

Intentional Peer Support: An Alternative Approach to Mental Healthcare



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by Sara Knight

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Mental healthcare has traditionally been dominated by professional interventions, such as therapy and medication. While these interventions can be helpful, they often overlook the importance of peer relationships in recovery.

Intentional peer support is an alternative approach to mental healthcare that emphasizes the importance of peer relationships in recovery. It is based on the belief that people with lived experience of mental health conditions can offer unique insights and support to each other.

Intentional peer support is different from traditional peer support in that it is intentional and structured. It is not simply about providing a space for people to talk about their experiences, but rather about creating a

supportive environment in which people can learn from and support each other.

Principles of Intentional Peer Support

Intentional peer support is based on the following principles:

- **Empowerment:** Intentional peer support empowers individuals to take control of their own recovery.
- **Self-determination:** Intentional peer support respects the individual's right to make decisions about their own care.
- **Collaboration:** Intentional peer support is a collaborative process that involves both the individual and the peer supporter.
- **Respect:** Intentional peer support is based on mutual respect between the individual and the peer supporter.
- **Confidentiality:** Intentional peer support is confidential and the individual's privacy is respected.

Benefits of Intentional Peer Support

Intentional peer support has numerous benefits for individuals with mental health conditions, including:

- **Reduced symptoms:** Intentional peer support can help to reduce symptoms of mental health conditions, such as depression and anxiety.
- **Improved quality of life:** Intentional peer support can help to improve the quality of life for individuals with mental health conditions by

providing them with social support, emotional support, and practical assistance.

- **Increased self-esteem:** Intentional peer support can help to increase self-esteem for individuals with mental health conditions by providing them with a sense of belonging and acceptance.
- **Reduced isolation:** Intentional peer support can help to reduce isolation for individuals with mental health conditions by providing them with opportunities to connect with others who understand their experiences.
- **Increased empowerment:** Intentional peer support can help to empower individuals with mental health conditions by giving them the tools and skills they need to manage their own recovery.

How to Find Intentional Peer Support

There are a number of ways to find intentional peer support, including:

- **Peer support groups:** Peer support groups are groups of individuals who have lived experience of mental health conditions. These groups provide a safe and supportive space for people to share their experiences, learn from each other, and offer support to each other.
- **Peer support workers:** Peer support workers are individuals who have lived experience of mental health conditions and who have been trained to provide support to others. Peer support workers can provide one-on-one support, group support, or both.
- **Online peer support:** There are a number of online peer support groups and forums available. These groups can provide a way for

people to connect with others who understand their experiences, regardless of their location.

Intentional peer support is a valuable alternative approach to mental healthcare. It can provide individuals with mental health conditions with social support, emotional support, practical assistance, and empowerment. If you are interested in learning more about intentional peer support, please reach out to a mental health professional or visit the website of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI).

Additional Resources:

- NAMI: Peer Support
- Peer Support Network
- Mental Health First Aid



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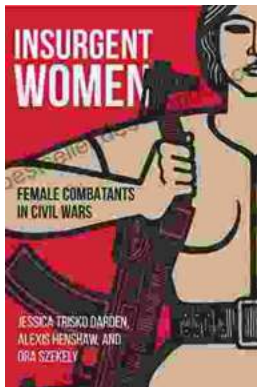
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