PEER SUPPORT
The Program

Why Do We Need The Program?

A. A macho image, as well as a distrust of professionals, inhibits seeking professional help. It is often seen as a sign of weakness. Discussing with fellow employees can be an acceptable alternative.

B. Most physicians agree that 70 to 90 percent of all illnesses are either caused by or made worse by STRESS factors.

1. Physical symptoms range from minor headaches or upset stomachs to coronary heart disease and heart attacks.

2. Emotional symptoms include a range from minor sleep disturbances to chronic psychological problems.

3. The greatest problems come from unresolved stress.

   a) It may be a result of an assault, or a crisis in the family. The situation itself does not cause stress. Stress caused by how we perceive the situation and how it affects us.

4. Stress-related retirement has not increased over previous years.

C. Stress can be brought about by several factors:

1. Workplace

   a) Performing within acceptable guidelines.
   b) Shift work, overtime, and pay concerns.
   c) Supervisors are a major cause of stress to many employees.
   d) Burnout

2. Public

   a) The feeling of being expected to be all things to all people (problem solver, cop, firefighter, social worker, mediator, doctor, lawyer, paramedic, EMT, etc.).
   b) First to criticize your behavior under stress.

3. Family

   a) Difficulty balancing job and social commitments.
   b) Bringing the job home - "always the hero" mentality.
   c) Long hours, overtime, etc.

4. Physical/Emotional Demands of the Job

a) Must be in good physical condition to perform your job.
b) Can't let any feelings "out" for fear it will be seen as a sign of weakness.
c) Must be able to handle all situations encountered on the job, which sometimes carries over to home life.

D. Those who are affected will find a way to cope. This can take various forms:

1. A good, worthwhile, socially acceptable manner.

a) Relaxation, physical exercise, talking it out with friends, etc.

2. A temporary solution that will lead to future, additional stress.

a) Alcohol, drugs, gambling, suicide.

E. There is usually an abundance of people who are willing to listen to a person in crisis-partners, friends, family, supervisors, co-workers, etc.

1. Problems can occur when each gives advice and tries to "fix" the person.

2. Often advice is poorly timed or inappropriate.

3. Many just don't know how to help.

4. Training is for those who want to go on helping by learning how to make appropriate decisions and give good advice.

F. Most employers or private industries realize the benefits of providing a way for employees to overcome their problems <u>before</u> they affect job performance, which leads to:

1. Decreased absenteeism.
2. Reduce accidents.
3. Positive affect on morale.
4. Increase in productivity.
5. Cost effectiveness.

Even traumatic stress and long-term stress, can be released or resolved given a proper channel.

1. Two things not to do:

a) Ignore the problem hoping it will go away.
b) Put a "band-aid" on it.

THE ROLE OF PEER SUPPORT

PEER SUPPORTERS

A. Peer support provides a way for employees and their family members to confidentially talk about personal and professional problems with specially trained co-workers who understand and want to help.

B. Peer supporters are Para-professional counselors whose primary function is to LISTEN, ASSESS, and whenever necessary, REFER to professional counselors. They should NEVER be used as a replacement for required professional care.

C. Peer supporters complement those services provided by outside professionals. The program expands available resources by offering a greater field of choice to personnel who want to talk to someone who has "been there" and understands what it is like to work their jobs.

D. There is no limit as to the type of "life problems" which can be discussed with peer support.

1. Most problems will resolve themselves when those involved are given a chance to be heard.

2. From March through June 1985, marital problems were the most common concerns brought to peer supporters' attention. The next most common, in descending order of times seen, were: bereavement, alcohol dependency, career concerns, stress-related issues, critical incidents, relationships with children, retirement concerns, disciplinary problems, problems with co-workers, financial concerns, supervisor/subordinate issues, relationships with step-children and off-work disability.

SPECIALIZED TRAINING

A. Peer supporters will acquire supportive skills designed to help them assist co-workers who are experiencing a variety of life crisis situations.

B. New/different ways to listen and communicate will be learned.

C. Techniques for dealing with emotionally charged issues will be demonstrated.

1. How to cope with one's own emotions.
2. How to help another deal with his/her emotions.

D. Peer supporters will learn by practice in group sessions how to know when a situation requires professional intervention.

1. When a crisis is a crisis
2. What to do with a peer that does not need referral.
3. Referral and resource agencies.

E. Special attention will be paid to recognizing major crisis.

1. Suicidal Behavior
2. Major Depressive Episodes

F. Peer supporter's responsibilities to themselves, the program and the agency will be discussed.

1. Limitations
2. Moral, Civil, and Ethical Considerations
3. Risk Taking

SPECIFIC SKILLS RECOMMENDED FOR PEER SUPPORTERS

Personal Qualities Desired:

1. Humility, modesty, integrity, respect, sympathy and curiosity about people.
2. A sincere appreciation of people.
3. Satisfaction in being with, listening to and trying to understand people and society.
4. The ability to take a passive role.
5. The ability to make a good first impression.
6. The ability to accept people with differences.
7. The ability to endure being misunderstood.
8. The ability to give support to a peer even though they may say malicious, prejudiced or false statements.
9. A sense of humor.
10. Empathy while maintaining emotional stability.
11. The ability to keep personal projections at a minimum and still retain insight.
12. Open and friendly, avoiding resentment during an interview.
13. The ability to tolerate love or hostility.
14. The ability to take rebuffs.
15. The ability to accept not being accepted.
16. Gaining satisfactions outside the job for a whole personality.
17. No need to use people to show power.
18. Non-aggressive.
19. Respect for sub-cultural values or taboos.
20. Non-judgmental.
21. High sense of ethics: a professional attitude giving an impression of confidentiality and security.

HIGH FUNCTIONING PEER SUPPORTERS

A) Establish trust and rapport.

B) Enable peers to express their feelings.

C) Practice good listening behavior, both verbal and non-verbal.

D) Understand the value of good listening.

E) Gain necessary information effectively without changing the relationship.

F) Identify high stress and poor adaptive behavior.

G) Able to distinguish a crisis, short-term problem or a chronic problem.

H) Identify suicide risks.

I) Follow-up on the progress of a peer and carry out possible remedies to the situation.

These abilities are most easily accomplished by:

1. Listening
2. Paraphrasing thoughts and/or feelings
3. Summarizing and Self-Disclosure

As well as treating people with:

1. Respect
2. Emphatic understanding and guidance

THE EFFECTS OF SELF-CONCEPT AND DEFENSE MECHANISMS ON INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

It is generally believed that how we feel about ourselves is directly related to how we interact with other people. The more we like whom we are, the easier it is to relate in interpersonal situations. Conversely, the less we can accept ourselves, the more difficult it will be to deal with another person's insecurities or hostilities. It is a complicated chain of psychological events that connect these two phenomena's, but one worth knowing something about if you are going to be dealing with other people's emotional problems.

It is important to make clear that we have been talking about perfectly normal people in this discussion on peer support. This is not a short course in Abnormal Psychology. We're not dealing with neurotics or characterological disorders, nor is that the purpose of peer support. Typically, in your work as peer supporters, you will be dealing with generally well-functioning individuals who are in periods of high stress and need some help getting through a tough time in their lives. Essentially, we are talking about people like you and me. In one sense, the first step you can take in your training is to admit that you don't always have it all together. That sometimes you may feel less than good about yourself. If you can admit that to yourself, it will give the peer more confidence that he or she is talking to an open and human person, and will hopefully disarm him or her of some of their defenses.

From our earliest years we are confronted with people and situations that have an impact on how we feel about ourselves. Parenting figures and significant others have problems which manifest in the feedback we receive. These can be taken out on us in the form of being put down, criticized or undeservedly punished. It results in developing an unrealistic low opinion of who we are (low self-concepts).

Another process by which people develop low self-esteem is having parents who manipulate them to do and feel what they (the parents) want them to. Often it is very different from what the child is really feeling. The child is then told he/she is a "good boy/girl", but down deep the child knows they aren't really feeling what they are being reinforced for. They feel if they really act the way they felt, they would be no good. These confused feelings may continue later in their life and could turn into twisted feelings. For example, "if people like me, they really don't know me; if they knew who I really was, they wouldn't like me at all". Many group therapy sessions have been conducted and it has been found that every member of my group shared this fear about their own likeability as a person.

It is a tragic, but universal part of the human condition. The way most people deal with this deep-seated fear is by developing defense mechanisms to ward off their feelings of doubt. The primary purpose of all defense mechanisms is to protect us from feeling badly about ourselves. A certain level of self-protection is normal and healthy.

It is when defenses become too much a part of our daily functioning that we get into psychological trouble. Different people tend to use different types of defenses that determine what we refer to as their personality style. You will undoubtedly recognize many of these mechanisms in yourself or others you know.

1. Projection:

Attributing to other people's feelings or thoughts that are really your own. "I'm not angry with my wife: she's the hostile bitch". It's easier to see the other person as having the hostility rather than yourself.

2. Displacement:

Feelings toward a person that are really directed toward someone else. Coming home and hassling your wife/girlfriend instead of yelling back at your supervisor is an example. It is safer on your ego (and your job) to take it out on someone with whom you have more leverage than on a superior.

3. Rationalization:

Making an excuse for a failure, "I wasn't that interested in getting promoted anyway, it's all political". This makes it easier on our own self-concept if we say we don't care or we blame it on external uncontrollable events.

4. Repression:

A basic defense mechanism that keeps painful thoughts or emotions from consciousness. This often occurs after going through traumatic experiences. This can be a painful or wrongful personal experience that we prefer to be kept quiet or forgotten about. As with the other defenses, it makes it easier on the self-concept or ego.

5. Denial:

Refusing to admit the existence of a reality. An example of this could be a person's first reaction when being told they or a loved one has a possibly fatal illness and their response is to simply say, "it's not true". It makes it easier on the person's psyche to deal with horrible reality when they are ready to. This can last for hours, days or even months and years. Denial is often used when being confronted with a spouse's infidelity; it is easier to pretend it is not there.

6. Intellectualization:

Dealing with highly emotional events in a cool, rational way. An employee at your agency, Joe, has a confrontation with another co-worker, Fred. While working around the clock to complete a project before the deadline. Fred leaves work and is involved in a car accident. Your supervisor says, " I am sorry to hear about Fred but, you're doing a great job on that project. I am sure you will do fine working alone to finish this project before the deadline. You can see this is closely related to denial and as an employer, may be highly useful in coping with traumatic situations.

7. Reaction Formation:

Substituting an opposite feeling for the unacceptable one the person really has. A parent who feels angry and rejecting toward their child overcorrects by expressing lots of worry and concern about the child's safety. Another example would be a person attracted by the excitement and brutality of war who becomes a pacifist.

8. Passive Aggression:

This is not a classical defense mechanism, but is a first cousin and deserves mentioning. It refers to indirect, often subtle ways of expressing anger with having to do it directly. Examples are: Being constantly late for appointments, "losing" others' valuables, "forgetting" to tell people important messages, being "too tired" to have sex, etc. All of these "excuses" can have an element of validity to them and are, thus, not easy to confront. The purpose is to get anger out without having to own it. Because of the difficulty many people have in expressing anger, passive aggressive behaviors are fairly common ways of protecting our ego from admitting we are angry with someone.

9. Alcoholism/Substance Abuse:

This too, is not a classical defense mechanism, but it is such a problem in today's society that it must be discussed. It is, as are the other mechanisms, a way of protecting the person from feeling badly about himself. Aside from suicide, it is the ultimate escape. In fact, substance abuse is a type of slow suicidal behavior. The person wants out, but doesn't want to leave for good. Just for a few hours, until he has to report for work in the morning. Drinking obliterates reality: it makes it less painful to deal with the misery of one's life. It is, of course, the most dangerous defense mechanism because it can kill. It kills the user, his relationships with his family and often destroys many lives around him.

10. Sublimation:

This is the only purely "healthy" defense mechanism. It refers to expressing a socially unacceptable impulse in a socially acceptable way. Boxing or other physical contact sports are excellent ways of sublimating anger, as opposed to hitting your child. People sometimes become teachers to demonstrate that they are intellectually competent; or work out their hostile feelings toward authority; or accountants so that they can be obsessive-compulsive and make money with it; or performers to feed an insatiable need for recognition.

The point to remember is people develop their defenses for very good reasons to protect themselves against feeling badly about who they are, and can be useful when not taken to an extreme. So, respect this when you see them in others and they will eventually give them up when they begin to feel better about themselves.

Why do we have trouble feeling good about ourselves in the first place? A general answer to this question is that we are prevented from being ourselves as we grow up. We may develop problems, defenses and a low self-image. The reverse is equally true to the extent that if we are allowed to be ourselves as youngsters we will develop a positive and congruent self-concept.

What happens with most of us, however, is that we are prevented from expressing ourselves much more than is actually necessary. We learn parts of us are not acceptable, are not to be expressed, and are not good. Typical areas of societal repression have to do with anger and sexuality, both of which are often said to be *bad* by parents and teachers. We end up having to relearn that those parts of ourselves are okay when we're grown.

One result of these assaults on our self-esteem is that we take this unrealistically low self-concept into our relationships as adults and feel we have to pretend we're something we're not.

In marriages what often happens is that two people that are struggling to feel good about themselves meet, each looking for validation from the other, but unable to provide it because they are so needy themselves.

They have put on a facade of togetherness prior to the marriage but as the months and years roll by, their real feelings about themselves surface and they have to work on re-defining their relationship. This leads either to an improved marriage, mutual loneliness or divorce.

What does all of this have to do with peer support? A lot. The people you'll be dealing with are, as stated above, basically normal, well-functioning people. However, they are human and they will come to you not only in some kind of crisis which you can help them sort out, but also with a whole host of feelings about themselves, defenses against those feelings, and relationships that have been affected by their individual psychological styles. You need to recognize some of the patterns I've discussed here and to see them as normal, part of the human condition. If you suspect for instance, that a peer is using rationalization to explain away his third divorce ("I didn't love her anyway"), you may simply ask him if he really feels that way or if saying that makes it easier to deal with another terminated relationship. Or, if a peer says that he has been unduly impatient with his teenage son lately and you suspect he's displacing some aggression from somewhere else, you may ask how he's feeling toward his wife or toward people at work, and if he is perhaps taking out angry feelings toward others on his son.

To summarize: As we grow up, how we feel about ourselves is determined not only by our own accomplishments, but by the messages we get from significant others about who we are. The more unconditional acceptance we feel from others, the less we need to rely on defense mechanisms to make us feel okay. The better our self-image, the more likely we'll be able to develop positive relationships with others.

The goal of peer support, in fact of any helping, is to provide an atmosphere in which the person feels totally accepted and is able to explore who he or she is in the context of a caring relationship. As I stated at the beginning of this manual, this is at once a very modest and very ambitious goal. I feel confident that you will do it well.

JOHARI'S WINDOW
A MODEL FOR LEARNING MORE ABOUT MYSELF AND HELPING OTHERS LEARN MORE ABOUT ME

MYSELF

1. Things about myself that I know.

   (a) Free and Open Areas - I know and they know.
   (b) My Secret or Hidden Self - Things I know, they don't.
   In order for others to learn things about me that they don't know, which I would like for them to know, I must take RISKS and tell them.

2. Things about myself that others know but are unknown to me.

   (a) My Blind Self - They know things about me that I don't.
   In order to learn what others know about me that I would like to know, I must ask for and receive FEEDBACK!
   (b) My Subconscious Self - Things about me I don't know and they don't know. There are some things about me that I, or others may never know.

OTHERS

1. Things others know about me that I also know.

   (a) Free and Open Areas - I know and they know.

2. Things I know about myself that others do not know.

   (a) My Secret or Hidden Self - Things I know, they don't.
   In order for others to learn things about me that they don't know, that I would like for them to know, I must take RISKS and tell them.
   (b) My Subconscious Self - Things about me I know and they don't know.
   There are some things about me that I, or anyone else, may never know.

PEER SUPPORT ISSUES

PEER SUPPORT ISSUES

I. Selection of Peer Supporters

a. Peer Supporters are selected, on a volunteer basis, from all ranks and positions within the workplace.

II. Peer Supporter Services

a. Anyone in the workplace and their family members may utilize the services of this program.

b. Support sessions are conducted on the Peer Supporter's and peer's own time, absent exigent circumstances.

   1. Emergency response during working hours requires the approval of the concerned or his\her designate.

c. All communication between a Peer Supporter and a peer is confidential, <u>except</u> for those matters that involve a life threat or a dangerous violation of the law.

   1. Peer Supporters shall not be interviewed, nor shall they discuss details of support sessions, with employer personnel.

d. An Individual's decision to seek Peer Support services shall be voluntary.

   1. Although supervisors may suggest, out of concern for the individual, that he/she may want to see a Peer Supporter, referral shall not be made under duress or promise of reward.
   2. The above in no way alters the employer's ability to administer discipline, or a supervisor's responsibility to supervise.
   3. Peer Supporter's names and business telephone numbers are available on posted lists at each unit of assignment.

III. Monthly Statistics

a. Peer Supporters submit monthly statistic sheets to the Program Coordinator, which indicate the number of support sessions performed as well as the general nature of those sessions.

b. Names of peers and specifics about Peer Support sessions are not submitted.

IV. Follow-up Training Sessions

a. After completing the three-day training seminar, Peer Supporters are expected to attend quarterly training meetings.

b. Training meetings are two hours in length and cover new material, new and reviewed techniques to use in support sessions. Guest speakers are scheduled, as time allows.

BASIC SUPPORT MODEL
OVERVIEW

We all have problems in living. Usually we find a way to cope. However, there are times when our usual coping skills do not work to remedy the problem or the problem overtaxes our usual resources. Talking it out with someone helps mobilize coping resources. Keeping everything inside and isolating oneself emotionally usually intensifies the problem and makes things worse. As peer support personnel, your role is to help a fellow employee reduce the level of stress through emotional support that allows the mobilization of coping resources.

Helping is providing purposeful assistance to other people that make their lives more pleasant, easier, less frustrating, or in some other way, more satisfying.

Some people confuse helping others with satisfying their own desires. Hopefully, you are not such a person. Certainly people do gain much personal satisfaction from helping, but it should remain within a context that values and respects those receiving help.

The helping process is a series of events that assists people in making desired changes. The process has a beginning and an end. It involves a person with a concern and a Peer Supporter who uses information, concepts, and skills.

I. There are main aspects of the peer support process.

A. Defining Problems - "Things are not as I want them to be" situations.

1. Labels are often used to categorize problems
(Example: loneliness, depression, confusion, anger, etc.). Labels vary in tremendous degrees.

2. Because of the variance, avoid labels and deal with feelings, thoughts, and behavior.

3. Be specific in clarifying problems.

B. Assisting - Involves helping tools (concepts, skills, and information) and helping strategies (a plan for using the tools to help obtain the desired outcomes).

1. There are four helping tools categories

a. Basic Communication Tools - Assist you as a Peer Supporter to:

1. Communicate acceptance of people you are helping.

2. Help clarify their thinking, feeling, and behaving.

3. These two tools are for active listening, which requires the listener to pay attention to two levels of communication.
   a. Understand the issues being described.

   b. Understand the feelings of the person about those issues.

1. The active listener makes predictions about what the speaker is trying to express and then takes some kind of verbal action as a means of helping.

b. Goal-gaining Tools - Used to help people take specific actions.

1. Contracting - a peer arranges or contracts with the Peer Supporter to do certain activities. Reviews are done periodically to see how well the contract is being fulfilled. Contracting makes the relationship explicit and eliminates the vagueness.

2. Modeling and role playing - trying out new behaviors in non-threatening situations.

3. Reinforcing - giving persons support when they take action toward desired outcomes.

4. Decision-making - helping people define their objectives, identify alternative means for achieving goals, and develop procedures for analyzing risks and predicting needed resources.

a. Behavior Observation and Description Tools

1. In talking with a peer or a group, an impartial observer can be effective. He is neutral and objective and can help others focus on facts and information instead of getting entangled in biases.

b. Resource Development Tools - Identify resources and make them more available to people.

1. In the long run, these tools may be the most useful ones to you as a Peer Supporter.

2. They consist of getting information to people, establishing sources of help for specific problems, and facilitating the uses of resources.

5. Helping Strategies

a. Developing effective strategies requires imagination, sensitivity, and good perceptual abilities.

b. Know why you are using particular helping tools at a particular time.

1. What is your purpose?

2. Are you doing active listening as a means for aiding self-understanding, reducing anger, or establishing a relationship?

c. Strategies can enhance your helping efforts and make better use of your time.

6. Achieving Outcomes - Outcomes are desired changes in the life of the person being helped. They may vary in extremes.

   a. There are four main outcomes to deal with.

   b. Change in feeling states

      1. A feeling state is an emotional condition you experience for a period of time.

      2. It is more than a brief emotional reaction, and stronger or more specific than a mood.

      3. It may last for part of an hour, a day, or several days longer.

      4. It's usually associated with a given event or experience.

      5. Negative feeling states are psychologically uncomfortable, sometimes painful. Some negative feelings would include frustration, depression, anger, self-pity and resentment.

      6. The placement of feeling states on the positive-negative and intensity continuums determine their debilitating effect.

      7. Sometimes reducing the intensity of the feeling may eliminate its debilitating effect.

      8. When we have negative feeling states, usually someone has violated our values or ignored our underlying assumptions. We cause our own feelings.

      9. The source over which one has the most control is oneself. It is usually more productive to focus on our own behavior than on others.

      10. Clarifying underlying values and assumptions often works toward changing negative feeling states. After the clarification process, people can often turn from preoccupation with negative feelings to action aimed at dealing with circumstances to which they object.

      11. Often feelings may be changed to neutral or positive feeling states without doing anything at all about the precipitating events or circumstances.

   c. Lack of understanding seems to be about three subjects.

      1. Self

         a. Self-understanding is an ongoing challenge because we constantly change throughout the life span.

2. Others

a. Understanding significant others involves knowing their interests and values and their perceptions of us. This can be difficult because people tend not to be frank about how they feel about each other. They sometimes confuse being open with being obnoxious.

3. Circumstances

a. Understanding of environmental circumstances is for instance, knowing laws, policies, and "how-to" information. Lack of understanding can be caused by incomplete information, inaccurate information, and misperception.

b. Increased understanding does not always require the Peer Supporter to provide new information. Sometimes the peer can be helped to recognize his perception of what is already known.

c. Decisions - a major source of unhappiness for many people is their inability to make decisions.

1. Part of the difficulty in making decisions is lack of decision-making skills.

d. Deciding - A five step decision-making model.

4. Defining: What is my specific problem or concern? Use your listening skills to help the person define their problem and situation, and what they want to happen? Is it realistic?

5. Investigating: What are alternatives and consequences of each? In every decision there are many alternatives. Peer Supporters can assist in highlighting choices and shedding light on alternative choices. Peer Support can be helpful in identifying the consequences, both positive and negative, for each alternative.

6. Choosing: Which of the alternatives should I choose? Exploring and clarifying one's values is an integral part of making a thoughtful and personally rewarding decision. The impact of each alternative on others, other consequences, and follow-through on one's choice are important to discuss. Realistically means the ability to "carry it off". More information may have to be gathered. Peer support personnel can help others identify what information is needed and where they can get it.

7. Acting: When and how will I act upon my choice? Procrastination is a self-defeating behavior that plagues most of us. Even after a decision has been made, special attention must be given to implement the decision. A plan of action can be discussed that

outlines various steps that will move a person towards a goal.

8. Evaluating: How will I know I made the right choice? One's personal values system will influence the evaluation procedures and the interpretation of results. Ask the question, "How am I feeling about what has happened?" If the internal feedback received is compatible with the value system, positive feelings should result.

d. The desire or need to make a decision is often associated with both a negative feeling state and lack of understanding.

1. Implementing Decisions - the most carefully thought out decision is usually little more than an exercise in futility if satisfactory action does not follow. It is often difficult to separate a decision from the action necessary to implement it. Often when we decide not to pursue a course of action it is because of our prediction we cannot perform the tasks involved. It is often easier for people to decide upon goals than to find ways to pursue them.

II. Problem ownership - You as Peer Supporter, do not take over the peer's responsibilities. Each person is responsible for his/her own actions. One moves into the helping relationship with the clear intention of moving out as soon as appropriate. It is often important to clarify "problem ownership" with the person being helped. Make it clear you are not inviting a partnership arrangement. A Peer Supporter is a resource and the people being helped may need to be reminded that the problems are theirs. No one can solve our problems for us. We need the increased freedom associated with directing our own lives. Do not fall into the trap of worrying about another's problem because you begin to assume part ownership of it. Worrying is non-productive and foolish.

III. The change or outcome is not the only result of helping skills (e.g., active listening), but certain attitudes that facilitate the helping/communication process.

A. The Facilitating Conditions.

1. Caring commitment - Demonstrate some degree of caring for the person. Working with someone requires you shift the focus away from your own needs and interests to those whom you are helping.

2. Accepting - Recognize that others have a right to their feelings, although you may not approve of their behaviors. Accepting others assumes that they are doing the best they can to get along in their lives and to satisfy their basic needs. If they could do better, they would. Remember, however, that accepting others is not the same as approving of people's actions or agreeing with them. Moreover, it does not mean that you are encouraging them to continue their personal worth and dignity as a person. Conveying acceptance tells the person that both what he/she has to say is important and worthy of another's attention. It also acknowledges your willingness to listen and encourages the speaker to continue.

3. Understanding - Understanding is not only grasping what a person is talking about, but also sensing what the person is feeling and experiencing. While you are trying to understand another, avoid labeling, judging, and evaluating. You are too busy being with the person. You are trying to see things from the other person's point of view. Empathy, understanding a person's world from their point of view, is another word for understanding.

4. Trusting openness - As people experience caring, acceptance, and understanding, they gain a sense of security and confidence. They can take more risks, explore more ideas without fear of being judged or devalued. Openness is fostered that invites self-disclosure. Respecting confidentiality and the trust of the person is crucial.

5. Respecting - People who are respectful of others give them common courtesies, including the right to express their own decisions, to solve their own problems, and to shape their own lives. When people feel respected, they are more likely to share their feelings and talk more openly. They know that their contributions will be acknowledged and that they will not be "put down" for their efforts.

FEELINGS AND EMOTIONS

Seven Exercises For Expressing Anger Indirectly

1. **Angry Letter**

   Write a letter to each person you are angry with. Begin as follows: "I am angry with you." List your complaints as completely as possible. Be sure the recipient will understand you. Place the envelopes where you can see them, you may want to use a bright-colored envelope so you can see them easily. Later, if you feel any additional anger, reread the letter and add to it. After a while dispose of the letter, throw it in the ocean, burn it with a ceremony, bury it in the woods, tear it into shreds, do something you will remember.

2. **Safe Anger Acts**

   Write the name of the person you're angry with in large letters on a piece of paper. Tear the paper into as many pieces as possible as quickly as possible. Burn the scraps, thinking, "You deserve my anger." Repeat as necessary.

3. **Taking Angry Steps**

   Write the person's name on the sole of your shoe. All day long, remind yourself that it's there. Take delight in getting rid of the anger with every step that you take.

4. **Acting Out the Anger**

   Close yourself in a room and scream your worst opinion of this person. It helps to beat a pillow with your fists at the same time. Don't be afraid to get worked up. Don't be afraid, even if you begin to cry. Letting the anger out won't hurt you or anyone else. When you have completed this, sit quietly for ten minutes with your eyes closed, breathing deeply and easily. Wash your face hands and go for a walk. Repeat in a few days if necessary.

5. **Partial Contact**

   Pick up the telephone and dial the number of the person you are angry with. When they answer, push down the button to break the connection and start your tirade, pretending that the other person is still on the line. (Make sure you keep the button down.)

6. **Symbolic Menial Tasks**

   Allow your anger to find expression in positive menial tasks that consume your energy. Cleaning the attic, the extra room, and the garage. Baptize each weed in your garden with the name of the person you are angry with and then weed with a vengeance. Invent your own exercise, keeping in mind that you need to do some thing to get your anger out, making sure you do not harm another person or another's property.

7. **Ridiculous Imagery**

   Imagine the person who irritates you as a large rubber duck, but with real feathers and webbed feet, and hear their jabs and irritating remarks as mindless quacking. Make up any character that gives you a laugh and implant them on the irritating person's face.

BEING IN TOUCH

WITH YOUR FEELINGS

IS THE ONLY WAY

YOU CAN BECOME

YOUR HIGHEST SELF

THE ONLY WAY

YOU CAN BECOME

OPEN AND FREE

THE ONLY WAY

YOU CAN BECOME

YOUR OWN PERSON

Feelings that persons have, but fail to identify…

Abandoned
Adequate
Affectionate
Ambivalent
Angry
Annoyed
Anxious
Apathetic
Astounded
Awed

Bad
Betrayed
Bitter
Blissful
Bold
Bored
Brave

Calm
Capable
Challenged
Charmed
Cheated
Cheerful
Childish
Clever
Combative
Competitive
Condemned
Confused
Conspicuous
Contented
Cruel
Crushed

Deceitful
Defeated
Delighted
Desirous
Despair
Disturbed
Divided
Dominated

Eager
Ecstatic

Embarrassed
Empty
Enchanted
Energetic
Enjoy
Envious
Evil
Exasperated
Excited
Exhausted

Fascinated
Fearful
Flustered
Foolish
Frantic
Frustrated
Frightened
Free
Full
Furious

Glad
Good
Gratified
Greedy
Grief
Guilty

Happy
Hate
Heavenly
Helpful
Helpless
High
Horrible

Inspired
Intimated
Isolated
Irritated

Jealousy
Joyous
Jumpy

Kind

Lazy
Lecherous
Left out
Lonely
Longing
Loving
(love)
Low
Lustful

Mad
Mean
Miserable
Mystical

Naughty
Nervous
Nice Nutty

Obnoxious
Obsessed
Odd
Outraged
Overwhelmed

Pain
Panicked
Peaceful
Persecuted
Petrified
Pleasant
Pleased
Pressured
Proud
Quarrelsome

Rage
Refreshed
Rejected
Relaxed
Relieved
Remorse
Restless
Righteous
Rigid

Sad
Sated
Satisfied
Scared
Screwed up
Sexy
Shocked
Silly
Skeptical
Sneaky
Solemn
Sorrowful
Spiteful
Startled
Stingy
Stuffed
Stupid
Stunned
Suffering
Sure
Sympathetic

Talkative
Tempted
Tense
Terrible
Terrified
Threatened
Tired

Ugly
Uneasy
Unsettled

Vulnerable
Vivacious

Wicked
Wonderful
Weepy
Worry (ied)

LISTENING SKILLS

LISTENING

LISTENING IS THE MOST IMPORTANT SUPPORTER SKILL

Listen On 3 Levels:

A. Content
B. Feelings
C. Perspective or point of view
    1. It takes practice to listen on all 3 levels
        a. Example: A daughter comes home very late. Her father waits up and puts her on restriction, the next day she runs away.

D. Feelings - A variety of possible feelings
    1. Angry at being disobeyed
    2. Frustrated at being unable to control daughter
    3. Hurt by being left
    4. Worried about what will happen
    5. Insecure about daughter's love

E. Perspective or point of view
    1. Have I done something wrong?
    2. How can I fix this?
    3. What's wrong with her?

Listening Involves Attending To Both Verbal And Non-Verbal Cues

A. Verbal content
B. Words chosen and voice tone "What happened?"
C. Non-Verbal
    1. Facial expression
    2. Body posture

Purposes Of Listening

A. Allows the peer to direct the session
B. Gives the peer the responsibility for what happens in the session
C. Encourages the peer to continue expressing his/her ideas and feelings
D. Helps the peer relax and feel more comfortable
E. Contributes to the peer's sense of security
F. Enables the Peer Supporter to draw more accurate inferences about the peer.

ADDITIONAL SKILLS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO MORE EFFECTIVE LISTENING

A. Eye contact
B. Accurate verbal following
C. Posture
D. Empathetic responses
    1. Non-verbal
    2. Verbal
E. Assessing peer's problems and whether he is in control. Listen - don't give advice

TWO OR MORE IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF LISTENING

A. Extra emphasis on words e.g., "She didn't talk to me, just packed a bag and was gone when I got home." Peer Supporter: "You sound angry."

B. A pattern or reoccurring theme in consecutive seemingly unrelated incidents. In example, father talks about failing Sergeant's exam, then about a bad performance evaluation, then about his daughter running away. Peer Supporter says: "Are you feeling like a failure?"

HOW TO COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY

Effective communication skills are essential in determining our ability to have rewarding relations with others and to achieve satisfaction in life. The quality of our relationships with friends, spouses, children, and colleagues are dependent upon sound communication skills. In fact, it is often our failure to communicate effectively that leads to personal disappointment and the breakdown of important relationships. Unfortunately, we often leave the success of important relationships to chance until communication fails and the relationships begin to deteriorate. By then, however, it may be too late. This brief guide outlines important characteristics of effective communication and offers practical suggestions for improving these skills. It will not solve all of your communication problems and it is certainly no substitute for professional help. However, it will give you some important ideas and suggestions.

Listen Effectively:

The first step in developing skilled communication is effective listening. Relating to others is impossible unless you can fully hear what they are saying. To begin, maintain eye contact between yourself and the person with whom you want to communicate. Next, let him or her talk freely while you simply try to comprehend what is being said. Listen for both the feelings and the content of what the person is saying. If you are not sure you have heard everything or understand what is meant, it is often helpful to paraphrase what has been said and then allow the other person to clarify any misunderstanding of the message. Try not to let your own feelings interfere at this point or you might miss something important.

Respond Descriptively:

Be careful not to respond to an important message with an evaluative statement. Our culture has programmed us to think largely in evaluative terms. We like something or we don't; we feel things are either "right or wrong." Effective communication is not designed to determine winners or losers. In communicating, the goal is to learn all we can about someone else's thoughts and feelings and let that person better know the same things about us. Hence, descriptive statements about the other person's communication and your reaction to what is said will be most helpful. Evaluative statements are not helpful and tend to elicit defensiveness.

Use your Feelings:

Feelings are important in communicating. Often it takes practice to be able to identify them and use them constructively, but there are hardly any interpersonal issues about which we do not have some feelings. When you communicate your feelings it is important to be specific and to take responsibility for them. Sometimes this is referred to as an "I" message. For example, "I feel angry because you left without me, and I really wanted to go along."

Note that the statement is descriptive and includes a statement of feelings. It allows the receiver of the communication to respond without feeling accused or threatened. Contrast that with possible reactions to a statement such as, "How could you leave me there like that!" or, "You are selfish and inconsiderate," or "Everyone says you don't care about me." In short, express your feelings, negative or positive, as clearly as possible and be responsible for what you say.

Assess Needs:

Effective communication considers the needs of all involved. If you are giving someone feedback about your reactions to an event, be sure that you are addressing something over which he/she has control. If you do not consider the other persons needs and ability to deal with what you are saying, your efforts could be destructive.

Make Timely Responses:

Effective communications are delivered at a time when the issue to be discussed is most important, usually as soon as possible after the behavior has occurred. It can be destructive to save old or unresolved concerns for discussion at a later time or to use them as a weapon ("remember when you..."). On the other hand, it is important to decide if the other person is ready to handle your communication immediately. Sometimes, it is best to delay sensitive communications until an appropriate setting can be found for the discussion. Avoid discussing emotional issues until you are in a place where there is privacy and you can talk freely.

Effective communication skills are not easily obtained. They require practice and feedback from another person to be sure that communication is occurring. However, as you develop better skills in communicating, they can help you learn more about yourself and greatly enrich the quality of your relationships.

KEY WAYS TO RECEIVING AND RESPONDING TO OTHERS' MESSAGES

1. The Empathetic Response:

Also called the reflective response, the mirror response, and active listening. Requires that we attempt to listen without preconception or bias.

Advantages:

- Indicates concern and interest in the other person
- Indicates acceptance of the other person
- Helps to focus and define the issue for himself/herself
- Yields more appropriate follow-up responses; don't get off track
- Defuses conflict by preventing reciprocal escalation

Disadvantages:

- Can be taken as condescending, especially when offered strategically or mechanically
- Takes a lot of time (but this is usually outweighed by advantages)

Common barriers to using:

- Self-consciousness, awkwardness
- Limited repertoire of openings

Suggestions:

a. May be used as a full-blown summary of extended material down to the accent-simply a word or two repeated from what was said.

b. Can be used in a truly active manner even as a kind of interruption. E.g., "OK. I want to ask you to stop for a minute to make sure I understood what you were saying. What I get so far is . . .."

c. It's useful to select and/or write out and then practice a variety of openings. Some examples:

I'm picking up that you . . .
I gather . . .
To me, you're conveying a sense . . .
I wonder if you're saying . . .
I'm not sure I'm with you, but . . .
If I'm hearing you correctly . . .
As I get it, you're saying that . . .
Listening to you it seems that . . .
It appears to you . . .
Let me check to see if I understand . . .
I sense that you're saying

d. Give yourself time to think. No requirement for instant response.

e. Usually keep responses short. Give the essentials.

f. When possible, use language of the other person; don't shift their idioms into your language style.

2. The Reportage Response:

Shares observations of vocal and body data and filters out the works. Also called the "perception check."

Advantages:

- It directs the person to look at the congruence between the verbal and the nonverbal.
- E.g., "I notice when you said you agree you spoke very quietly and looked away."
- It gives the person freedom to handle the information in ways he or she chooses. (We say no more than "I am aware of . . ." "I notice that . . .", "I'm observing that . . ." and stop there.
- Especially appropriate when the other person is giving off mixed messages.

Disadvantages:

- People may resent having their unconscious messages pointed out.
- They may not be ready to own them.

Suggestions:

a. In simplest form, merely report what you see and hear in a tentative manner. "I'm noticing you're sitting on the edge of your chair . . ."

b. A full-form perception check contains both the sense data you observe and your interpretation: "I am aware that you're looking out the window a lot, and I get the idea that you're tuning out what he's saying . . ."

c. Probably not appropriate until some measure of trust has been established.

3. The Probing Response:

To draw or pull out information that is missing in the story. Essentially used to gather in more data.

Statement forms. In example:

Say more about . . .
Tell me more about . . .
Go on about . . .

Question forms. In example:

When did it happen . . .?
How often does it occur . . .?
What happened next . . .?
Who was involved . . .?

Advantages:

- It can help the other make sense of his/her experience
  E.g., How do those fit together? What struck you about that?
- It can surface thoughts, feelings, and experiences.
  E.g., How do you feel about that? What conclusion did you draw about that?
- It can move the other person to action.
  E.g., How could you make that work for you? What are the options?

Disadvantage:

Overused, a tone of interrogation.

ACTIVE LISTENING STARTERS

The basic idea of active listening is to demonstrate to the other person that

(a) You are listening to them

(b) That there is room for them to correct themselves if you've heard it wrong

(c) Make them feel heard. Active listening takes practice.

Here are lead-in phrases that might help you summarize, paraphrase, rephrase and acknowledge:

- I'm picking up that...
- As I get it, you felt...
- Sort of a feeling that...
- Sort of saying...
- Kind of a feeling like...
- If I'm hearing you correctly...
- To me it's almost like you're saying...
- Sort of hear you saying that you...
- Kind of made you feel...
- The thing you feel most is...
- So, as you see it...
- As I get it, you're saying...
- What I guess I'm hearing is...
- I'm not sure I'm with you but...
- I somehow sense that maybe you feel...
- You feel...
- I really hear you saying...
- I wonder if you're expressing a concern that...
- It sounds as if you're indicating a concern about...
- I wonder if you're saying...
- You place a high value on...
- It seems to you...
- Like right now you believe...
- You often feel...
- You feel, perhaps, that...
- You appear to be feeling...
- It appears to you...
- As I hear it, you...
- So, from where you sit...
- Your feeling now is that...
- I read you as saying...
- Sometimes you...
- Your message seems to be, "I...
- Listening to you it seems as if...
- I gather...
- So your world is a place where you...
- You communicate a sense of...

OPEN AND OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

- Tell me more about how you see this...
- How do you perceive the situation?
- Help me understand the situation...
- Can you tell me more about..?
- What are alternatives that you've thought about..?
- How did you decide that..?
- What do you mean by...
- What are some good things about that idea..?
- How can I help you do something about that..?
- In what ways is this important to you..?
- What are some things you'd like to tell (Name)..?
- If you were to do things over again how would you do them differently...
- What other possibilities are there...
- Where would that lead..?
- What might some of the consequence be..?
- What were the things that led up to this..?
- How did you come to decide this..?
- What have you done so far about that idea..?
- Explain this to me again...I'm having a hard time understanding...
- Where would you like to go with this idea..?
- What are some other ways you've thought about..?

(Add ten more of your own)

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

9. _____

10. _____

10 KEYS TO EFFECTIVE LISTENING

These keys are a positive guideline to better listening. In fact, they're at the heart of developing better listening habits that could last a lifetime.

10 keys to effective listening		**The *bad* listener**	**The *good* listener**
1.	Find areas of interest	Tunes out dry subjects	Opportunities: asks "What's in it for me?"
2.	Judge content, not delivery	Tunes out if delivery is poor	Judges content, skips over delivery errors
3.	Hold your fire	Tends to argument	Doesn't judge until comprehension complete
4.	Listen for ideas	Listens for facts	Listens for central themes
5.	Be flexible	Takes intensive notes using only one system	Takes fewer notes. Uses 4-5 different systems, depending on speaker.
6.	Work at listening	Shows no energy output. Attention is faked	Works hard, exhibits active body state
7.	Resist distractions	Distracted easily	Fights or avoids distractions, tolerates bad habits, knows how to concentrate
8.	Exercise your mind	Resists difficult expository material; seeks light, recreational material	Uses heavier material as exercise for the mind
9.	Keep your mind open	Reacts to emotional words	Interprets color words; does not get hung up on them
10.	Capitalize on fact that THOUGHT is FASTER than speech	Tends to daydream with slow speakers	Challenges, anticipates, mentally summarizes, weighs the evidence, listens between the lines to tone of voice

NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

How can you show someone that you're paying attention with your **BODY**?

When you listen to other people, your body tells them if you are really interested. If you are bored, or thinking of other things, it will show in your body position.

We can teach ourselves to be ACTIVE listeners!

The word S O L E R represents the basic steps you can use to "listen' with your body. The letters mean:

S **SQUARELY** face the other person.
Stand or sit directly forward, not sideways or on a slouching position. This will help you keep your mind on the person who is speaking.

O Put your body in an **OPEN** position.
When sitting, your feet should be flat on the floor, hands resting on your thighs. When your arms are crossed, you are in a closed position.

L **LEAN** forward a little.
This shows that you are eager to hear what the other person has to say.

E Make **EYE** contact.
This doesn't mean to stare, but to look at the other person most of the time.

R Be **RELAXED**.
Doing the S, O, L, and E may feel awkward at first, but the more you practice, the more relaxed you will feel. Soon, paying attention will be very natural.

SUMMARY OF NONVERBAL BEHAVIOR CUES TYPICAL GESTURE CLUSTERS

OPENNESS
Open hands
Unbuttoning coat
Uncrossed legs

EVALUATING
Hand-to-cheek, finger raised
Head tilted
Chin stroking
Looking down over glasses
Gesturing, chewing on glasses
Pacing
Pinching bridge of nose
Lighting pipe, chewing on it

READINESS
Hands on hips
Sitting, leaning forward, hands on knees
Sitting on the edge of the chair
Arms spread, leaning on table
Moving in (decreasing distance between you and the target)
Speaking confidentially

COOPERATION
Sitting on edge of chair
Leaning forward
High eye contact
Tilted head
High hand-to-face gestures
Coat unbuttoning

DEFENSIVENESS
Arms crossed
Fists clenched
Sitting with leg over chair arm
Sitting backwards in a chair

SUSPICION\SECRETIVENESS
Defensiveness syndrome (above)
No eye contact
Sideways glance
Feet\body pointed toward exit
Touching bridge of nose, rubbing ear and eye

CONFIDENCE

Finger "steepling"
Hands clasped behind back, chin upward
Territoriality:
    Feet on desk
    Defining psychological space
    Leaning on object
Elevating self
Cigar smoking, lighting up when the negotiation is near success, blowing smoke upward
Clucking sound
Leaning back with both hands supporting neck

REASSURANCE
Clenched hands, thumb rubbing
Cuticle or nail picking
Sucking on pen, pencil, paperclip
Pinching self, hands

FRUSTRATION\DESPERATION
Short breaths
Running hands through hair
Rubbing back of neck

NERVOUSNESS
Body feels "pressurized"
Clearing throat
"Whew" sound
Anxious whistling
Cigarette smoking
Heavy breathing, tightness in chest
Hands covering mouth while speaking
Tugging at pants while sitting
Jingling money in pockets
Interrupting conversations

SELF-CONTROL
Locked ankles
Clenched hands
Restraining arms, gripping wrists

PARAPHRASING

FEEDBACK: PARAPHRASING

Definition of Paraphrasing:

Paraphrasing is a Peer Supporter response that restates the content of the peer's previous statement and/or feeling. Paraphrasing concentrates primarily on cognitive verbal content. That is content which refers to events, people and things. In paraphrasing the Peer Supporter reflects to the peer the verbal essence of his/her last comment. Sometimes paraphrasing may involve simply repeating the peer's own words, perhaps emphasizing one word in particular. More often paraphrasing is using words that are similar to the peer's, but fewer in number.

In paraphrasing, the Peer Supporter must identify the peer's basic message, either cognitive or affective (pertaining to feeling or emotion) and give that message back to the peer using his/her (the Peer Supporter's) own words.

Purposes of Paraphrasing:

1. It communicates to the peer that the Peer Supporter understands or is trying to understand what is being said. Paraphrasing can thus be a good indicator of accurate verbal following.

2. It sharpens a peer's meaning to have his/her words rephrased more concisely and often leads the peer to expand his/her discussion of the same subject.

3. It often clarifies confusing content for both the Peer Supporter and the peer. Even when paraphrasing is not accurate, it is useful because it encourages the peer to clarify his/her remarks or feelings.

4. It can spotlight an issue by stating it more succinctly, thus offering a direction for the peer's subsequent remarks.

5. It enables the Peer Supporter to verify his/her perceptions of the peer's statements or feelings.

Components of Paraphrasing:

Paraphrasing has two components: determining the basic message and rephrasing. The Peer Supporter uses his/her judgment to determine the basic verbal or feeling message communicated. Peers tend to speak in short paragraphs and seldom state a single thought and wait for a reply. Thus the Peer Supporter must attend to all of the peer's verbal content, but decide on the basic message being expressed in each paragraph.

After the Peer Supporter determines the basic message he/she attempts to give this content back to the peer in more precise way by rephrasing it. The Peer Supporter may want to combine several of the peer's related comments into one response.

In summary, effective paraphrasing is determining the basic meaning of the message content and rephrasing it with fewer words.

Checking Out:

To minimize the possibility of the Peer Supporter's assumptions distorting what the peer is saying, the Peer Supporter should get in the habit of checking out his/her paraphrasing. This can be done by adding phrases such as, "Is that right?", "Am I correct?", or "Have I heard you correctly?" to the paraphrase. This procedure will usually evoke a response from the peer, and the Peer Supporter can then judge whether he/she is making assumptions. Checking out may not be necessary, however, if the peer is clearly indicating agreement either verbally or non-verbally.

Assessing the Outcome of Paraphrasing:

How effectively a Peer Supporter has used paraphrasing can best be judged by the peer's response after a paraphrase. If the paraphrase is effective, the peer may indicate agreement by a word or gesture and may continue to talk further on the same subject.

Sometimes the Peer Supporter will not succeed in accurately distilling the peer's comments, and the peer may reply, "No, that's not what I meant". When this occurs, the Peer Supporter's attempt at paraphrasing has still been useful because it allows the Peer Supporter to see immediately that he/she has erred either in determining the basic message or in rephrasing the content.

In other instances, the peer may confirm the accuracy of the Peer Supporter's paraphrase. Having heard his/her meaning expressed in different words, they may decide to modify or even reverse the meaning entirely to reflect a changed point of view or feeling.

Each of these outcomes can be regarded as evidence that the Peer Supporter's paraphrase has been effective.

Examples of appropriate phrases with which a Peer Supporter might begin a feeling response are:

It seems that you feel.....
Are you saying that you feel.....
You seem to feel.....
Is it possible that you feel.....
I'm picking up that you feel.....
You appear to be feeling.....
Perhaps you're feeling.....
I sense that you feel.....

Our Reactions, Thoughts Or Feelings Make Sense To Me

An important concept to understand with regard to paraphrasing is empathy, which has been identified as one of the essential conditions in supporting. Empathy means putting oneself in the other person's shoes. More formally, it might be defined as the Peer Supporter's attempting to perceive the world through the peer's frame of reference. Thus the Peer Supporter manifests empathy through his/her ability to perceive what is happening in regard to the peer. Paraphrasing is one of the ways empathy can be communicated.

Examples of Paraphrasing:

Four examples of peer statements and possible paraphrasing responses follow. After reading the examples, indicate next to each response whether it is an appropriate or poor paraphrasing response for at least one of the examples.

Peer: I think I'm going to move out this weekend.
All she ever does is complain about my drinking.
Never does any housework, just nags me.

Peer Supporter: Nagging and drinking don't mix _____

Peer Supporter: Sounds like things are bad at home and you're trying to decide whether to leave._____

Peer Supporter: It seems you've made the decision that you can't take it anymore._____

Peer Supporter: _____

****

Peer: My boss doesn't understand me at all. He doesn't realize I always have a hard time getting up in the morning.

Peer Supporter: I hear you saying that your boss can't see your situation the way you see it._____

Peer Supporter: Your boss is firm about work starting at 6:00.

Peer Supporter: Mornings are a tough time for you. _____

Peer Supporter: _____

****

Peer: I got in trouble again for my drinking and may lose my job._____

Peer Supporter: So your right to work could be in jeopardy._____

Peer Supporter: Sounds like this new offense could mean trouble for you._____

Peer Supporter: _____

****

Peer: I didn't want to come here. There is nothing wrong with me. I only came to see you because my wife insisted.

Peer Supporter: You seem resentful about coming here._____

Peer Supporter: You feel that you're a perfectly normal person._____

Peer Supporter: I get the impression that you're annoyed._____

Peer Supporter: _____

****

Summary of Paraphrasing:

To paraphrase is to determine the basic message in the peer's cognitive or feeling statement and concisely rephrase it. The rewording should capture the essence of the content. Occasionally, an exact repetition of the peer's remarks may be an appropriate paraphrase. More commonly, the Peer Supporter utilizes similar, but fewer, words. Sometimes the Peer Supporter offers fresh words that capture the basic message of the peer.

SUMMARIZATION

FEEDBACK: SUMMARIZING

Definitions of Summarizing:

Summarizing is the tying together by the Peer Supporter of the main points discussed in a session. Summarizing can focus on both feelings and content and is appropriate after a discussion of a particular topic within the session or as a review at the end of the support session of the principal issues discussed. In either case, a summary should be brief, to the point, and without new or added meanings.

In may respects, summarizing is similar to, or an extension of, paraphrasing in that the Peer Supporter seeks to determine the basic meanings being expressed in content or feelings and give these meanings back to the peer in fresh words. Summarizing differs primarily in the span of time it is concerned with. In paraphrasing, a statement or feeling occurring over a short period of time is rephrased. In summarizing verbal or feeling content, several of the peer's statements, the entire session, or even several sessions are pulled together.

In summarizing, the Peer Supporter is pulling together a greater number of statements and/or feelings that have come out over an extended period of time.

Purposes of Summarizing:

1. It can ensure continuity in the direction of the support session by providing a focus.

2. It can clarify a peer's meaning by having his/her scattered thoughts and feelings pulled together.

3. It often encourages the peer to explore an issue further once a central theme has been identified.

4. It communicates to the peer that the Peer Supporter understands or is trying to understand what the peer is saying and feeling.

5. It enables the Peer Supporter to verify his/her perceptions of the content and feelings discussed or displayed by the peer during the session. The Peer Supporter can check out whether he/she accurately attended and responded without changing the meanings expressed.

6. It can close discussion on a given topic, thus clearing the way for a new topic.

7. It provides a sense of movement and progress to the peer by drawing several of his/her thoughts and feelings into a common theme.

8. It can terminate a support session in a logical way through review of the major issues discussed in the entire support session.

As with paraphrasing, the Peer Supporter should make a practice of checking out the accuracy of a summary with the peer to minimize the chances of making unwarranted assumptions.

Examples of Summarizing:

To a single mother, exploring problems that she is having with a teenage son, who is smoking marijuana:

> As I understand what you've been saying during the past few minutes, you seem to be struggling with three possible ways to handle the situation: you might continue trying to reason with your son yourself; you might ask his father to help you deal with the boy; or you might stop discussing the problem with your son and punish him by taking away his privileges.

****

At the end of a support session with a male co-worker:

> Let's take a look at what we've covered in this support session. It sounds like you've felt inadequate in dealing with several areas of your life - your family, your job, and now your new girlfriend.

****

Summary:

To summarize is to <u>select</u> to the key points or basic meanings from the peer's verbal content and feelings and succinctly <u>tie them together</u>. The summarization should accurately reflect the essence of the peer's statements and feelings and should not include assumptions of the Peer Supporter. Summarizing then, is a review of the main points already discussed in the session to ensure continuity in a focused direction.

SELF-DISCLOSURE

I. Definition

The Peer Supporter shares his/her own feelings, experiences, attitudes or opinions for the benefit of the peer.

II. Guidelines

A. A self-disclosure should relate directly to the peer's situation (Peer Supporter is not there to tell war stories).

B. Usually, the Peer Supporter only discloses experiences that have happened to him/her.

C. Two rules-of-thumb are:
   1. Will this benefit the peer?
   2. Can the Peer Supporter comfortably reveal this?

III. Purpose of Self-Disclosure

A. To deepen the relationship and help build a sense of trust and rapport.

B. To reduce the peer's feeling of being alone or unique in the situation, e.g., by telling the peer that you were afraid in a similar situation, the peer is encouraged to look at his/her own fears.

C. To foster a feeling of empathy as the peer sees that the Peer Supporter may be able to see the peer's point of view.

D. To help the peer express content or feelings that he/she has previously avoided.

E. By using self-disclosure, the Peer Supporter stands to gain by being seen as an honest, open person. Self-disclosure fosters a climate of trust and openness.

IV. Problems of Self-Disclosure

A. A Self-disclosure may shift the focus of the session away from the peer and onto the Peer Supporter. (Remember that the self-disclosure is for the benefit of the peer.)

B. The Peer Supporter runs the risk of being ignored or ridiculed and the peer's perception of the Peer Supporter may change.

V. Not all Peer Supporters feel comfortable sharing personal experiences. Some of us are more private people.

VI. The Peer Supporter should decide for himself/herself in each situation, if self-disclosure feels comfortable to use and will assist the peer.

EXAMPLES OF SELF-DISCLOSURE

Below are three peer statements, followed by possible self-disclosure responses. After reading the examples, (a) indicate next to each response whether it is an appropriate or poor self-disclosure and why, and (b) formulate an appropriate self-disclosure for the third peer statement. (Assume that the appropriate conditions in the relationship have been established.)

****

Peer: You know, I feel so ashamed. All my friends are going to find out that I have a drinking problem and I don't know how I can face them.

Peer Supporter: I think I'm aware of how you might be feeling because I can remember how ashamed I felt at first, when I had to admit to my friends that I am an alcoholic. _____

Peer Supporter: I think I know how you might feel. I'm not an alcoholic, but my father is and I can remember my shame and embarrassment about the secret getting out. _____

Peer Supporter: I know how you feel. I felt really embarrassed when my father came to my graduation in jeans. _____

****

Summary of Self-Disclosure

Self-disclosure involves the Peer Supporter sharing his/her own feelings, attitudes, opinions, and experiences for the benefit of the peer. The self-disclosure of the Peer Supporter might be revealing a present feeling or relating a relevant past experience. Both timing and appropriateness of content are central to effective self-disclosure. Used appropriately, Peer Supporter self-disclosure should increase the level of trust, genuineness, and empathy in the relationship and reduce the peer's feeling of being unique in his/her problems or difficulties.

COMMON STAGE I PROBLEMS

Moving Too Quickly

Peer Supporters can hinder the helping process by moving on too quickly before adequately doing Stage I work. For instance, they introduce advanced-level empathy too soon confusing or threatening the peer, confront without laying down a base of understanding and support, or give advice. These premature responses sometimes indicate a lack of respect for the peer ("I want to move ahead at a pace that pleases me, not one that is good for you").

Moving Too Slowly

Peer Supporters sometimes feel very comfortable in Stage I and tend to remain there. They constantly encourage peers to explore themselves further and further until this self-exploration becomes meaningless. It no longer contributes to the clarification of the problem situation. In this case, helping can degenerate into a game of insight hunting. Insights into one's experiences, behaviors, and feelings certainly play an important part in the helping process, but searching for insights should never be allowed to become an end in itself.

Fear of Intensity

If the Peer Supporter uses high levels of attending, accurate empathy, respect, concreteness, and genuineness, and if the peer cooperates by exploring the feelings, experiences, and behaviors related to the problematic areas of his or her life, the helping process can be an intense one. This can cause both the Peer Supporter and peer to back off. Peer Supporters know that helping is potentially intense. They are prepared for it and know how to support a peer who is not used to such intensity.

Peer Rambling

One reason a Peer Supporter may be moving too slowly in Stage I is that they are allowing their peers to ramble. Rambling destroys the concreteness, the focus, and the intensity of the helping experience. If the Peer Supporter punctuates the peer's rambling with nods, "uh-huhs," and the like, then the peer's rambling is merely reinforced. Monologues on the part of either the Peer Supporter or the peer are ordinarily frequently to the peer, without interrupting what is important or making the peer lose his or her train of thought. Frequent use of accurate empathy gives direction to the support process. Although peers should explore those issues that have greatest relevance for them (this is another way of saying that the peer's need to determine the direction of support), effective Peer Supporter, because they attend and listen well, are quickly in touch with what is most relevant to their peers.

SELF-EXPLORATION

Because what peers are being influenced to do in Stage I is to talk about themselves and explore themselves and their problem situations in terms of concrete and specific experiences, behaviors, and feelings, it is useful to take a closer look at self-disclosure as a human process. Psychologists have only begun to study self-disclosing behavior scientifically. It is difficult, then, to situate the kind of self-disclosure that is associated with training groups and the helping process in a wider context of "normal" self-disclosing behavior.

Jourard, among others, claims that responsible self-sharing is a part of the normal behavior of the healthy actualized person. According to him, persons who cannot share themselves deeply are ultimately incapable to love. Some theoreticians, taking a common sense approach to self-disclosure, have hypothesized that there is a curvilinear relationship between self-disclosure and mental health: very high and very low levels of self-disclosing behavior are signs of maladjustment: moderate (and appropriate) self-discloses can pour a great deal of energy into building and maintaining facades so that their real selves will not be discovered. The over discloser discloses a great deal even when the situation does not call for it; the under discloser remains closed even when the situation calls for self-disclosing behavior.

Self-disclosure, either within the helping relationship or outside it, is never an end in itself. Assume here that self-disclosure, to promote growth, but must be appropriate to the setting. Derlega and Grzelak outline seven aspects of self-disclosure that you can use to explore appropriate self-disclosure in a helping context.

Informativeness. This refers to both the quantity (breadth) and quality (depth or intimacy) of the information provided. In helping this refers, as we have seen, to the experiences, behaviors, and feelings that need to be explored to define the problem/situation adequately. This will, of course, differ from peer to peer.

Accessibility. This refers to the ease with which information can be obtained from the peer. Some peers need more help than others in getting at relevant experiences, behaviors, and feelings. As we have seen empathy and probing are important skills in the regard.

Voluntary. This refers to the peer's willingness to provide relevant information. Peers who are fearful about revealing themselves need support and encouragement.

Reward Value. This refers to the extent that revealing information provided positive (reinforcing) or negative (punishing) outcomes for the peer. If you fail to listen to what a peer is saying or you respond in a way that the peer finds punitive, the peer's self-disclosing behavior will most likely diminish. On the other hand, if you attend and listen well and if you deal carefully with his or her revelations, then the self-disclosing behavior is likely to be maintained.

Truthfulness. This refers to the extent to which the peer's messages provide information about his or her actual psychological state. If you discover that the peer is not telling you the

truth, it may be that he or she is afraid of telling you or fears other punishing consequences. If this is the case, accusations of being a liar will not help. What is needed are both support and reasonable challenge.

Social Norms. This refers to the extent to which what is disclosed conforms with or deviates from cultural expectations about appropriate disclosing behavior. Some peers are very low discloses in their everyday lives (in fact, this may be part of the problem situation). Providing such peers with some kind of facilitating structure for self-disclosure can help.

Effectiveness. This refers to the extent to which the messages revealed contribute to the peer's goals. It makes little difference if peers talk intimately and at length about themselves if such disclosures do not contribute ultimately to management of the problem situation. Through empathy, probing, and summaries, you can help peers make their disclosures focused and goal-directed.

No claims are made here that self-disclosure in itself "cures," for it is a stage in a developmental helping process. But as Mower demonstrates, self-disclosure can in some cases, release a great deal of healing forces or resources in the peer. For instance, it helps a peer get out from under a burden of guilt. Therefore, adequate self-disclosing behavior predicts therapeutic outcome. If we can find a way to expend the statement of a problem to a concrete list of specific behaviors that constitute it, one major obstacle to the solution of the problem will have been overcome. In other words, the initial ambiguity with which most people analyze their interpersonal problems tends to contribute to their feeling of helplessness in coping with them. Knowing which specific behaviors will solve the problem provides a definite goal for action and having that goal can lend a great sense of relief.

Self-disclosure does not "cure," but it does contribute significantly to the overall process. Let's look at the difference between the self-disclosing behaviors of two different peers.

Peer A: "Things just don't seem to be going right. My personal life is at low ebb. I'm overloaded with work, and a lot of other things intervene to clog up the work. I tend to give up."

This peer expresses his feelings in a vague way; he does not delineate or own his experiences clearly; and he fails to indicate his concrete behaviors.

Peer B: "I'm depressed, really down, and this is unusual for me. I find it hard to get out of bed in the morning and I feel groggy most of the day. I try to read but keep putting the book down and wandering around the house. I think I should go to a movie or visit a friend, but I don't do it; I don't even want to. I have even lost my appetite. This has been the pattern for a couple of weeks now. I think I know what's going on. Two weeks ago I received my dissertation back from my committee. They turned it down for the second time. I really thought I had made the corrections they wanted before. Now I'm beginning to think I'll have to get an entirely new topic, collect new data - the whole bit. But I don't think I have the energy, the drive, and the motivation to do so; yet I don't want my graduate education to go down the drain. Maybe what bothers me even more is that when I began working on the

> dissertation, I began to withdraw from my friends. I didn't invite anyone over to my place and I turned down their invitations to dinners and parties. I didn't even hang around after class to talk to anyone. I left as soon as class was over to get to my typewriter. Now nobody calls me up anymore or comes over. I don't blame them. Why should they? I put the dissertation before them for months. So, on top of everything else, I'm lonely. I just want to pack up to New York."

This peer's statement is filled with specific feelings, experiences, and behaviors. The difference in self-disclosure ability between Peer A and Peer B is obviously vast. Because many peers will not have the ability to reveal themselves as Peer B does here, your probing and empathy skills are needed to help them bridge the gap.

PEER SUPPORTER SELF-SHARING

Another way of challenging your peers is to share with them something about yourself. Like other forms of challenging, Peer Supporter self-disclosure is not an end in itself. It must contribute something to getting the work of helping done. Peer Supporter self-disclosure can have two principal functions.

First it can be a form of modeling and, as such, a way of showing peers how to disclose themselves and a way of encouraging them to do so. Most of the research on Peer Supporter self-disclosure stresses this function: "Overall...the research weighs in favor of the conclusion that therapist modeling of self-disclosure can be an effective method of denoting...for peers what is to take place behaviorally in psychotherapy." It is most useful with peers who don't know what to do or who are reluctant to talk about themselves in an intimate or personal way. Therefore, this kind of Peer Supporter's self-disclosure would seem to be most useful early in the helping interviews, but it could also be used any time a peer gets "stuck" and is having difficulty revealing himself or herself. Both Jourard and Mower were pioneers in urging this kind of Peer Supporter's self-disclosure. Self-help groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous use modeling extensively as a way of showing new members what to talk about and of encouraging new members to talk freely about themselves and their problems.

Second, the Peer Supporter's self-disclosure can help peers develop the kinds of new perspectives needed for goal setting and action. If your experience can help peers develop useful alternate frames of reference, then sharing yourself seems to be a question of common sense.

> Ben is a counselor in a drug rehabilitation program. He was an addict for a number of years but "kicked the habit" with the help of the agency where he is now a counselor. It is clear to all the addicts, he is not only rehabilitated but also intensely interested in helping others both rid themselves of drugs and develop a kind of lifestyle that helps them stay drug-free. Ben freely shares his experience, both of being a drug user and his rather agonizing journey to freedom.

Ex-alcoholics and ex-addicts can make excellent Peer Supporters in programs like this. Sharing their experience is central to their style of supporting and is accepted by their peers. Weigel, Dinges, Dyer, and Straumfjorn found evidence suggesting that Peer Supporter self-disclosure can frighten peers or make them see the Peer Supporter as less well adjusted. In view of this and other difficulties, it seems that the Peer Supporter's self-disclosure should follow certain principles. A Peer Supporter's self-disclosure can be part of the contract. Derlega, Lovell, and Chaikin found that the Peer Supporter's self-disclosure can well be misunderstood by naive or uninformed peers and prove counterproductive. However, if, as in the case of the drug counselor just mentioned, it is clear from the start to peers that "high self-disclosure by the supporter is part of the professional role and is appropriate for effective treatment," then peers are not put off by it. In short, if you don't want peers surprised about your sharing your experience with them, let them know that you might do so.

Sharing yourself is appropriate if it helps peers achieve the treatment goals outlined in this helping process. This includes if it helps them talk about themselves, if it helps them talk about problem situations more concretely, if it helps them develop new perspective and frames of reference, and if it helps them set realistic goals for themselves. Peer Supporters self-disclosure that is exhibitionistic or engaged in for "effect" is obviously inappropriate. Here are some principles to be followed to ensure that self-sharing is appropriate.

1. Selective and focused. Peer Supporter self-disclosure is appropriate if it keeps peers on target and does not distract them from investigating their own problem situations. It may be that selective bits of the supporter's experience might be useful in helping the peer get a better conceptual and emotional grasp of his/her problems.

2. Not a burden to the Peer. Peer Supporter self-disclosure is appropriate if it does not add another burden to an already overwhelmed peer. One supporter thought that he would help make a peer who was sharing some sexual problems more comfortable by sharing some of his own experiences. After all, he saw his sexual development as not too different from the peers. However, the peer reacted by saying, "Hey, don't tell me your problems. I'm having a hard enough time dealing with my own. I don't want to carry yours around too!" This novice supporter shared too much of himself too soon. He was caught up in his own willingness to disclose rather than its potential usefulness to the peer.

3. Not too often. Peer Supporter self-disclosure is inappropriate if it is too frequent. This too, distracts the peer and shifts attention to the supporter. Research suggests that if Peer Supporters disclose themselves too frequently, peers tend to see them as phony and suspect that they have ulterior motives.

In summary, then, even though the research on Peer Supporter self-disclosure is somewhat ambiguous, it is still a skill or response that should be part of any Peer Supporter's repertory. That is, Peer Supporters should perhaps be willing and able to disclose themselves, even deeply, in reasonable ways, but actually do so only if it is clear that it will contribute to the peer's progress.

THE CONTENT OF THE PEER'S SELF-DISCLOSURE

What should peers talk about? They should talk about both their problems in living and the resources or potential resources they have to handle them. The goal of self-exploration is not merely quantity, or even intimacy, of self-exploration, which includes: (1) problem-related information and (2) solution-oriented resources. Resources exploration provides a positive dimension of the self-exploration process. Consider the following example:

> Peer: I practically never stand up for my rights. If I disagree with what anyone is saying, especially in a group, I keep my mouth shut. I suppose that when I do speak up, the world won't fall in on me. Sometimes others do actually listen to me. But I still don't seem to have any impact on anyone.
>
> Peer Supporter A: It's frustrating to be afraid to speak up and to get lost in the crowd.
>
> Peer Supporter B: The times you do speak up, others actually listen and you're annoyed at yourself for getting lost in the crowd so often.

Peer Supporter A misses the resource the peer mentioned. Although the peer habitually fails to speak up, he does have an impact when he does speak. Others listen sometimes. And this is a resource.