

In Unit 8 you will learn about the utility of the strengths-based approach which focuses on helping the clients identify their own strengths, as well as things to consider before sharing one's experience, and drawbacks and difficulties in sharing, among other helpful topics.

Lived experience is fundamental in peer support. But how should it be used? What role should the helpers take and how can they help? Some aspects will depend on individual preferences and predispositions and some can be pre-defined, especially in the case of formal (professionalized) peer support services. But what about going out socially, sharing life stories, offering and receiving emotional support?

Lived experience

Direct, personal experience with a particular issue or service

There is no universal recipe for a successful peer relationship, however any peer supporter ought know what attitudes are not acceptable in peer support, e.g. intimate relations with the peer, sharing illegal substances or financial transactions out of those formally established by the organization providing the services.





Parallelism in lived experience

Homelessness affects people from all backgrounds and brings many additional problems with it. Sometimes the experiences can be very different. All parties should understand that it can be difficult to reach an ideal level of parallelism in lived experience between two people in the context of peer support. Therefore, having a common base is not always enough—the peer supporter should be able to empathize with the situation, to understand the differences between himself and his peer.

Expert by experience

a person who has specific expertise in a determined topic because she has lived (experienced) it in first person

Sharing lived experience at other levels

Experts by experience may not only help by sharing their experiences with peers, but their experience is also valuable to professionals and existing structures.

Their participation in planning, implementing, and evaluating services, brings in different perspectives, and improves the chances of these services to meet the needs of the users.



Links:

[Using personal experience](#)

[Speaking from Experience: The Power of Peer Specialists](#)

[Developing a Model of Change Mechanisms within Intentional Unidirectional Peer Support](#)

[Experts by Experience: Peer Support and its Use with the Homeless](#)

[How your mental health lived experience can heal others TEDx TALK](#)