



Peer Support Best Practices - Tips Sheet

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- Goals:
 - To foster a culture of support and well-being
 - To create an opportunity for sharing thoughts and emotions related to an event
 - To connect with others who have had similar experiences
 - To support the process of healing after an adverse event

- Elements needed for a peer support conversation:
 - Confidentiality
 - Validation of experience
 - Space and time for sharing
 - Closure with a plan

- How to Be a Good Peer Supporter:
 - Tone of voice: Warm, inviting, curious
 - Body language: Open, lean in, eye contact, active listening
 - Typical conversations: can be impromptu or formal

- Important Elements of the Conversation:
 - Encourage sharing
 - Begin with open-ended questions
 - “Can you tell me a little about what is going on?”
 - “How are you feeling now?”
 - Validate experience, including thoughts, emotions, unanswered questions
 - Examples
 - Repeat statement
 - “So you are saying that you are feeling...”
 - “It seems like you feel...”
 - Validate the emotion, not the facts
 - “I can imagine how difficult it is.”
 - “That’s quite a heavy load to carry.”
 - Name the emotion/normalize
 - “I can imagine that could make you feel...”

- Provide Support
 - Acknowledge shared humanity
 - Allow for silence and time for reflection
 - Elicit coping strategies
 - Stress importance of self-care
 - Share local and national resources
- What Peer Support is not:
 - Not meant to be an investigation of the facts
 - M&M
 - Formal QI/Safety investigation
 - Legal inquiry
 - Not meant to be formal therapy
 - Not meant to be “expert opinion”
- Pitfalls/ things to Avoid
 - Statements that discourage sharing:
 - “Don’t be so hard on yourself.”
 - “Don’t feel that way! You are such a good doctor.”
 - “It wasn’t your fault.”
 - Judgement:
 - Both in body language and word choice
 - Over-sharing:
 - Too many questions
 - Inserting personal experiences
 - Making assumptions about:
 - Emotions
 - Experiences
 - Level of Impact
 - Taking notes about the peer’s experience
 - No documentation of the content of the peer conversation should be taken
 - This is important from a risk mitigation standpoint