

Intentional Trauma Informed Peer Support: An Alternative Approach



Shery Mead, 2006

In Intentional Peer Support We...



- Explore the whole context of people's lives (race, culture, class, gender, etc)
- Are present through witnessing rather than assessing and evaluating
- Challenge each other out of 'doing what's been done to us'
- Determine where the real problems lie



Intentional relationships that support both of us in:

- Re- defining
- Re- remembering
- and Reclaiming

Who and how we want to be in community.

**"You're weird, bad, crazy..you
deserved it, It's your
fault"...etc**

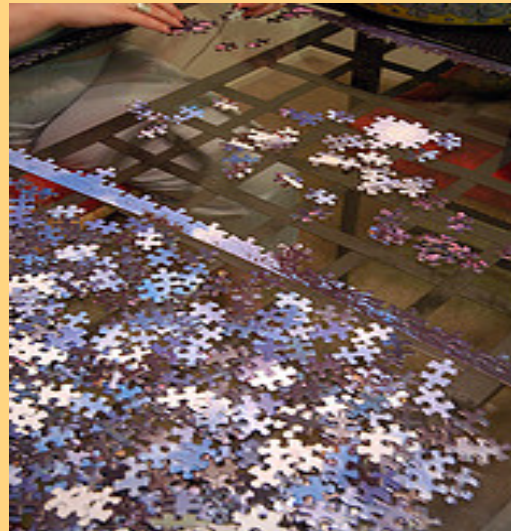
I learn to "act as if"

**I seek help for
my problem**

**I wonder what
my problem is**

**You say that you
like me**

**The pressure of
secrecy builds**



**"You wouldn't like me
if you really knew
me."**

I feel split in two

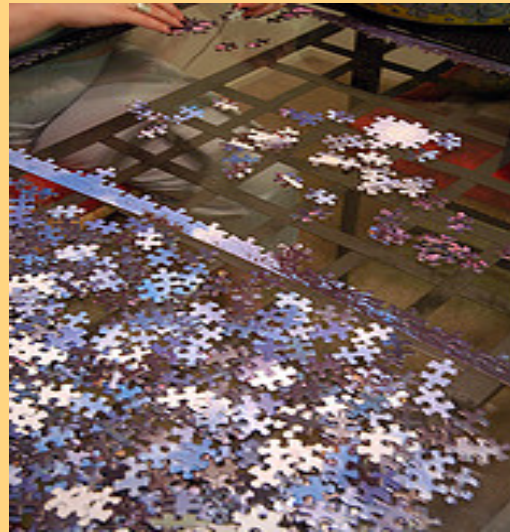
I come to you for help

I figure you're the expert

You give me a diagnosis

You wonder if I should be hospitalized

You determine treatment based on my "symptoms"



I call you when I feel like my symptoms are "out of control"

I start defining my experiences as symptoms

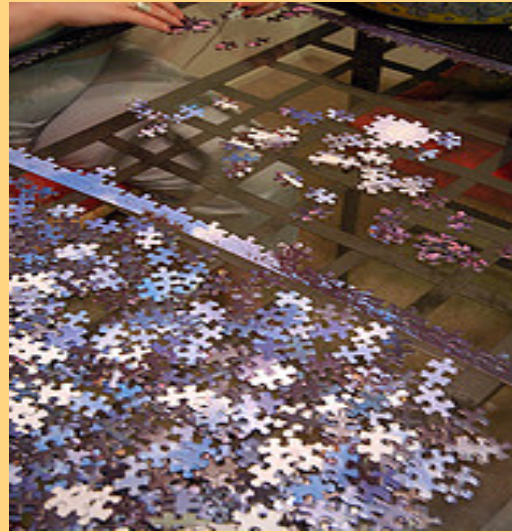
You ask me how I'm managing my symptoms

I come to you for help

I figure you're the expert...

We get to know each other.

You suggest that I take a PRN



We feel like we're "equals..." Until

You ask you if I'm feeling safe

I am having a hard time...

You worry that you'll say the wrong thing.

I come to you for help

We're both the experts

We listen to each other

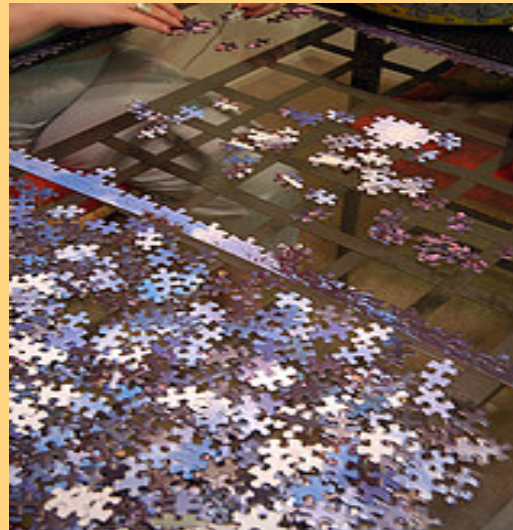
We talk about what works for us both

We learn a lot about each other

We negotiate power, conflict and safety

One of us has a hard time

We struggle with our fear





Think of and describe a relationship that has really inspired you to move out of your comfort zone.

What were the unique qualities of the relationship?

Think of and describe a relationship in which you inspired someone else to move out of their comfort zone.

What were the unique qualities of the relationship?

The Tasks of Peer Support



1. Connection
2. To help each other understand how we've come to know what we know
3. To redefine help as a reciprocal process
4. To help each other move towards what we want rather than away from what we don't

Listening from a position of “not knowing”

If we listen for illness, what we’ll hear is illness...



Ask questions that explore meaning

- Help me understand...
- I wonder...
- How did you learn...
- What makes that so...(hard, scary...)

Pay Attention to the Told and Untold Story



- How did the person learn to think this way?
- How are these beliefs helpful?
- What are the stories we've learned to tell?
- How have those beliefs been helpful to us?

Validation



■ Respond to feelings rather than ‘fixing it’

■ Empathize

■ Acknowledge change

Mutuality: Redefining Help

- Keeping the needs of both people in mind
- How is this going to help both of us?
- Maintaining an expectation of learning from each other
- Don't fall into helper/helped roles

Mutual Responsibility



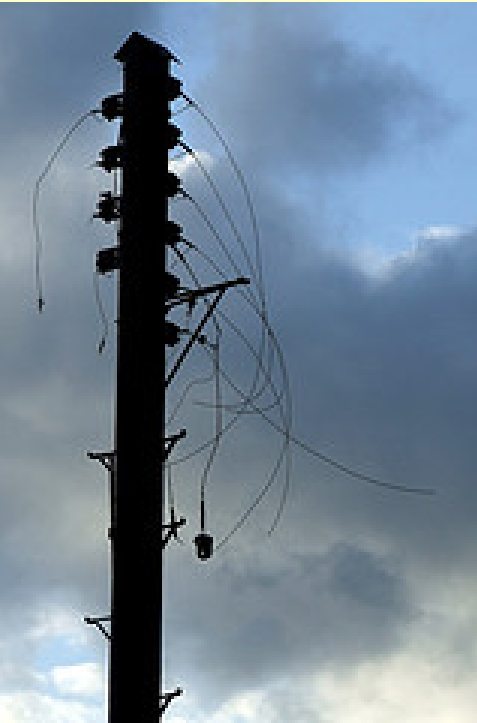
- Both people state their needs and wants
- Both people take responsibility for their own feelings
- Difficulties are negotiated
- Shared responsibility for safety/comfort
- Shared responsibility for maintaining the intentionality of the relationship
- Shared responsibility for stimulating and supporting critical learning and growth

Moving Towards What we Want

- What do you want?
- Do your current beliefs support what you want?
- What would you have to believe to have what you want?
- What do you want to feel?
- If you were feeling that way what would you be able to do?



Task One: Connection



Many people feel disconnected because of:

- Trauma
- Mental health diagnoses
- Poverty
- Otherness

What are the things that help you re-connect?

Worldview



- How we've learned to see...
- Tells us what to do...
- What we get reinforces how we see...
- You need to change how you see to get something new.

'Help' Goes Both Ways

- Model peer support: Don't provide a service
- Re-defines help as a relationship where both people learn and grow



- We bear witness to each other's stories
- We support each other
- We respectfully challenge each other

Supports us in Moving Toward What We Want



- Life is exciting rather than a struggle
- Our energy increases
- Relationships focus on creating rather than commiserating
- We do not understand ourselves as limited
- We begin to create dreams we never knew existed