

Superstars

Person-Centered Peer Support Skills Workbook



Wellness Program 2016

Moirá Ryan, LPC

Table of Contents

Pre-test.....	3
1: The Basics.....	6
2: The Power of Connection.....	12
3: Empathy.....	20
4: A New Way of Listening.....	26
5: Listening Takes Practice.....	34
6: The Natural Movement Toward Growth.....	40
7: Sharing Our Stories.....	44
8: Setting Healthy Limits.....	49
9: Creating a Safe Space.....	55
10: Group Facilitation.....	61
Conclusion.....	69
Post-test.....	72

Pre-test

Name: _____ Date: _____

Please read each statement carefully before answering. To the left of each item, indicate how often you behave in the stated manner, using the following scale:

Almost never

1

2

3

4

Almost always

5

HOW I TYPICALLY ACT TOWARD MYSELF IN DIFFICULT TIMES

- _____ 1. When I fail at something important to me I become consumed by feelings of inadequacy.
- _____ 2. I try to be understanding and patient towards those aspects of my personality I don't like.
- _____ 3. When something painful happens I take a balanced view of the situation.
- _____ 4. When I'm feeling down, I tend to feel like most people are probably happier than I am.
- _____ 5. I try to see my failings as part of the human condition.
- _____ 6. When I'm going through a very hard time, I give myself the caring and tenderness I need.
- _____ 7. When something upsets me I try to keep my emotions in balance.
- _____ 8. When I fail at something that's important to me, I tend to feel alone in my failure.
- _____ 9. When I'm feeling down I tend to obsess and fixate on everything that's wrong.
- _____ 10. When I feel inadequate in some way, I try to remind myself that feelings of inadequacy are shared by most people.
- _____ 11. I'm disapproving and judgmental about my own flaws and inadequacies.
- _____ 12. I'm intolerant and impatient towards those aspects of my personality I don't like.

Concept and original scale by Kristin Neff. Short form scale found here: Raes, F., Pommier, E., Neff, K. D., & Van Gucht, D. (2011). Construction and factorial validation of a short form of the Self-Compassion Scale. *Clinical Psychology & Psychotherapy*. 18, 250-255.

Welcome to Your Peer Support Journey!

You're here because you have something powerful to offer: your lived experience, your genuine presence, and your ability to connect with others who are finding their way forward. This workbook isn't about turning you into an expert or teaching you to fix other people's problems. It's about helping you trust the natural wisdom that comes from your own journey.

Over the next 10 weeks, we'll explore together what makes peer support different from traditional helping relationships. This workbook will guide us through understanding and practicing the core elements of person-centered peer support.

What to Expect Each Week

We'll meet for 2 hours to:

- Explore one aspect of peer support
- Try out different ways of being with others
- Practice skills together
- Reflect on what we're learning
- Support each other's growth

Between meetings, you'll have chances to:

- Try out what we've learned
- Notice what works and what doesn't
- Bring your experiences back to the group

What Makes This Approach Revolutionary

Most "helping" approaches assume that:

- Experts know best
- People need to be fixed
- Problems need solutions
- Professional distance keeps everyone safe

But peer support turns this upside down. You'll see!

How We'll Learn Together

- Your experiences and insights matter
- It's okay to feel awkward as we practice
- Questions and doubts are welcome
- We grow by trying things out

You already have what it takes to do this work. Your struggles, your healing, your setbacks, your growth - all of it matters. This group process is a way to help you share your wisdom and learn from others who are on the same journey.

Ready to begin? Let's start by getting to know each other...

1

The Basics

Beginning Our Journey

Before we dive into peer support skills, let's take a moment to understand two important things:

1. Where we're starting from (that's what the pre-test helps us see)
2. How learning new skills usually feels

The Learning Journey

When we start learning any new skill - especially one involving human connection - we typically go through several stages:

Stage One: Beginning

Most people experience:

- Feeling like an outsider rather than a participant
- Feeling vulnerable and self-conscious
- Being excited but also fearful
- Anxiety about new interactions
- Feeling overwhelmed and unsure

This is completely normal! Just like learning to ride a bike or speak a new language, *we all start as beginners.*

Stage Two: Confronting Reality

You're not quite a beginner. It's new, but you're growing! Many people now experience:

- Physical stress (often getting sick or feeling down)
- Doubts about the work
- Wondering if they're cut out for this
- Questioning if this approach really helps
- Thoughts of giving up

This stage is also normal! It's often when the most important learning happens.

Stage Three: Building Confidence

Eventually, people notice:

- Growing comfort with the role
- Better ability to leave work at work
- Some continuing anxiety (that's okay!)
- More willingness to discuss the work
- Increased trust in the process

What This Means for Our Learning

Understanding these stages helps us:

- Be gentle with ourselves as we learn
- Trust that discomfort is temporary
- Know we're not alone in our doubts
- Recognize growth when it happens

Take a moment to reflect:

1. What do you need to feel supported in the beginning stage?
2. What has helped you handle feeling overwhelmed in the past?
3. How can you show yourself compassion through this process?

This is why we're starting with a self-compassion assessment - not to judge ourselves, but to notice how we treat ourselves as we learn and grow.

Everyone's road to becoming a peer support worker is unique. Your lived experience - whatever it includes - is valuable. Your story matters. Your insights matter. And most importantly, your way of connecting with others matters.

What Makes Peer Support Different?

Let's explore how peer support stands apart from other kinds of helping relationships:

What a helper does...	Peer Support	Provider Support	Both
Sharing personal recovery story	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Making diagnoses	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Offering hope through lived experience	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Maintaining professional distance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Providing emotional support	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Prescribing a treatment plan	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

After filling out this table, let's discuss: What surprised you?
What feels most important about the peer support role?

Your Unique Voice in Peer Support

Take some time to reflect on what brings you to this work:

1. What drew you to peer support?
2. What does recovery mean to you personally?
3. How has your lived experience shaped how you understand support?

Understanding Each Other's Worlds

Note: We'll watch a short video called "Eyes on the Stars," about a boy who has to deal with a bunch of people's assumptions about what he is like.

Group Discussion:

- What was the librarian missing about who Ron really was?
- One thing people often assume about you
- What were they missing about your whole story
- How it feels when people take time to really know you

Why This Matters in Peer Support

When we meet people:

- They might look like someone we "know all about"
- They might remind us of others we've met
- We might think we know their story
- We might have ideas about "people like that"

But everyone's story is bigger than what we first see.

In peer support, we:

- Stay curious about each person's whole story
- Let go of our first assumptions
- Make space for surprises
- Listen for what makes each person unique

1. Think of a time when someone really "got" you, despite being different from you. What did they do that helped you feel understood?
2. What communities or experiences are very different from your own? How can you stay open to learning about these differences?

Practice Time: First Meetings

Find a partner. Take turns practicing how you might introduce yourself as a peer support worker. No rush, take your time. Remember - there's no script! Be genuine about:

- What peer support means to you
- How you see the relationship working
- What you can and can't offer
- Your hope for working together

Afterward, share with your partner:

- What felt natural?
- What felt awkward?
- What would you try differently next time?

Final Thoughts

1. What clicked for you today?
2. What are you still wondering about?
3. What makes you feel hopeful about doing this work?

2

The Power of Connection

A Tale of Two Approaches

We've seen how peer support is different from traditional helping. Now let's experience this difference firsthand by trying out two very different approaches.

Think about a time you were really struggling. Maybe you were feeling hopeless, angry, or lost. Now imagine these two scenarios:

Scenario 1: You go to see a professional. They listen for a few minutes, then hand you a worksheet titled "Choosing to Feel Better." It has boxes to check and lines to fill in about your "triggers" and "coping skills." They tell you to work on it at home.

Scenario 2: You talk to someone who's been through similar struggles. They just sit with you. They share a bit about their own dark times. They don't try to solve anything. They just make you feel less alone.

- Which scenario feels more helpful? Why?

Let's consider how we can best support our peers. First off, let's look at a worksheet designed to help people figure out their triggers and help modify their behaviors so that they can start feeling better and thinking more productive, healthy thoughts.

We're going to try looking at a "personal behavioral plan," to get a sense of one idea around what support might look like.

As you read through the "personal behavioral plan," it might be helpful to think about how it might help someone you know personally with making positive changes. Take a moment to think about this person, consider what problem or pain they have in their life, and then read through the next two pages.

Things to Take Your Mind Off the Pain

Pick something else to focus on that might help you feel better today. Ideas:

Journaling

- Make a list of your accomplishments or skills
- Journal your feelings and thoughts about what's going on
- Spend ten minutes writing down times you felt confident

Forcing Your Brain to Change Directions

- If you're feeling sad, think about things that make you angry (or vice versa)
- Count backward from 1,000 by 7s ("993, 986, 979...")
- Say the word "milk" out loud over and over until it loses its meaning

Social Activities

- Talk to a friend about their problems
- Talk to a professional about your problem
- Call someone who doesn't stress you out, and talk about something else
- Go to a meeting, and think about sharing
- Do something special for someone you care about
- Do one small, nice thing for a stranger

Distracting Activities

- Exercise
- Take a warm bath or shower
- Listen to good music and dance around your apartment
- Do something that feels "normal," like washing your hair
- Put on something that makes you feel attractive
- Meditate, practice a breathwork exercise, or pray to your higher power
- Make a plan with steps you can take toward changing your life

Choosing to Try to Feel Better

1) Notice the signals that helped you notice you're not doing well

Example: yelling at cashier, spending all day in bed, upset stomach

2) Identify today's source of pain

Example: anger at neighbor, feeling lonely, being hungry

3) Identify something else to focus on to help reduce your anxiety

Example: make a list of accomplishments, take a shower, call a friend

How it works:

- Notice what's going on, and try to focus on something else
- Notice how you feel after trying to focus on something else
- Notice if you're feeling better, if you'd like to try again, or if you'd prefer right now to stew on the pain instead.

Try It Out!

Break into pairs. Take turns sharing something that's been challenging for you lately (choose something small you feel comfortable discussing).

Take turns with each role:

Role 1: The Helper with Tools

- Listen for 2 minutes
- Immediately offer advice
- Hand them the “Choosing to Try to Feel Better” worksheet and help convince them to try it out – talk them through how to use the worksheets

Role 2: The Person-Centered Peer

- Listen for 2 minutes without trying to fix
- Share briefly from your own experience if it makes sense (“I’ve been there”)
- Just be present with the person

Afterward, discuss:

- How did it feel to be "helped" with a worksheet?
- As the person seeking help, which method made you feel more capable?
- As the helper, which role felt more authentic?

Why Do We Get So Many Worksheets?

Let's think about why the mental health system loves worksheets and tools:

- Professionals want to feel helpful
- Tools feel concrete and measurable
- Paperwork makes things feel "official"
- It's scary to just sit with someone's pain

But here's what people actually tell us they need:

- Someone who's been there
- Someone who can sit with their most angry or sad thoughts
- Someone who believes they can grow
- Real human connection

Your Own Experience

1. Think about a time you were in pain. Looking back at these different approaches, which ones did you encounter? What actually helped?
2. What feels challenging about letting go of the "expert" role?
3. Is there any feeling of relief about not having to be the "expert"?

Remember

- Worksheets don't heal people. Connections do.
- It's okay not to have answers.
- Just being there is enough.

Next time you feel pressured to "fix" someone, remember: The most powerful thing you can offer is your genuine, caring presence.

Would you like to share this "Choosing to Try to Feel Better" worksheet with a neighbor or friend? You can try using both approaches - try fixing them first, then try just listening. Notice what happens in each case.

A Revolutionary Idea

Beliefs about “what helps” come in many different flavors. Examples:

BEHAVIORISTS believe that some people need to be told what to do in order for them to become their best selves. (Someone who’s afraid of leaving the house needs to be encouraged to practice leaving the house.)

COGNITIVE-BEHAVIORISTS believe that some people need advice on changing the way they think. Once they change the way they think, they can change their behavior. (Someone dealing with PTSD needs help noticing their triggers. Once they notice their triggers, they can avoid those.)

In these three ways of helping, who is in charge of knowing what the problem is and of knowing the best way to provide help? The expert, or the person with the pain?

PERSON-CENTERED PEER SUPPORT rests on the REVOLUTIONARY assumption that ALL people can be TRUSTED to have the resources inside themselves in order to reach their full potential.

However, it’s *necessary* to provide people with an environment in which they feel accepted, understood, liked, and trusted to find their own way. Expecting folks to reach their potential without those things is like expecting a plant to thrive without sunshine or water.

Definitions first! What is person-centered peer support?

Person-Centered: A way of helping that focuses on and trusts other people (as opposed to “expert-centered,” or focusing on and trusting the expert in the room)

-
Peer: Somebody who is the equal of somebody else. (A peer can also be a politically empowering term to describe someone in recovery from substances, mental health, or any other type of recovery.)

Support: To offer encouragement and comfort to someone else.

Person-Centered Peer Support:

**A person
who knows they’re not an expert on other people’s lives
who chooses to walk beside someone as they
figure out what they want for themselves**

Recovery: The road toward becoming more and more healthy, complicated, and connected to yourself and others. (Recovery can also be used to mean living life without addictions or the symptoms of mental illness.)

Final Reflections

1. Today we experienced how giving someone a worksheet feels different from just being with them. What surprised you about this exercise?
2. What about today’s workshop felt uncomfortable or challenging?

Remember: You don't have to be a perfect listener. Just being genuine in your desire to understand and accept others is a powerful start.

3. One person I can ask to listen to *me* – without trying to help me fix any problem – this week (e.g., “Sam,” “roommate,” etc):_____

3

Empathy

Last week, we talked about what makes peer support so important:

- Showing your peers that they can trust you
- Showing your peers that you're curious about what's going on with them
- Showing your peers that you like them just as they are, and you'll keep on liking them no matter what
- Showing your peers that you want to hear them out
- Showing your peers that if you'll only offer resources if they ask for that
- Showing your peers that you trust them to be the expert on their own life (no advice)

Person-Centered Peer Support is Not:

- Giving advice or offering resources
- Focusing on finding a "quick fix"
- Believing relapse = failure
- Focusing on people's medication or appointments or diagnoses
- Silently blaming people for their situation
- Assuming some people aren't capable (pitying them)
- Feeling responsible to fix things for people

We've seen how different it feels when someone tries to fix us versus truly being with us. We've learned that people have the capacity to find their own way forward when given the right environment. But how do we actually create that environment?

It starts with listening. Not the kind of listening where we're waiting for our turn to talk, or thinking about what advice to give, or trying to figure out how to make the person feel better. Real listening.

Think back to the last time you were in pain. What responses made you shut down? What responses helped you open up?

Let's try an experiment that might feel strange at first:

Just Say What You Hear

Break into pairs. One person will talk about something that matters to them - it can be anything from a movie they love to a dream they have for their future. The other person's **ONLY** job is to say back what they heard:

"What I hear you saying is..." "It sounds like..." "So from your perspective..."

No questions. No advice. No sharing your own similar experience. Just reflect back what you hear. (Note: this is **WEIRD**, and not a normal way of having a conversation. No one feels comfortable with this right away.)

After a few minutes, discuss:

- What was it like to listen this way?
- What was it like to not have to do anything else? Really hard?
- What did you notice about your urge to respond in other ways?

What Makes Recovery Possible?

According to Carl Rogers, there are SIX conditions that are necessary – and also sufficient (enough) – to foster positive growth:

- ○ Two people are in psychological contact (have a relationship).
- ○ Person One is in a state of incongruence (they feel vulnerable or anxious).
- ○ Person Two can be congruent in the relationship.
- ○ Person Two expresses unconditional positive regard for Person One.
- ○ Person Two expresses empathy for Person One, and works to communicate that empathy to Person One.
- ○ Person One is able (to some degree) to take in the empathy and unconditional positive regard from Person Two.

Notes (for you):

Relationship _____

Congruence _____

Unconditional Positive Regard _____

Empathy _____

Perceiving Caring _____

Think about a time in which you were in pain. Do you buy these conditions?

The Courage to Just Be There

It takes courage to sit with someone's pain without trying to fix it. It's easier to hand someone a worksheet than to say "I hear you, and this really sucks."

Practice Exercise

Think of common "fixing" responses and how to transform them into connecting responses:

- Fixing: "Have you tried making a gratitude list?"
- Connecting: "Take your time. I'm listening..."

- Fixing: "Oh, you're feeling anxious? Have you tried meditation?"
- Connecting: "What's this feeling like for you?"

- Fixing: "Let me give you the number for..."
- Connecting: "Keep going. I want to hear this."

Try writing your own:

- Fixing: "You need to _____"
- Connecting: _____

- Fixing: "Why don't you just _____"
- Connecting: _____

Sympathy and Empathy

So we've been talking a lot about different ideas around what "helping" means. Although it's completely valid and sometimes very important to offer peers resources or to walk them toward a solution to their problems, in this class we're focusing on a different approach. We aren't focusing on helping by fixing.

First, we're going to watch a video by researcher Brene Brown about how powerful this kind of helping can be.

This video defines terms this way:

Sympathy is feeling sadness or pity for someone

Empathy is trying to remember your own feelings of sadness in order to connect with someone

Thoughts?

Have you ever been told "at least"? How was that for you?

Final Thoughts

1. Look at page 19. Which parts about practicing peer support seem the hardest for you now? (*Examples*: not judging people for their situation, honestly liking others no matter what choices they make, being curious about the minutia of other people's lives, etc). Which parts seem easier?

2. One person I can ask to listen to *me* – without trying to help me fix any problem – this week (e.g., "Sam," "roommate," etc): _____

4

A New Way of Listening

Barriers to Doing Effective Peer Support:

- Labeling people and deciding it's a waste of time to support some people ("the only thing that helps panic attacks is meds," "some people just act needy to get attention so why bother talking to them?")
- Feeling impatient with people for not doing "what they need to do"
- Losing sight of peers' strengths and assuming the role of "rescuer"
- Incorrectly thinking "I'm an expert on what this person needs"
- Feeling a need to impress others with how extremely healthy and trouble-free you are (sometimes as a defense against feeling helpless or imperfect)

Helping – What Works:

- Showing your peers that you're a safe person to talk to
- Showing your peers that you're curious about what's going on
- Showing your peers that you like them just as they are, and you'll keep on liking them no matter what choices they make
- Showing your peers that you want to hear them out
- Showing your peers that if you'll only offer resources if they ask for that (not rushing to fix)
- Showing your peers that you trust them to be the expert on their own life (not giving advice unless they ask for advice)

What else helps?

Medications, learning coping skills, getting advice – all these things can help. And there are loads of people who are available to do those things. Everybody's got advice!

People practicing a person-centered "peer support" approach don't have to take on the responsibility of learning about brain chemistry and getting a medical degree, don't have to feel responsible for fixing other people's problems, don't have to memorize every resource in the community. Peer support means getting to do the work of listening hard and liking other people hard – and no one gets enough of those things. And those things really, really work.

Understanding Different Kinds of Responses

We've felt what it's like when someone tries to fix us with worksheets. But what's the alternative? It starts with a radical kind of listening - one where we aren't waiting to give advice or thinking about what to say next.

Think back to the Brene Brown video, which theorized that the best way to help someone else is to express your own vulnerability. This is a key component of the person-centered approach to peer support.

But, what do you literally do? What if you don't know them well? What if you don't even understand their problem? (Boundaries are important – just assume you have loads of emotional bandwidth and time.)

When someone is sharing something important, we have many ways we might respond:

Types of Communications:

Reflect content: Repeat what the person just said ("You're saying that...")

Reflect emotion: Name the feeling you hear ("It sounds like you feel...")

Ask open questions: Questions that can't be answered with yes/no ("What was that like for you?")

Note: The next three kinds of responses often shut down real connection:

Reflect meaning: Explain why they feel that way ("You're upset because...")

Ask closed or yes/no questions ("Did you try...?")

Give advice or resources ("You should...")

Example

Consider you're in a peer support role in a group setting. A new group member comes into the room and starts talking to you. They seem very emotional. They say:

I'm so mad. He's really upset. There's some kind of "thing" going on, and I don't know what that means, but then today I got this phone call and I found out I can move into our new place tomorrow. It's really hard for me to think straight right now - I think I'm going to leave.

How can you respond?

FIRST THOUGHT:

Whoa! I'm confused. I don't understand what's going on.

Reflect content. Repeat, in your own words, what the person said.

Example: It's really hard for you to be here right now.

Reflect emotion. Name the person's emotion.

Example: You're really upset right now.

Ask open questions.

Example: What's going on in your head?

Reflect meaning. Help the person understand why they're emotional.

Example: You feel overwhelmed because there's a lot going on.

Ask closed (yes or no/one-word-answer) questions.

Example: Are you talking about your boyfriend? Where are you going?

Give advice, information, or offer resources.

Example: It sounds like you're thinking about using. You need a meeting?

Types of Communications:

Reflect content

Repeat what the person just said

Reflect emotion

You feel _____.

Ask open questions (not yes/no)

~~Reflect meaning~~

~~Help the person understand why they're having an emotion~~

~~Ask yes/no/one-word-answer questions~~

~~Give advice, information, or offer resources~~

Listening in Action

Let's try using just these three tools:

- Reflecting content
- Reflecting emotion
- Asking open questions

Break into groups of three. Take turns with these roles:

- Speaker (shares a small challenge from their life)
- Listener (practices using just these three responses)
- Observer (notices what happens)

Start simple - maybe talk about your morning or a recent movie you saw. This isn't about diving into heavy topics - it's about practicing the skill of really listening.

Now we'll watch a short clip of a conversation between someone who's asking for help and someone who's listening very hard to that person. Take note of:

- What kinds of responses do you hear?
- How does the speaker seem to respond to different kinds of listening?
- What feels natural? What feels forced?

Watch and Notice

We're going to take some time to practice noticing these communications when they happen. We'll watch a six minute clip of a conversation between a person looking for support and a person who is using the skill of listening to help them. (This is from a DVD called *Carl Rogers Interviews Steve*.)

Try to write down three of the listener's responses. I'll stop the video after some of the listener's responses to help you out. You don't need to get the wording exactly right. Don't worry about the kind of communication it is yet (don't fill in the blue lines).

Response:

Kind of communication:

Response:

Kind of communication:

Response:

Kind of communication:

What kinds of person-centered listening skills did the listener use the most?

Did you notice any non-verbal responses? Did those seem important?

We'll watch one more clip. The listener's the same person. No need to take notes. Just observe, and notice what you notice. (This is from a DVD called *Carl Rogers and Anger*.)

The Art of "Being With"

Sometimes we slip into fixing mode because silence feels uncomfortable. But think about times you've been heard deeply. Often the power isn't in the specific words - it's in feeling that someone is truly "with" you.

Practice: Sit in pairs facing each other. Take two minutes to just be present with each other. (You don't have to make eye contact the whole time.) Notice:

- What makes you want to speak?
- Can you stay present without words?
- What happens in the silence?

Common Challenges

Let's talk about what makes this kind of listening hard:

- When the person's pain reminds us of our own
- When we really think we know what would help
- When we're worried about saying the wrong thing
- When we feel pressure to make it better

What helps us stay in listening mode?

- Taking a breath
- Remembering that fixing isn't our job
- Trusting that listening itself is powerful
- Being honest when we're getting pulled into fixing

Final Thoughts

1. Outside of practicing this skill, how else could anyone get better at it?
2. One person I can ask to listen to – without trying to help them fix any problem – this week (e.g., "Sam," "roommate, etc): _____

5

Listening Takes Practice

Let's Try It Out!

Now, we're going to spend some time practicing using person-centered listening skills. This is a really different kind of listening. Don't worry about not being perfect at it. It takes practice! And now: we practice! Each person gets a full set of cards (as seen below).

Let's break into groups of three. Each person practice being the speaker for five minutes – talk about something trivial, like your breakfast. One listener will have a chance to practice person-centered listening, and one listener will be the silent observer.

Listeners: don't try to help solve anything. Just repeat back what's said, tell them what they're feeling, or use an understanding noise to help the speaker feel that they have your permission to keep talking. It's going to feel weird and artificial at

Reflect content	Reflect emotion	Mm-hmm
Reflect content	Reflect emotion	Mm-hmm
Reflect content	Reflect emotion	Open question
Reflect content	Reflect emotion	Open question
Reflect content	Reflect emotion	Open question

Watch and Notice

We're going to watch two short videos clips. The first is about one person trying to fix another person. (Content warning: It's called "Mom's Intervention with her Heroin Addicted Daughter.") The second is about a listener who wants to make sure the other person feels accepted. (It's called "It's You I Like.") Afterward, we're going to discuss the kinds of *language* and *curiosity* the listener used – you can take notes if you want to.

Who did you feel like had the most *power* in the first clip? (Circle one.)

Speaker

Listener

Equal

How about the second clip? (Circle one.)

Speaker

Listener

Equal

Was there any *language* used, in either clip, that you think helped the other person feel understood?

Were there *non-verbal communications* that made the speaker feel heard and accepted?

More Practice!

Now let's do this again, but in a big group and with a little change to the cards. We're all going to have a chance to try talking about our favorite and least favorite foods. When you are the speaker, just talk. When someone responds to you, notice if you like that response, and just keep talking.

When you are the listener, your goal is to get rid of one card at a time by giving the speaker each kind of response. Remember: we're all practicing!

Reflect content	Reflect emotion	Mm-hmm
Reflect content	Reflect emotion	Mm-hmm
Reflect content	Reflect emotion	"I Like You" State
Reflect content	Reflect emotion	Open question
Reflect content	Reflect emotion	Open question

(An "I Like You" statement is any non-question that tells the speaker that you accept them, or that their thoughts and feelings seem natural and normal to you.)

Your Listening Style

Take a moment to reflect:

1. Which kinds of responses come most naturally to you?
2. Which ones do you tend to overuse?
3. Which ones feel challenging?
4. What helps you stay present as a listener?

Remember: The goal isn't perfect listening. The goal is creating enough space for people to hear themselves and find their own way forward.

Practice This Week

Choose one person to practice pure listening with this week. (You can tell a neighbor you're practicing a new skill, or you can just strike up a conversation at a bus stop with a stranger.) No advice, no fixing - just be there and reflect what you hear. Notice:

- What comes up for you?
- What happens for the other person?
- What do you learn?

Would you like to share this with another peer? You might practice listening together and give each other feedback.

Next time: We'll explore empathy more deeply and look at how sharing our own stories can help create deeper connections.

What are your thoughts, after trying it a few times in group and on your own, about the *usefulness* in relating to other people in this way? On a gut level, do you like it, or do you prefer a different kind of helping?

6

The Natural Movement Toward Growth

We've practiced the basics of how to listen. But why does this kind of listening matter so much? Let's hear what Carl Rogers discovered about human growth:

I believe I know why it is satisfying to me to hear someone. When I can really hear someone, it puts me in touch with him; it enriches my life. It is through hearing people that I have learned all that I know about individuals, about personality, about interpersonal relationships. [...]

When I say that I enjoy hearing someone, I mean, of course, hearing deeply. I mean that I hear the words, the thoughts, the feeling tones, the personal meaning, even the meaning that is below the conscious intent of the speaker. Sometimes too, in a message which superficially is not very important, I hear a deep human cry that lies buried and unknown far below the surface of the person.

So I have learned to ask myself, can I hear the sounds and sense the shape of this other person's inner world? Can I resonate to what he is saying so deeply that I sense the meanings he is afraid of, yet would like to communicate, as well as those he knows?

I think, for example, of an interview I had with an adolescent boy. Like many an adolescent today he was saying at the outset of the interview that he had no goals. When I questioned him on this, he insisted even more strongly that he had no goals whatsoever, not even one. I said, "There isn't anything you want to do?"

"Nothing. . . . Well, yeah, I want to keep on living."

I remember distinctly my feeling at that moment. I resonated very deeply to this phrase. He might simply be telling me that, like everyone else, he wanted to live. On the other hand, he might be telling me - and this seemed to be a definite possibility - that at some point the question of whether or not to live had been a real issue with him. So I tried to resonate to him at all levels. I didn't know for certain what the message was. I simply wanted to be open to any of the meanings that this statement might have, including the possibility that he might at one time have considered suicide. My being willing and able to listen to him at all levels is perhaps one of the things that made it possible for him to tell me, before the end of the interview, that not long before he had been on the point of blowing his brains out. This little episode is an example of what I mean by wanting to really hear someone at all the levels at which he is endeavoring to communicate. [...]

I find, both in therapeutic interviews and in the intensive group experiences which have meant a great deal to me, that hearing has consequences. When I truly hear a person and the meanings that are important to him at that moment, hearing not simply his words, but him, and when I let him know that I have heard his own private personal meanings, many things happen. There is first of all a grateful look. He feels released. He wants to tell me more about his world. He surges forth in a new sense of freedom. He becomes more open to the process of change.

I have often noticed that the more deeply I hear the meanings of this person, the more there is that happens. Almost always, when a person realizes he has been deeply heard, his eyes moisten. I think in some real sense he is weeping for joy. It is as though he were saying, "Thank God, somebody heard me. Someone knows what it's like to be me." **In such moments I have had the fantasy of a prisoner in a dungeon, tapping out day after day a Morse code message, "Does anybody hear me? Is anybody there?" And finally one day he hears some faint tappings which spell out "Yes."** By that one simple response he is released from his loneliness; he has become a human being again. There are many, many people living in private dungeons today, people who give no evidence of it whatsoever on the outside, where you have to listen very sharply to hear the faint messages from the dungeon.

Discussion

- What strikes you about the potato in the cellar?
- How have you seen this "actualizing tendency" in your own life?
- Have you ever experienced being heard this deeply?
- Have you ever had the privilege of hearing someone else this deeply?
- How does this change how we think about "helping" others?
- Do you buy the idea that every person has an actualizing tendency (a natural movement toward growth)? And, is it necessary to buy into this *theory* in order to have a person-centered approach to how we *treat* other people?

Sometimes the most important messages come in the quietest voices. Our job isn't to strain to hear - it's to create enough quiet in ourselves to let those messages emerge.

What This Means for Peer Support

When we share our stories in peer support, we're not trying to:

- Show people the "right" way to recover
- Give them a map to follow
- Prove that we have it all figured out

Instead, we share to:

- Demonstrate trust in each person's natural movement toward growth
- Show that growth is possible even in difficult circumstances
- Create an environment where others feel safe to grow in their own way
- Offer hope without prescribing a path

Your Own Story of Growth

Take a moment to reflect:

1. When you've been in a dark cellar like this, what emotions did you most want to feel?
2. How did you reach toward the light?
3. Who or what helped create conditions for your growth?

Remember: Like the potato in the cellar, every person has an innate drive toward growth and healing. Our role isn't to create that drive - it already exists. Our role is to believe in it, even when others might have lost sight of it themselves.

Next, we'll explore how to share our own stories in ways that create space for others to discover their own path toward growth.

7

Sharing Our Stories

Understanding that people naturally move toward growth changes how we share our own stories. Instead of telling people how to recover, we're showing them that growth is possible.

One of the major “recovery tools” that peer support providers bring to the table is their own experience and vulnerability. The major reason why the recovery story is such a powerful tool is that it is your own personal story in the way it happened. Peers you are supporting can be inspired by the truth, hope, and possibilities implicit in your recovery story. *(Remember we can define “recovery” as “the road toward becoming more and more healthy, complicated, and connected to other people.”)*

We're going to start our discussion by watching a ten-minute-long video of Peer Support Specialists discussing “4 Easy Tips on Telling Your Recovery Story.”

Benefits & Risks of Sharing Your Personal Recovery Story

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| + Shows that change is possible | - "Unfair" expectations |
| + Shows that recovery is not linear | - Too much focus on me instead of them |
| + Reduces shame and disconnection the | - Promoting "my way" as only way |
| | - <i>We might get hurt</i> |

Watch and Observe

We're going to watch a video of one woman's recovery story. It's called "Amy's Mental Health Recovery." You might want to use this page to take notes on things she does that you like.

**Remember we're defining "recovery" as the process growing and of becoming more and more healthy, complicated, and connected to others.*

Group Discussion:

How successful was the woman in the video at

- a) connecting with you?
- b) breaking the stigma of mental illness?
- c) inspiring hope?

What would you choose to do differently than she did?

What are some of the strengths you have developed in your own journey?

What types of supports have you developed and used?

Brief Notes on My Story

I grew up this way: _____

Somewhere along the road, I started: _____

This is why I wasn't able to pull myself out of that hole for a while:

I decided to get better: _____

The process is difficult: _____

This is what my life is like now: _____

What did you want to hear from people who'd "been through it" when you were in pain?

Am I getting lost in the details of my "pain story" and forgetting to share a message of hope?

Am I sharing, or am I lecturing? What are my *motives* for sharing this part of my story?

- A) Build a relationship
- B) Break stigma of mental illness/addiction/feeling negative feelings
- C) Inspire hope

Am I able to tell this part of my story without getting overwhelmed with emotion? (If not, is it ok that I decide not to share so much?)

Try It Out!

Most of us have very interesting, and somewhat complicated stories when told in detail and without purpose the message of recovery can get lost. People who practice peer support professionally have to keep in mind key points in their entire story so that eventually they can summarize their experience to meet any situation.

1. Do you identify as being in recovery? Do you struggle with mental health? Alcohol & drugs? A bad childhood? None of these, or all of these?
2. Can you summarize your childhood in a sentence? (*For example: I come from a broken home and had to grow up too fast.*)
3. Are there parts of your pain story that you tend to want to tell... that you notice might not be *helpful* for others hearing your recovery story?
4. What does your recovery look like? What tools have you used to get where you are? Getting vulnerable and open during meetings, church, or other relationships? Learning to accept yourself more through other ways? This is the part that is the emphasis of your story.

Second draft of version of my story – practice keeping it short and sweet!

8

Setting Healthy Limits

What Are We Talking About?

Being real with others about our experiences is powerful. But how do we stay authentic while also taking care of ourselves? This is where thoughtful limits come in.

Personal boundaries or limits:

The rules we choose for our relationships with other people.

You can probably think of someone you know whose family had a rule about not wearing shoes in the house, or whose family had a rule about not discussing family secrets with outsiders, or whose family had a rule about only eating in the kitchen. It's easy to notice family rules when they are very different from your family's rules.

We usually aren't conscious of our own rules, because we learned them as children... from adults who also weren't intentionally choosing the rules they wanted for their relationships. We learned the rules before we knew the word "rule"! When we meet someone with very different boundaries than we have, the new rules become very obvious. She has a rule that it's ok to stand much closer to other people than I'm comfortable with! They have a rule that interrupting others is a good thing! He has a rule that he doesn't answer any personal questions!

What are rules like these for? The purpose of having personal boundaries is to protect ourselves from potential future hurt.

When we think about boundaries, many of us picture stone walls - something firm and unchanging that keeps people apart. In traditional mental health settings, boundaries often mean keeping strict professional distance: never sharing personal information, never seeing clients outside of appointments, never accepting gifts. These rules often come from providers' bosses and must be followed or the provider could get into trouble.

But peer support is different. We're not trying to maintain professional distance - we're trying to create genuine human connection while keeping everyone (including ourselves) safe and supported.

Boundaries vs. Limits

Let's think about the difference:

- **Boundaries** are like stone walls - rigid and unchanging
- **Limits** are like fences - clear but flexible when needed

In peer support, we usually work with limits rather than boundaries. We set limits:

- Based on our needs and the needs of others
- That can change as situations change

Can you think of one or two healthy limits you've seen in relationships?

Think about a situation where you or someone you know set a limit with someone and it really helped the relationship in the long run.

a. How did you negotiate it?

b. How did that create greater safety for both people?

Let's Look at Some Real Situations

Scenario 1: Late Night Calls

Blu and Jim connected well in a peer support group. Jim starts calling Blu late at night when he's struggling. Blu wants to be supportive but is exhausted at work.

Discussion:

- What are the needs on both sides?
- What limits might be helpful?
- How could Blu express these limits while maintaining connection?

Scenario 2: Close-Knit Community

Fatima provides peer support in a tight-knit immigrant community where everyone knows each other's families. She runs into clients at mosque, community events, and the halal market. Her supervisor says she needs to find new places to shop and interact where she won't see any clients.

Discussion:

- What makes this situation complex?
- What's the difference between rigid boundaries and thoughtful limits here?
- How can we maintain the connections we need while also setting limits?

Scenario 3: The Gift

Pat, a peer support worker, has been supporting Kai at the clinic through some tough times. Kai brings Pat a handmade scarf as a thank you. Pat's supervisor tells her "If you take a gift from Pat, everyone else will think you're playing favorites."

Discussion:

- What values or needs might be behind a "no gifts" policy?
- What message is sent when Pat accepts the scarf? What message would be sent by returning it to Kai?
- What creative solutions might honor both Kai's way of showing care and program rules?

Notice Your Intention

Good limits are:

- Clear but kind
- Flexible when appropriate
- Based on real needs
- Explained honestly
- Consistent (mostly)
- Open to discussion

Poor limits are:

- Rigid rules without reasons
- Based on fear rather than needs
- Unexplained or inconsistent
- Used to create distance
- Non-negotiable without cause

Practice: Your Own Limits

1. What are your non-negotiable limits in peer support? (Example: "I need sleep, so I don't take calls after 9pm")
2. What limits might flex depending on the situation? (Example: "I usually meet in the lobby, but might go for a walk with someone if they're really anxious")
3. What *words* can you use in explaining your limits that might help the other person feel less defensive about your limit?

When Limits Get Crossed

It's not *if* limits get crossed, but *when*. Let's practice:

"I really value our connection, and I want to keep supporting you. I need to be clear that _____"

"I notice I'm feeling overwhelmed. Can we talk about what would work better for both of us?"

"I appreciate you thinking of me. Let's talk about ways to celebrate your progress that work within my role."

Remember

- Limits protect relationships; they don't destroy them
- Clear limits actually help build trust
- It's okay for limits to evolve as we learn
- We're modeling healthy relationships for our peers
- When in doubt, be honest about what you need

What helps you maintain healthy limits while staying genuinely connected?

Final Thoughts

Make a list of 3-4 limits or rules you'll want to keep in mind when you're doing this work.

9

Creating a Safe Space

Creating Safe Spaces for Growth

Individual limits help create safety in relationships. Now let's look at how to create safety in group spaces.

When we come into a space and all the windows are broken, all the furniture's torn open, and everyone's staring at the ground, we adapt ourselves to that space. When we come into a space, and it's clean, and it doesn't feel like an institution, and people are getting along and talking to one another, we adapt ourselves to that space.

How can we help create a space that's inviting, welcoming, accepting, and safe?

Give Options and Choices: Being in recovery is definitely a choice. In safe groups, we honor and respect individual decision-making around options and levels of participation.

Use Invitational Language: It's sweet to be reminded we may or may not do something. Being invited to attend group or share - when we feel ready, willing, able, and safe - promotes the recovery process.

Create Safety and Predictability: Most often, we like to know what is going to happen, when and in what way. While we can't always make this happen in real life, in groups we can let our peers know what we plan to do during group time in order to create a safety net for experience.

Normalize the Range of Experience: Students of recovery often just want to feel like their ways of thinking and being are okay. It's okay if my "check-in" is different from my neighbor's.

Use Repetition and Simplicity: Many of us have discovered that repetition of safe and healthy practices are the backbone of our personal recovery. We don't need to overwhelm ourselves!

Create Opportunities for Success: It's the little successes that add up. Find authentic reasons to praise your peers and help them feel worthy. Help them feel seen, heard and acknowledged.

Through all of this, we create a safe space for personal exploration. In recovery, it means we are offering a safe container where we can explore and practice being who we are.

- from the philosophy of Living Yoga

Six Essential Elements

1. Give Options and Choices

Practice Exercise: Transform these statements into *real* choices:

- "Everyone needs to share today" →
- "This is how we do things here" →
- "You have to participate in activities" →

2. Use Invitational Language

Practice Exercise: Role play in pairs as you practice inviting someone to:

- Join a group discussion
- Try a new activity
- Share their experience
- Notice how your body language and tone affect the invitation.

3. Create Safety and Predictability

Group Planning Exercise: Create a simple group structure that provides predictability while remaining flexible:

- How will the group start?
- What happens in the middle?
- How will it end?
- What parts can flex?

4. Normalize the Range of Experience

Discussion Exercise: Share examples of how people might differently:

- Express feelings
- Show engagement or involvement in the group
- Practice self-care
- Define "recovery"

5. Use Repetition and Simplicity

Practice Exercise: List three simple practices that help create safety:

1. In the physical space: _____
2. In our communication: _____
3. In our structure: _____

6. Create Opportunities for Success

Brainstorm Exercise: What are ways to:

- Notice small steps
- Acknowledge effort
- Celebrate progress
- Support exploration

Seeing Safety in Action

Let's watch a short video where Mister Rogers demonstrates how to help someone feel safe trying something new. As you watch, notice:

- How does he explain what a restaurant is?
- How does he prepare viewers for what might happen?
- What tone and language does he use?
- How does he normalize different levels of experience?

Creating Your Own Safe Introduction

Now it's your turn! Choose one of these scenarios (or create your own):

- Inviting a peer to an art class
- Teaching a peer how to make hot chocolate
- Introducing a peer to your favorite coping skill
- Taking a peer bowling

Working in pairs:

1. First, explain what this activity is to someone who might never have done it before. (Everyone's new to something, and that's just fine!)
2. What might they expect when they get there?
3. If you were leading this activity:
 - o What project/skill would you start with?
 - o How could you make success possible for everyone?
 - o What choices could people have in how they participate?
 - o How would you help someone feel okay if they struggle?

Share your introductions with the larger group. Notice:

- Did you use the same introduction you practiced in Week 1?
- What language feels inviting?
- What details help create predictability?
- How do different people approach the same scenario?

The Actualizing Tendency Again!

Like the potato in the cellar reaching toward light despite difficult conditions, people naturally move toward growth when given a nurturing environment. Our role isn't to force growth but to create conditions where it can happen naturally through:

- A welcoming physical space
- Consistent but flexible structure
- Language that invites rather than demands
- Recognition of each person's unique path

Your Safe Space Vision

1. What elements do you consider most essential for creating safety?
2. Which one of these components feels like the most important one to you? Which one(s) might be hardest to navigate in a group setting?
3. How will you know when you've created a truly safe space?

Through all of this, we create a safe container where we can explore and practice being who we are.

10

Group Facilitation

We've explored what makes a space feel safe. Now it's time to put it all together and create our own welcoming spaces!

Focusing on the Wrong Thing

I want to get you thinking about all the big ways a group space can be made to feel unsafe. This usually happens when the person facilitating the space is more focused on unimportant things than they should be. (That's ok! We're all learning!) During this 5 minute exercise, please pretend that you are feeling shy and anxious. Notice that I...

- Demand participation
- Judge performance
- Ignore comfort levels
- Create pressure

Learning from a Master Facilitator

Glad that's over! Now let's watch Mister Rogers explain what a restaurant is. He is explaining this to children, but notice that he does not encourage his audience to feel stupid, small, or uncool for *not knowing*. As you watch, notice:

- How he explains something new
- How he prepares people for what to expect
- What language he uses
- How he makes space for different levels of experience

Discussion:

- What did you notice about his approach?
- How did he make something new feel less scary?
- What specific things did he do to help people know what to expect?
- How could we use similar approaches in our own groups?

From Scared to Safety

Remember how we talked about the stages of learning something new? Just like we needed safety and support to move through our own learning process, the people we work with need safety to grow and change.

When we create truly safe spaces, we're helping people:

- Move from feeling like outsiders to feeling welcome
- Work through their doubts and fears
- Build confidence at their own pace
- Trust the process of growth

This is why each element of creating safety matters:

- Giving choices helps reduce that overwhelming feeling
- Using invitational language eases self-consciousness
- Creating predictability calms anxiety
- Normalizing different experiences reduces shame
- Using repetition builds confidence
- Creating success opportunities encourages growth

Think back to your own learning process:

- What made spaces feel safe for you?
- What helped you stay with it when you wanted to give up?
- How can you create that same safety for others?

Learning from Experience

Think about different group spaces you've been in:

- Support groups
- Waiting rooms
- Community spaces
- Food pantries or markets
- Classes or groups
- Religious/spiritual gatherings

Which of these helped create safety?

- Giving real choices
- Using invitational language
- Creating predictability
- Normalizing different ways of being
- Keeping things simple
- Creating opportunities for success

What made these spaces feel:

Safe? _____

Welcoming? _____

Comfortable? _____

It's Normal to Feel Nervous

Thinking about leading a group might make your:

- Heart race
- Palms sweat
- Mind fill with worries
- Body want to run away

These kinds of fears are connected to our belief that we need to be able to fix and control anything that happens. This is super normal!

The truth is, at some point in your life, you're going to have sweaty palms and worries. At some point in the work, you're going to forget what to say. Consider giving yourself permission to be upset. Consider giving yourself permission to say out loud "Oh no, I'm feeling very worried because I've forgotten what to say next."

Strategies for Managing Our Own Anxiety

Before the group:

- Practice with a friend
- Visit the space ahead of time
- Have all materials ready
- Write out your opening welcome
- Take slow breaths
- Remember: perfection isn't the goal

During the group:

- Start with something simple
- Be honest about your nerves (unless that'd make you more nervous!)
- Focus on one person at a time
- *Remember everyone wants you to succeed*
- Take breaks if needed
- Keep breathing

Practicing One Small Thing

In a moment, we're going to focus on your ideas for a dream group. You haven't had time to think or practice, so give yourself permission to not be perfect at this right now! Let's each practice teaching just one simple thing:

- One yoga pose or stretch
- One breathing exercise (like "let's take five deep breaths together")

You have two minutes to:

1. Prepare the group for what's coming
2. Show us how you'd teach it

Remember to use Mister Rogers-style...

- Invitational language
- Clear expectations
- Acceptance of different abilities
- Opportunities for success

Now let's plan something you might like to share with others:

- Teaching how to cook a special dish
- Showing two basic yoga poses
- Going to the science museum together
- Starting a writing circle
- Something else!
 - o Who would you like to reach with your group?
 - o If you could make up a group that would be helpful for *you* achieving a particular dream, what would that group look like?
 - o What would you hope that you and your peers would get out of attending this group?

Planning Your Own Group

Group/Workshop Name: _____

Getting Started:

- How will you welcome or invite people in?
- What do they need to know first?
- What can you give as *safe options* for participating in today's group?

Check-in:

- How will people introduce themselves?
- What simple prompt might you use?
- If there is a check-in, how much *time* is spent on checking in?
- How will the check-in *help with the main activity* of today's group?

Main Activity:

- What's the core thing you're sharing, teaching, or hoping folks will enjoy?
- What choices can people have?
- What *is* the main activity of today's group?
- How much *time* is spent on the main activity?
- How does the main activity *promote the focus* of the group?

Processing/Discussion:

- What might you ask about their experience?
- How will you validate different responses?

Closing:

- How will you wrap things up?
- What acknowledgment might you offer?

Next Steps

What support would you need to try this out?

Who might you like to co-facilitate with?

When/how could you try a small version of this?

Remember:

- Start small
- Keep it simple
- Focus on *creating welcome* more than perfection
- Trust that your genuine presence matters more than polished presentation
- Everyone starts somewhere!

Would you like to practice any part of your plan with our group?

Conclusion:

The Revolutionary Act of
Being Human Together

Throughout this workbook, we've explored different models of what "helping" looks like. We've seen:

- A yoga teacher demanding perfect poses vs. creating space for each body's wisdom and choices
- Mister Rogers taking time to explain what a restaurant is vs. assuming everyone should already know
- Worksheets trying to fix problems vs. genuine presence holding space for pain
- Professional distance vs. authentic connection
- Experts with answers vs. companions on the journey

What ties all of this together?

A revolutionary belief: The most powerful tool we have isn't a technique or a worksheet or a skill. It's our willingness to be genuinely present with another human being.

This is radical because:

- It trusts that people have their own answers
- It values connection over correction
- It sees mistakes as part of growth
- It believes in the natural movement toward healing
- It challenges traditional power dynamics

When we drop the need to fix, save, or teach, we create space for real connection. When we trust that each person has what they need inside them, we help create conditions where growth can happen naturally.

Will you make mistakes as you try this approach? Absolutely. That's how we learn. Every time you catch yourself slipping into fix-it mode and choose to listen instead, you're growing. Every time you feel the urge to give advice and choose to ask a question instead, you're practicing. Every time you trust someone else's journey instead of prescribing the path, you're embodying this revolutionary approach.

Remember

- Your presence is more powerful than perfection
- Your authenticity matters more than expertise
- Your willingness to be real creates space for others to do the same
- Your trust in others' capacity helps them trust themselves

Go forth and practice. Try things out. Make beautiful mistakes. Learn from them. Share what you learn. *Create spaces where others can do the same.*

This is how change happens - not through grand programs or perfect interventions, but through genuine human beings choosing to be present with each other in revolutionary ways.

You've got this. We've got this. Together.

Post-test

Name: _____ Date: _____

Please read each statement carefully before answering. To the left of each item, indicate how often you behave in the stated manner, using the following scale:

Almost never

1

2

3

4

Almost always

5

HOW I TYPICALLY ACT TOWARD MYSELF IN DIFFICULT TIMES

- _____ 1. When I fail at something important to me I become consumed by feelings of inadequacy.
- _____ 2. I try to be understanding and patient towards those aspects of my personality I don't like.
- _____ 3. When something painful happens I take a balanced view of the situation.
- _____ 4. When I'm feeling down, I tend to feel like most people are probably happier than I am.
- _____ 5. I try to see my failings as part of the human condition.
- _____ 6. When I'm going through a very hard time, I give myself the caring and tenderness I need.
- _____ 7. When something upsets me I try to keep my emotions in balance.
- _____ 8. When I fail at something that's important to me, I tend to feel alone in my failure.
- _____ 9. When I'm feeling down I tend to obsess and fixate on everything that's wrong.
- _____ 10. When I feel inadequate in some way, I try to remind myself that feelings of inadequacy are shared by most people.
- _____ 11. I'm disapproving and judgmental about my own flaws and inadequacies.
- _____ 12. I'm intolerant and impatient towards those aspects of my personality I don't like.

Concept and original scale by Kristin Neff. Short form scale found here: Raes, F., Pommier, E., Neff, K. D., & Van Gucht, D. (2011). Construction and factorial validation of a short form of the Self-Compassion Scale. *Clinical Psychology & Psychotherapy*. 18, 250-255.