

### Family Voice Bulletin – Issue 33 (March 29th) Peer Support in the Community

Summarized by KJ (Krystal-Jyl) Thomas, MSW, RSW

In this week's session, facilitators KJ Thomas, MSW, RSW and Tracey Kent, MSW, RSW, were joined by Anthony VanLamoen, MSW, RSW, and peer specialist.

*“When setting out on a journey, do not seek advice from those who have never left home.” –Rumi.*

Peer support is a focus on mental health through a relationship between two or more people who share lived experiences. This shared experience may be from their own lives, or that of a loved one. Peer support has been well researched and there is overwhelming evidence of its many benefits. Personal integrity, hope, mutuality, dignity, self determination, trust, social inclusion, health, well-being, recovery, and lifelong learning are all trusted values in peer support.

Peer support can help in a number of ways, none more than the realization that you are not alone. Peer support fosters understanding that what we are going through, others have also gone through, and thankfully, found ways to be resilient, and cope, while even strengthening the mental health of our future selves. Being able to openly express feelings can lead to authentic connections and facilitate learning. This can increase hope, which we all know, is a helpful part of well-being.

Peer support is offered in a number of ways, including online forums, through groups, or one-to-one. While there are varying levels of peer support, what they all have in common is that the peer supporter has lived experience and training which focuses on confirmation of one's knowledge, skills, and ability to enter into helpful relationships with others.

The Royal has peer support workers and specialists, as well as peer facilitators. The Royal strongly recognizes the importance of peer support and continues to endorse these roles within the organization.

#### Resources

- Psychiatric Survivors of Ottawa <https://www.pso-ottawa.ca/about-us>
- The Oasis <https://theoasiskanata.ca/>
- Schizophrenia Society of Canada <https://schizophrenia.ca/>
- WRAP centre <https://copelandcenter.com/>
- Book: Motivational Interviewing, Third Edition: Helping People Change Hardcover – Illustrated, Sept. 7 2012 by William R. Miller
- Motivational Interviewing video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=reTb-x6UOmY>
- Training Resource Centre: <https://psychwire.com/courses>
- Peer Support Canada <https://peersupportcanada.ca/>