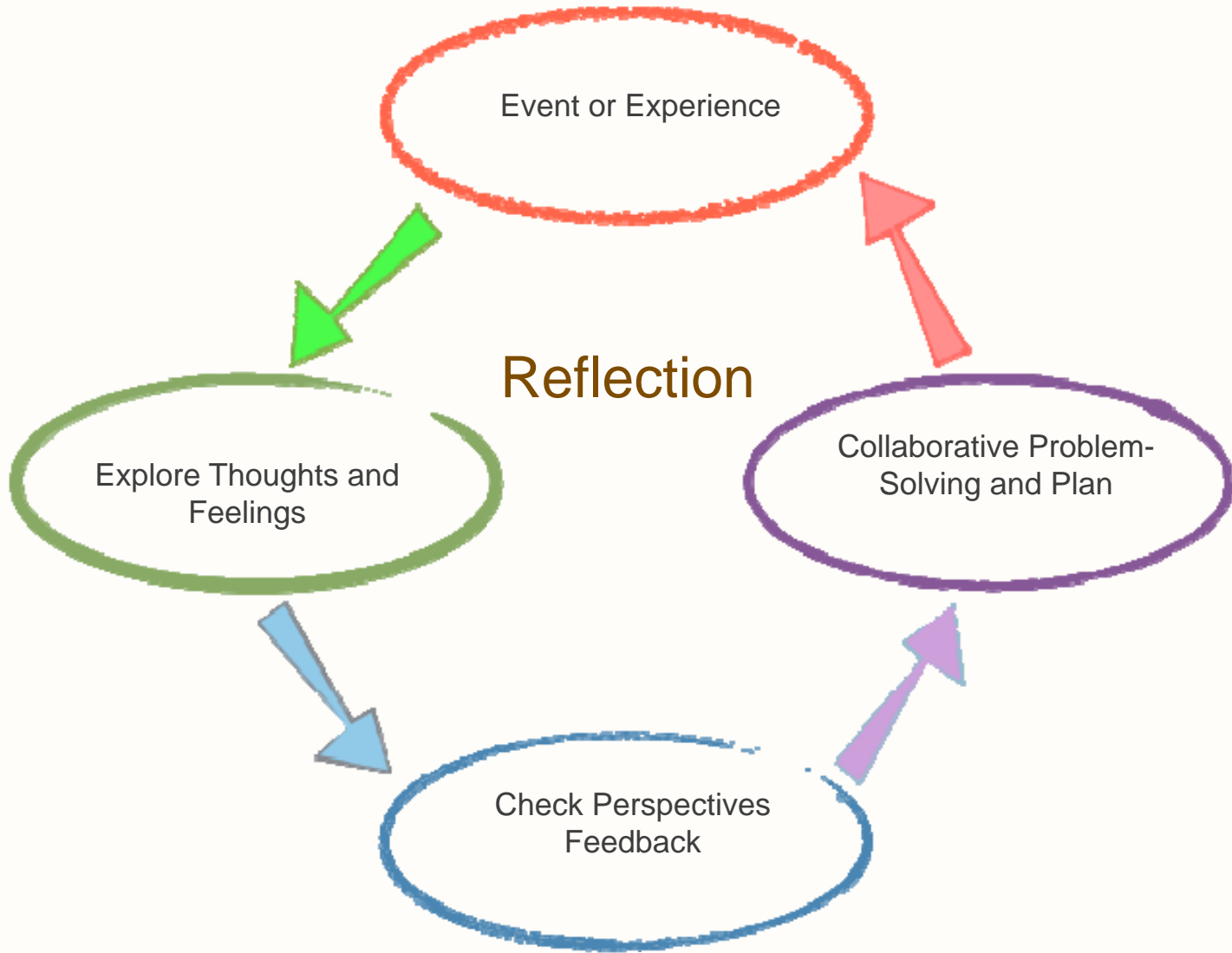




# Try Reflective Practice!

# Reflection With Trusted Others Can Be Transformative



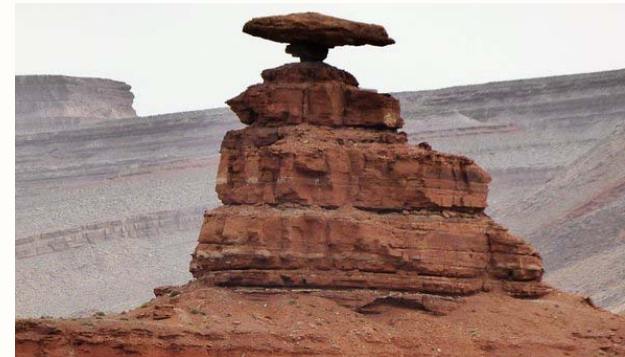


(Inspired Vision, 2015)



# Got Mutuality?

- At times, when peer support relationships feel stressed, this can be an indication that mutuality and shared responsibility are out of balance
- It can be an indication that peer supporters are taking on responsibility for the decisions or actions of others
- People care deeply, are invested, and can over-step



# A Tool for Self-Reflection

Health and Wellness for Peer Supporters and Family Supporters: Strategies for Well-Being, Self-Care, and Relapse Prevention



## Enhancing Personal Capacity for Wellness

# Incorporating Daily Wellness Strategies

- What dimensions of wellness are most important to you?
- How could these dimensions be better supported while you are at work?
- What are the ways you can bring a wellness mindset into your work setting?
- What wellness tools can be easily implemented in your work space?





**You have to act as if it were possible to radically transform the world. And you have to do it all the time.**

**- Angela Davis**



# Wellness Resources

- **SAMHSA's Programs to Achieve Wellness (PAW)**
  - <https://www.samhsa.gov/wellness-initiative/program-achieve-wellness>
- **SAMHSA-HRSA CIHS Wellness Organizational Self-Assessment**
  - [http://www.integration.samhsa.gov/Culture\\_of\\_Wellness\\_Self-Assessment\\_-COW-OSA-\\_Summer\\_2015.pdf](http://www.integration.samhsa.gov/Culture_of_Wellness_Self-Assessment_-COW-OSA-_Summer_2015.pdf)
- **Wellness Activity Lessons – A Guide for Group Leaders**
  - <http://www.cspnj.org/resources>
- **The Trauma Stewardship Institute**
  - <http://traumastewardship.com/>
  - [\*Trauma Stewardship: An Everyday Guide to Caring for Self While Caring for Others\*](#)

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