

6. understanding boundaries & what it means to co-create them



This module examines boundary creation within the context of peer support, grounded in the core value of mutuality.

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EXIT the module

1. welcome

welcome to
WHERE WE ARE AT
understanding
boundaries &
what it means to
co-create them



Welcome to **Where We Are At**, a training course for Provincial Peer Support Workers. We're glad you're here! This course is made up of 16 modules, all designed to support your training in peer support work.

The purpose of module **6. understanding boundaries & what it means to co-create them** is to acquaint you with one of the foundational values of peer support.

Any of the modules in this training can stand alone, but you'll notice they are very interconnected. All of the concepts and core values have many layers, and they will look a little different when you see them through the lens of different topics. For example, self-determination will look a little different when we look at it through the lens of learned helplessness, grief and loss, or goal planning, but the main message will always be the same.

You will get to experience all of those layers and intersections when you move through each module of the training. Feel free to navigate back and forth between modules as you move along since learning never has to be linear. There will be references to other modules intersected throughout.

Thank you for joining us on this educational journey!

2. gratitude



Before we begin this new **learning** journey, we ask that you reflect on the following question:

What am I grateful for today?

We know that taking time to reflect can give us the clarity and strength to do what can sometimes be difficult emotional work.

Download the **reflection journal** below and use it to record your thoughts. Please don't rush. Take all the time you need. This journal will be used for several questions throughout the module.



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70.1 KB

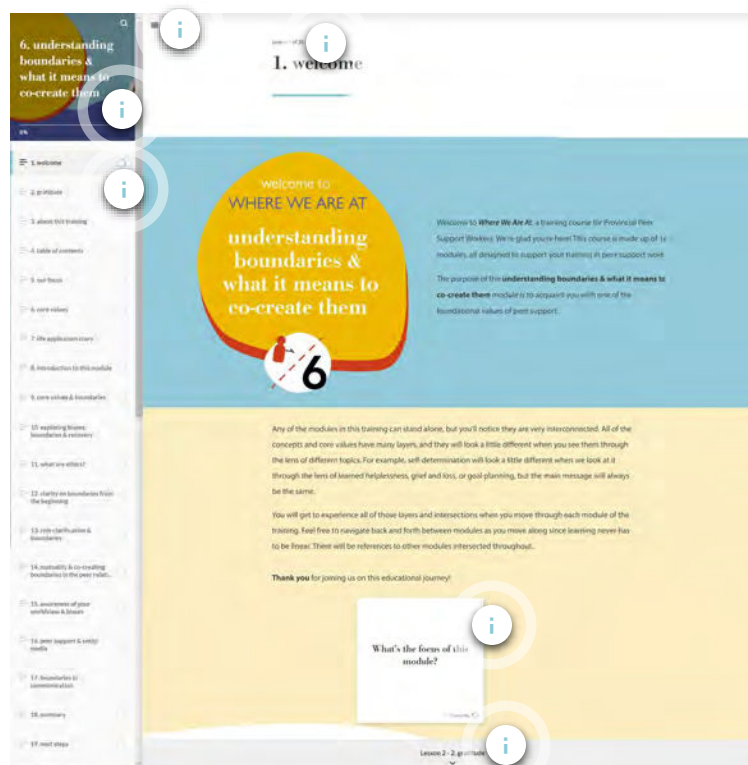


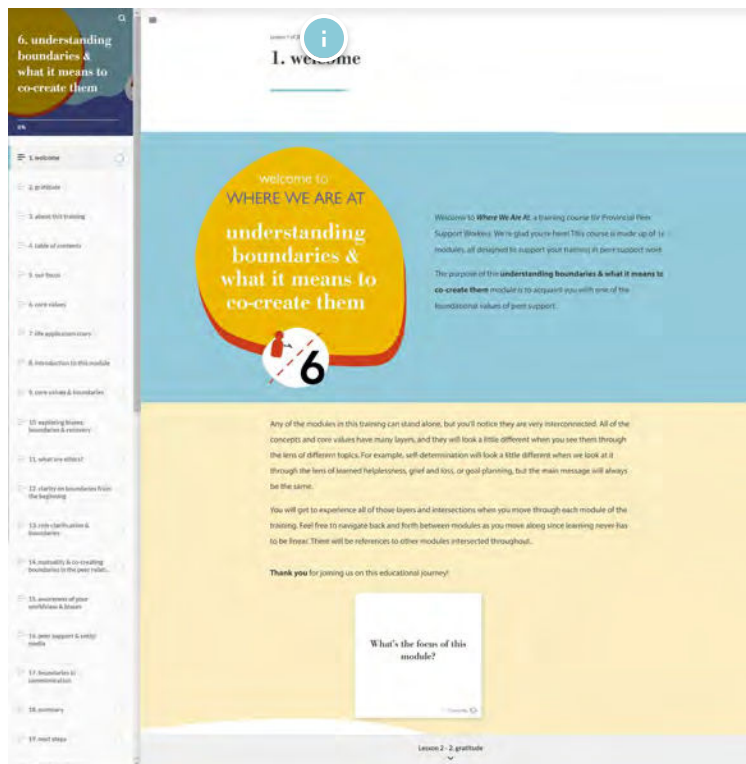
3. about this training

The course content has been guided by consultations that were held with peer support workers. It's with the utmost respect for their experience and wisdom that we share these learnings.

course navigation

You may have questions on how to use this course. We designed an interactive diagram to give you the chance to explore the different functions on the screen. Click the buttons below to learn more.





Lesson titles

Lesson 1 of 20

Above each lesson title, the lesson count is shown.

CONTINUE

reflection journal

As you discovered in the previous section, included in this training is a reflection journal. The journal is designed for you to use throughout the training. It's full of reflective questions related to the topics being explored that will get you engaging in the world around you with curiosity.

Feel free to use the journal in a way that works for you:

- 1 You can print it off and write in it or just use it to support reflective processing.
- 2 You can use the fillable PDF version and complete it online
- 3 You can write in your own journal, using the questions as guides.

We encourage you to find a safe, comfortable spot to engage with these questions.

CONTINUE

where we are at

provincial peer support worker training curriculum

The *Where We Are At* educational curriculum includes 16 modules. You'll find a brief description of each below.

1. the foundations —

An overview of all the practices and knowledge that will be transferable to all of the modules in this training.

2. peer support & wholeness

Provides an introduction to peer support work and explores differences between the peer support role and other roles within the mental health and substance use systems.

3. categories & containers: unpacking our biases

Helps you understand how and why we judge.

4. self-determination

Looks at self-determination, the theory of self-determination and how peer support workers can support creating an ecology where people trust their own inner wisdom.

5. cultural humility

Explores how to approach your peer support work through the lens of cultural humility and helps you understand how culture (and the destruction of culture) shapes our lives.

6. understanding boundaries & what it means to co-create them

Examines boundary creation within the context of peer support, grounded in the core value of mutuality.

7. connection & communication —

Focuses on cultivating compassion and empathy, listening deeply to understand, and asking powerful questions to increase reflection and connection.

8. healing-centred connection: principles in trauma-informed care —

Brings together all the learnings from previous modules to support the creation of environments and relationships that are safe and trauma-informed.

9. social determinants of health —

Explores the social determinants of health and how social, economic and other factors lead to better or worse health outcomes.

10. supporting someone who is grieving —

Examines how to understand grief and loss in order to support someone who is grieving, without trying to “fix” or “save” them.

11. substance use & peer support —

Explores the principles and methodologies around the harm reduction approach to substance use disorders and some of the history around the criminalization of substance use.

12. mental health & supporting those in crisis —

Explores the mindset shift necessary to support someone through a crisis.

13. goal planning —

Focuses on how peer support relationships can support the creation and meeting of goals.

14. building personal resilience —

Explores ways to build resiliency, create wellness plans and practice self-compassion.

15. family peer support —

Explores family peer support work and how, by working from a place of shared lived experience, family peer support workers can create positive change for families by building long-term relationships based on trust with those supporting loved ones.

16. working with youth & young adults

Explores the unique application of peer support principles to working with youth and young adults.



4. table of contents

Below you'll find a short overview of what topics you'll find in this module.

As you move through these topics, please remember you can always return to this page to revisit the main ideas being explored in each lesson.



life application story —

A scenario about sharing and boundaries.

boundary co-creation —

Reviews the concept of boundary co-creation.

exploring biases, boundaries & recovery

Explores how our worldview, biases and belief around recovery impact our boundaries.

what are ethics?

Examines ethics versus boundaries and introduces Peer Support Canada's Code of Conduct.

clarity on boundaries from the beginning

Looks at how boundaries change over time and the importance of clarity and timing when creating boundaries.

role clarification & boundaries

Probes the differences in roles including between peer support work and clinical work as well as privacy.

mutuality & co-creating boundaries in the peer relationship

Grounds boundary co-creation in the core value of mutuality.

awareness of your worldview & biases

Builds on **module 3** and looks at how different perspectives can show up in the work we do.

peer support & social media

Touches on the positives and negatives of social media use and how this can impact boundaries.

boundaries in communication

Explores the importance of setting communication boundaries.

5. our focus

What's the focus of this module?

Boundaries are an essential part of healthy human connection. The peer support relationship is no exception. When people in a relationship are clear about what is okay and what is not okay, they have a deeper capacity to build empathy, connect and stay out of resentment.

Boundaries and boundary creation within peer support might look different than in other professional roles within the mental health and substance use fields. Mutuality is foundational to peer support, so we'll explore how to approach boundary co-creation from the perspective of mutuality.

1 of 1

after reviewing this module, you'll be able to...



Recognize the difference between boundaries and ethics (including the Code of Conduct of Peer Support Services).



**Integrate a mindset of mutuality
in the co-creation of boundaries
with the people you support.**



**Recognize the importance
of, and be able to integrate,
boundary creation into your
personal self-nourishment
practice.**

The following core values are essential for peer support work.”

6. core values

hope and wholeness for all THIS IS THE OVERARCHING VALUE OF PEER SUPPORT.

CORE VALUE

Moving towards hope and wholeness for all:

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

All human beings long to know and be known—to be seen for who we are, and deeply heard, without someone trying to fix or save us.

MUTUALITY

The peer relationship is mutual and reciprocal. Peer support breaks down hierarchies. The peer support worker and the peer equally co-create the relationship, and both participate in boundary creation.

STRENGTH-BASED

It is more motivating to move towards something rather than away from a problem. We intentionally build on already existing strengths. We thoughtfully and purposefully move in the direction of flourishing, rather than only responding to pain and oppression.

SELF-DETERMINATION

Self-determination is the right to make one's own decisions, and the freedom from coercion. We support the facilitation and creation of an environment where people can feel free to tap into their inner motivation.

Peer support workers don't fix or save. We acknowledge and hold space for resilience and inner wisdom.

RESPECT, DIGNITY AND EQUITY

All human beings have intrinsic value. Peer support workers acknowledge that deep worth by:

- practicing cultural humility and sensitivity
- serving with a trauma-informed approach
- offering generosity of assumption in communication and conflict
- mindfully addressing personal biases

Peer support is about meeting people where there are at and serving others with a knowledge of equity.

BELONGING AND COMMUNITY

Peer Support acknowledges that all human beings need to belong and be a part of a community. Peer support recognizes that many people have barriers that keep them from developing community. We actively work towards deconstructing those social blockades that prevent inclusion and acceptance. Peer support workers serve with a social justice mindset, and intentionally practice empathy, compassion & self-compassion.

CURIOSITY

We are always intentional about how curiosity and inquiry support connection, growth, learning and engagement.

This curiosity isn't fueled by personal gain but by a genuine interest in connection. We encourage curiosity while respecting the boundaries and protecting the privacy of the people we support.

We are continually curious, but not invasive, while challenging assumptions and narratives. We ask powerful questions. We offer generosity of assumption to those who think differently than we do. We know that listening and asking questions are more important than providing answers.

***Note on the meaning of the term “generosity of assumption” from the glossary of terms:** Assumptions happen when we don't know the whole story, and allow our brains to fill in the blanks. Often we make negative assumptions about people or situations. Generosity of assumption means that we extend someone the most generous interpretation of their intent, actions, or words.

7. life application story

Check out this scenario with Jaymie and Maria.

story one

Jaymie, a peer support worker, and Maria had been meeting up with each other for almost a month now and had a good rapport. Jaymie decided early on that she didn't want to add peers to social media for privacy reasons, but she was happy to share her cell number for organizing meetings and chatting. At first she felt awkward expressing this, as she didn't want her peers to feel like they weren't important enough to be added to her social media accounts, but she soon realized that as long as she was upfront and explained that it was for privacy reasons, no one really minded. She asked Maria about her preferred means of communicating, and Maria explained that she didn't like talking over the phone but was fine with texting.

For their next meeting, they decided together to go for a walk in a park they both lived close to.

"How has your week been?" asked Jaymie.

"It's been hard. I broke up with my girlfriend last week," replied Maria.

"Oh I'm really sorry to hear that. Do you want to talk about it?"

Maria hesitated for a moment before responding. "Not really."

"Okay no problem. Thanks for being honest."

They came to a bench and sat there for some time, listening to the sounds of herons nesting.

"Sometimes I worry nobody else will accept me like she did. She's the only one I've really told about my mental health stuff," said Maria

"Yeah it's definitely scary telling people at first. For me, I've decided to only share with the people who I trust and feel are open-minded."

"Yeah that makes sense."

They watched a heron perched on the bank of the pond, waiting patiently to make its catch.

"You've experienced psychosis too, right?" asked Maria. Jaymie nodded. She didn't mind talking about her lived experience, but how much she felt like sharing depended on the day and the relationship.

"What was it like for you?" asked Maria.

"Well, I mostly had delusions."

"What kind of delusions?"

Jaymie took a breath and checked in with how her body was feeling in the moment. "You know, I'm feeling a bit heavy today and I don't feel like getting into what my delusions were. But I'm happy to talk about what helped me in my recovery, if you'd like."

"Yeah sure."

CONTINUE

questions for reflection

Answer these questions in your reflection journal.



What do you think about Jaymie's challenges in setting healthy boundaries with social media? Would you hold the same boundary? Why or why not?

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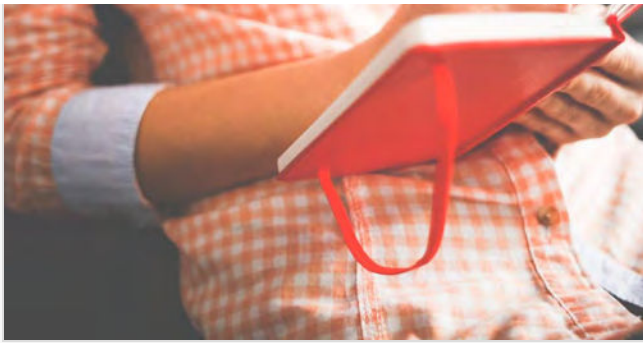


Sometimes we can get asked for details about our struggle, condition or experience with trauma. How do you feel about sharing those details?

2 of 3



What did you notice about how



Jaymie approached Maria's question?

3 of 3

CONTINUE

Now, check out this scenario with Freddy and Raja.

story two

Freddy is a peer support worker at an Overdose Prevention Site (OPS) in downtown Vancouver. He was so grateful for the support he got from the peer support staff when he was struggling that when he was ready to get back to work, he jumped at an opportunity to join the team. He wanted to give back.

As a peer support worker at this downtown OPS site, Freddy was assigned to work with whoever needed support at any given time.

Raja was a younger person who had been coming in often. Freddy saw a lot of himself in Raja. Though Raja had been really struggling, he always had a brightness to his demeanor. He and Freddy both loved science fiction and philosophy, and it was pretty regular that they got drawn into deep conversations about Star Trek or Kant. Freddy worked with lots of different people, but he rarely got to talk about his favourite things with anyone else at work.

Some days at the OPS were really hard. Freddy often found himself dealing with crisis situations all day long. This day was a particularly rough one. When Freddy looked up and saw Raja walk in the door, he actually felt a wave of relief.

"Hey Raja! What's up today?"

Raja came over to Freddy and sat down. "I'm not great actually. I'm really struggling this week. I ran into some old friends who I used to use with, and it's really brought back some really hard stuff," Raja said.

"I totally get that. I used to get like that too when I ran into people from my old life. Does anything help when you feel like this?"

"Yeah, I think I might feel better if I could get to a meeting, but I haven't been able to get to one. When I feel like this, I find it hard to go by myself," Raja said.

Freddy thought for a moment. He had the weekend off. Though he didn't usually see people he worked with outside of the OPS, he felt that it might be good to go to a meeting with Raja on his day off. After all, he felt like he could benefit from it too.

"I'm off tomorrow, what if I meet you at the Roundhouse at 5:15?"

Raja's face brightened, "You'd do that?"

"Of course!"

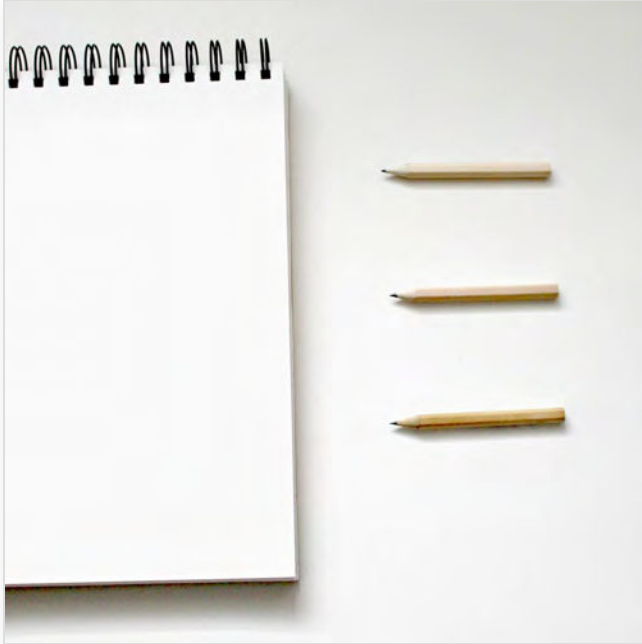
When he woke up Saturday morning, Freddy realized that he'd totally forgotten about his grandmother's 80th birthday party that afternoon. There was no way he could get out of it. He didn't have any way to get in touch with Raja, so he wasn't able to let him know that he couldn't make the meeting.

Freddy felt so bad about it all weekend. He regretted that he let Raja down. Throughout the next week he looked for Raja so he could apologize for not showing up at the Roundhouse, but Raja didn't come back to the OPS.

CONTINUE

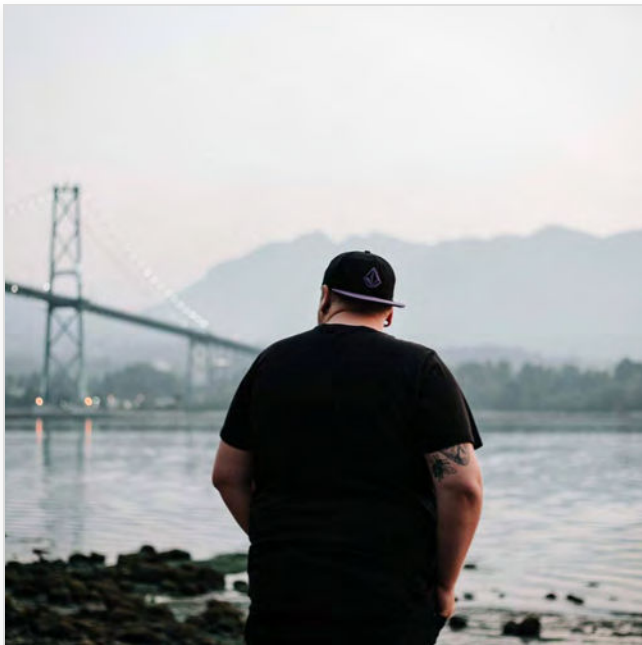
questions for reflection

Answer these questions in your reflection journal.



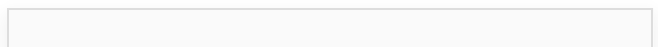
Can you identify some of the boundary issues in this scenario? List them.

1 of 3



What do you think are some of the repercussions of this situation?

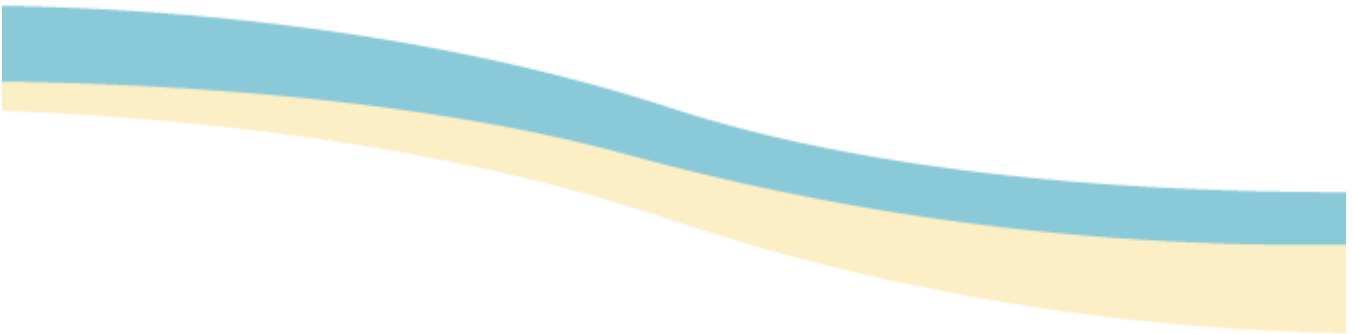
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What's an alternative way to approach this situation?

3 of 3



8. boundary co-creation



What do you feel when you hear the word boundary? Does the word resonate with you, or do you feel resistance to it? Does the word “boundary” feel firm, like the border between Canada and the United States? Or do boundaries feel more fluid and flexible?

Simply defined, boundaries are basically a clear guideline of what is okay and what is not okay in a relationship. Since peer support is about mutuality, it's essential that boundaries are **clear**, **defined** and **co-created**.

Co-created means that both participants in the relationship have input in the creation of the relationship boundaries.

Boundaries can be tough to navigate. They're especially tough in a program that's based on mutuality and connection. However, boundaries are very important, and in the spirit of mutuality, both people's voices should be heard. In this module we want to support and equip you to feel empowered to navigate the waters of boundary co-creation.

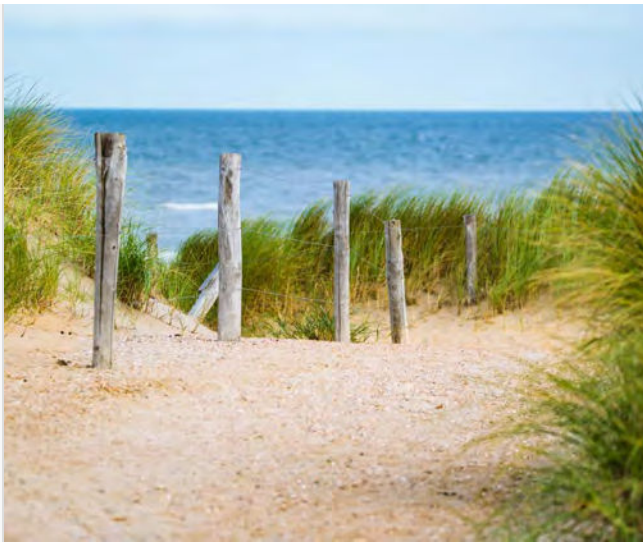
Often, we find ourselves wishing there were clear answers for the more difficult decisions we have to make. However, life is messy, and relationships can be messy too. Often there isn't one clear "this is the right thing to do" answer. This module is meant to support you when you find yourself in any grey areas.

CONTINUE

questions for reflection

Answer these questions in your reflection journal.





Do you have a hard time with creating boundaries? If yes, why do you think this is?

1 of 3

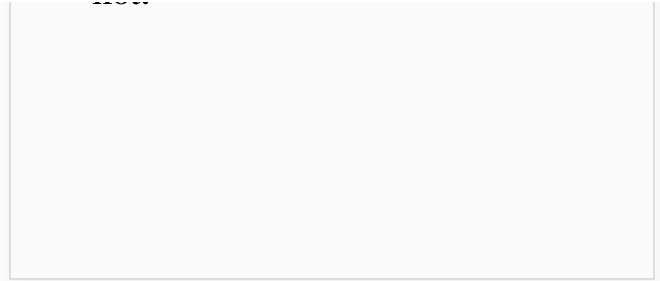


Do you have a hard time accepting other people's boundaries? Why or why not?

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Do you see the value in having clear boundaries? Why or why not?



3 of 3

CONTINUE

questions to ask yourself when co-creating boundaries

Whenever you're navigating a peer support relationship, whether that is building connection, establishing boundaries or even goal planning – it's essential that you connect with the peer support core values. They need to always be at the forefront of the work. When you feel confused or unsure, these core values can become a guidepost for you to be able to make decisions. They're meant to be a tool to support you.

click on each core value below to see what questions to ask

acknowledgement

Am I acknowledging both my needs and those of the other persons in this conversation? Are both sets of needs a priority? Are we both clear

**and comfortable talking about what
we need in the relationship?**

mutuality

**Am I approaching boundary
creation from a place of mutuality?
Are both/all of us co-creating these
boundaries?**

strength-based

**Is this conversation as strength-
based as it can be? Are we moving
towards where we want to go, rather
than away from where we don't
want to be?**

self-determination

How can we make self-determination and intrinsic motivation a key component in this process?

respect

Am I offering respect to the other person? Am I creating an environment that encourages respect for all? (For example, how do I speak about others who aren't present? Do I speak badly about people who aren't there? Do I complain about co-workers, or other people I work with?)

dignity

Am I respecting the other person's dignity? Am I approaching this conversation about boundaries with a trauma-informed lens? Am I clear? Does this feel safe for all involved? Am I aware of my

personal biases around this topic? If there's conflict, I choose to be aware of my

equity

Am I aware of equity issues in this conversation about boundaries? When I am aware of equity, I realize that some people have barriers that I might not have. For example, if I say "my boundary is I don't take phone calls, I only want to receive texts or emails," what if the person only has a landline

connection & belonging

Does this conversation encourage a sense of connection and belonging with the person? Is my tone kind and accepting? I am intentionally choosing to not speak unnecessarily harshly about this topic. If I feel disconnection happening during this conversation, I will

Am I approaching this conversation with the spirit of curiosity? Am I

curiosity

with the spirit of curiosity: Am I

asking the right questions to uncover anything that might be lurking under the surface? Am I engaging from a place of wanting to understand the other person?

hope & wholeness for all

Does this decision encourage hope and wholeness for all (for the person I am working with, AND myself, because I'm a mutual participant in this relationship)?

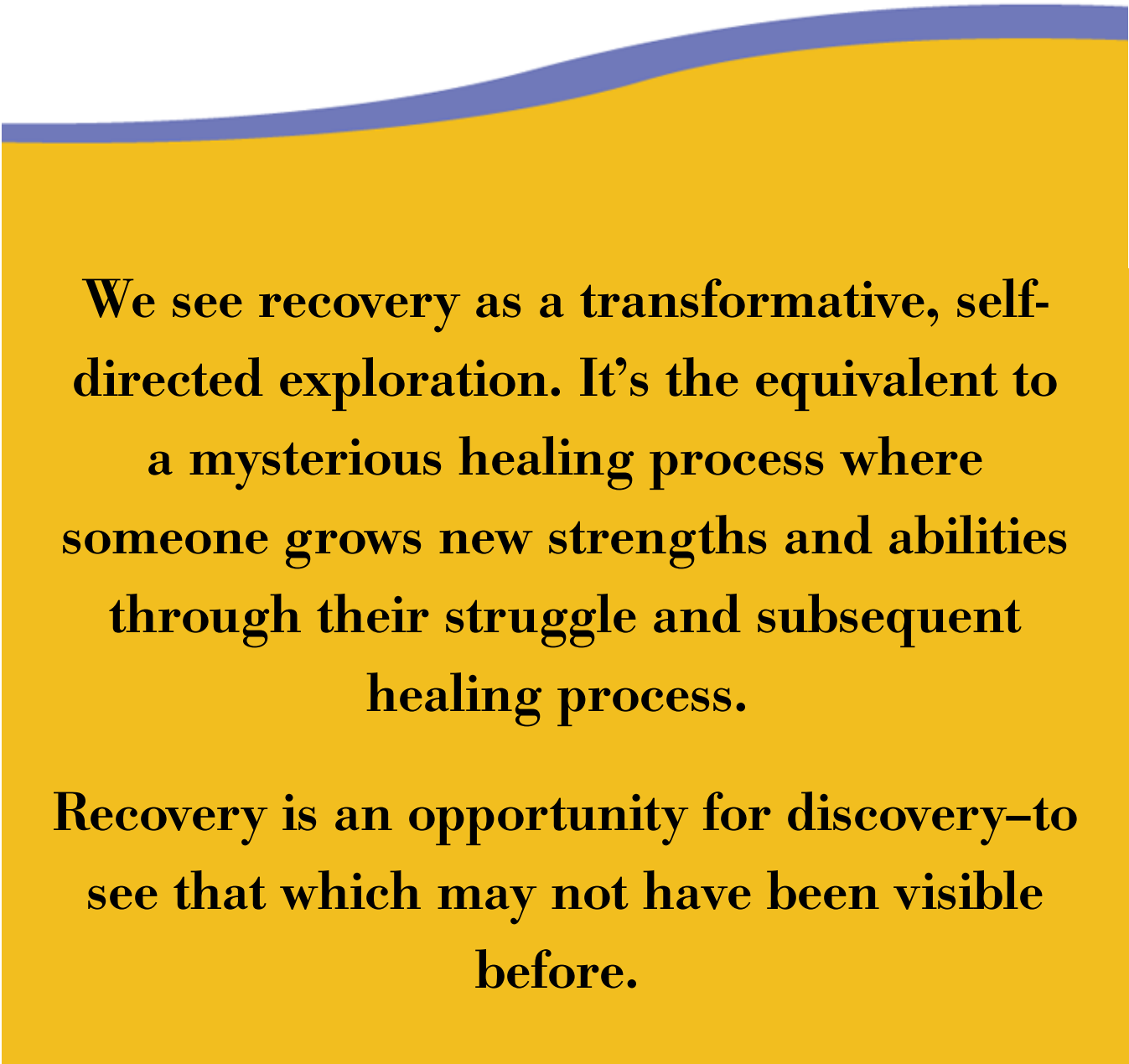
Values are the intrinsic motivators to everything we do in peer support. They guide us when we might be undecided about what to do in a challenging situation.

**We can reflect on these core values when
we need to make hard decisions.**



9. exploring biases, boundaries & recovery

Let's revisit how the B.C. Peer Support Training defines recovery:



We see recovery as a transformative, self-directed exploration. It's the equivalent to a mysterious healing process where someone grows new strengths and abilities through their struggle and subsequent healing process.

Recovery is an opportunity for discovery—to see that which may not have been visible before.

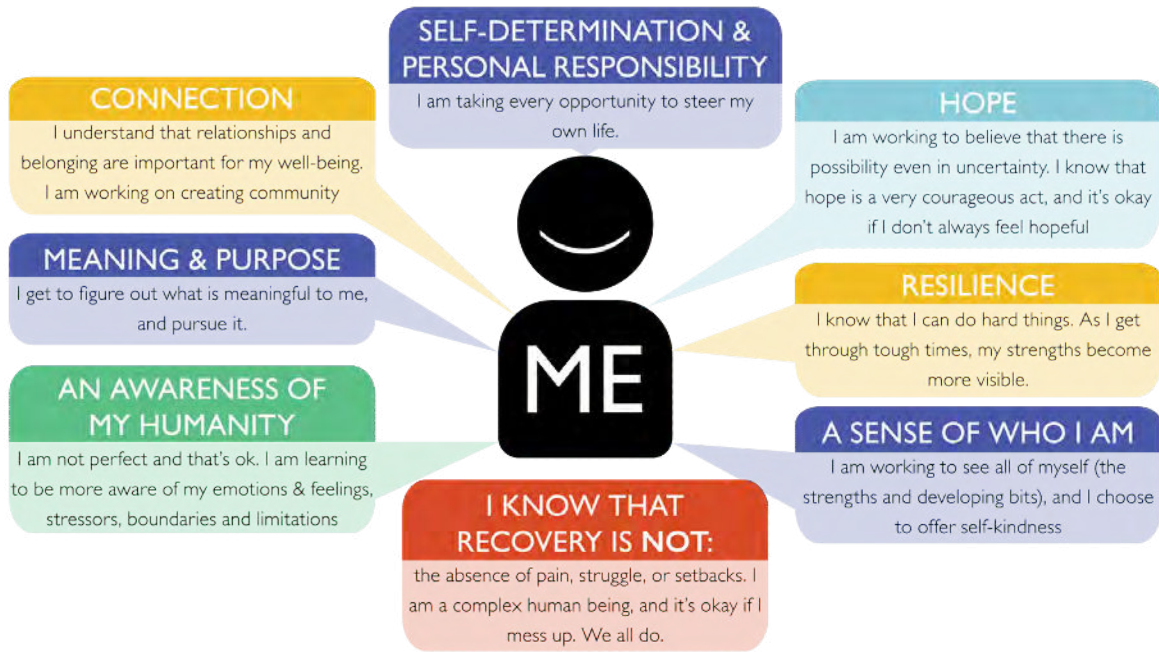
Recovery includes the discovery,
resurfacing, and development of hope, self-
determination, resilience, purpose,
presence, and belonging, even in the midst
of struggle.

It's the revelation of a new sense of being
in the world.

CONTINUE

The graphic below is one we shared in **2. peer support & wholeness**. It reminds us of the areas of focus that ground us in the recovery process.

recovery is the process of building...



Recovery is not linear. It is not a destination. It's an explorative voyage

You will be familiar with this graphic. We have shared it in our standards of practice document and also in module **2. peer support & wholeness**.

Why do you think it's important to look at what we believe about recovery before we talk about boundaries? Why do you think it matters?



After thinking about these questions on your own, expand the boxes below for some thoughts.

self-determination & personal responsibility —

When we steer our own lives, we are setting healthy boundaries for what we can and can't do.

hope —

Boundary creation is hope in action. It shows that we believe relationships can be healthy when we meet our own needs.

resilience —

The process of setting boundaries helps us to be more resilient because boundaries allow us to preserve our strengths.

a sense of who I am and where I belong —

We can't set boundaries if we don't know who we are and which communities we are a part of.

knowing what recovery isn't

Just like recovery, boundary setting isn't black or white. The process of boundary setting will involve mistakes, setbacks and pain. Humans are complex and it's ok to mess up (we want to be strengths based). Navigating complexity and accepting uncertainty is what makes us human.

an awareness of my humanity

As we learn about ourselves in the recovery process – about our feelings, emotions, stressors and limitation – we are simultaneously learning about our boundaries.

meaning & purpose

In order to explore what is meaningful to me, and pursue it, I must set boundaries. Boundaries line the path that makes that journey possible.

connection

Community gives us the strength to move forward in life. The people we connect with support our choices and those choices are the boundaries we need to recover – and grow.

Similarly to what we covered in the section about core values, your belief about recovery will impact many things in your peer support relationships, including boundary co-creation.

At the end of module **3. categories and containers: unpacking our biases**, we speak about Courtenay Harding's Vermont *Longitudinal Study of Persons with Severe Mental Illness*. The results of the 32-year research project showed us that more than 50% of people living with schizophrenia [who often self declare themselves as voice hearers] recovered – with no interventions. We can venture to guess that the number could have been even higher if people had strong support.

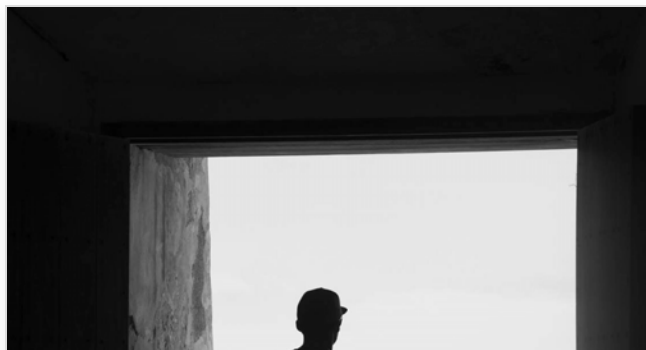
Many people have biases against people who use substances. We only have to look to the media to see those biases showing up. Yet there is data that people can get back on their feet! Proof of that is right in the very real lived experience of peer support workers in B.C.

Biases can very much get in the way of how we support someone. These biases can affect how we communicate and co-create boundaries. If we begin a conversation with doubt about the person being able to experience wholeness and recovery (as we described above), that will change everything about the dynamics, connection and the mutuality of the relationship.

CONTINUE

questions for reflection

Answer these questions in your reflection journal.

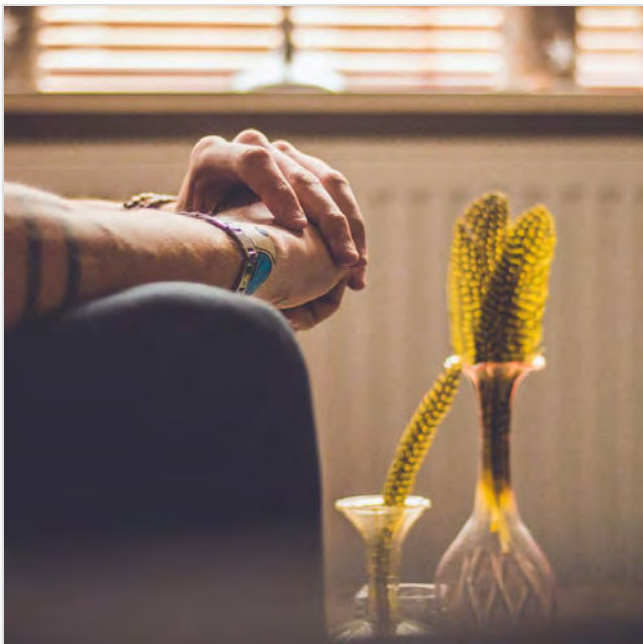


If someone doesn't believe in recovery for someone, in what way



will that impact boundary creation?

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Will that have an impact on expectations?

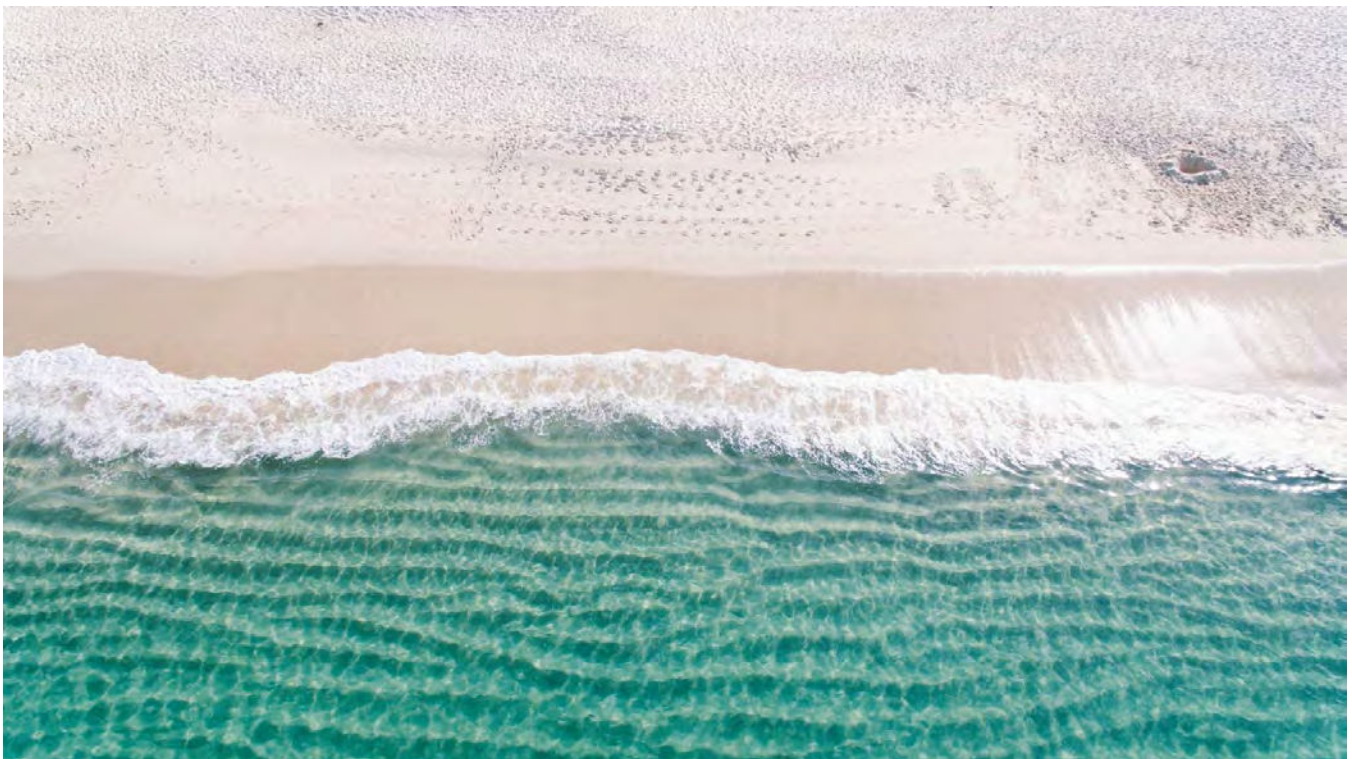
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Will that affect how you encourage self-determination in that person?

10. what are ethics?

Our core values are beliefs. Ethics are connected to the way we behave. The way we behave (ethics) is informed by our values.



Ethics are basically a set of rules. When connected with a profession or a role there's an expectation that they need to be followed at all times, whereas boundaries are flexible and can change depending on the people involved.

The [Government of Canada website](#) defines ethics this way:

Derived from the Greek word “ethos”, which means “way of living”, ethics is a branch of philosophy that is concerned with human conduct, more specifically the behaviour of individuals in society. Ethics examines the rational justification for our moral judgments; it studies what is morally right or wrong, just or unjust.

CONTINUE

 Please have the following documents in front of you:

- **Peer Support Core Values**
- [UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#)
- **Five Standards of Practice for Peer Support Workers from the document “Peer Support Services in B.C.: An Overview” (listed immediately below this note).**

the five standards of practice

The following standards of practice, which are listed in the document “Peer Support Services in B.C.: An Overview,” emerged from the principles and values of peer support. They are written for peer support workers to guide their practice. They are also meant to be a guide for organizations and leaders to support the oversight of peer services. Organizations can use these standards as they develop programs, lead staff and create job descriptions in the field of peer support.

Peer specialized proficiencies

1. Demonstrates understanding that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to recovery and wholeness. Each person needs to discover what goals, values, and beliefs work for them. Peer support workers recognize that others’ paths may be quite different from their own.
2. Demonstrates an awareness and understanding of self-determination and is able to apply it to the peer relationship. Understands that advice-giving and fixing are antithetical to self-determination.
3. Peer support is based on mutuality. The peer support worker does, however, acknowledge and recognize that there can still be a power differential when in a formal role. The peer support worker actively works to

create mutuality, and equality, while honouring boundaries and deeply respecting the well-being of the recipient of the services.

4. Chooses to self-disclose and share aspects of personal story in a way that supports the building of the relationship, connection and inspiring hope. Understands the importance of avoiding the sharing of traumatic details that can trigger a stress response in someone else.
5. Engages in active ongoing learning.

Principles of supporting wellness, wholeness, recovery, and social belonging

1. Actively creates and engages in self-care practices that support their own well-being.
2. Demonstrates awareness of their own stressors and triggers, and has a plan to support their own well-being through those challenges.
3. Actively chooses to practice empathy and compassion in interactions.
4. Recognizes the importance of clear, well-defined boundaries. Practices co-creating boundaries with the person they are supporting.
5. Demonstrates knowledge of recovery-oriented practices including but not limited to harm reduction, trauma-informed care, and the importance of person-first language.
6. Supports peers to discover strengths, explore new possibilities, and continue to build resilience.

Diversity, inclusion, and equity

1. Is aware of, and actively reflects on their own set of values and beliefs.
2. Is mindfully aware that they have a set of personal biases, and actively makes space for different perspectives.
3. Understands and can apply intercultural sensitivity towards all cultural groups. Works to avoid stereotyping.
4. Understands the harmful effects of colonization and privilege, and works to reduce harm.

5. Understands how stigma and the Social Determinants of Health can affect someone's life experience.
6. Respects a diversity of modalities and interventions, even if different than their own personal approach

Facilitating communication and connection

1. Demonstrates an understanding of, and sensitivity towards the effect of personal communication style on others.
2. Communicates clearly, respectfully, and effectively through spoken, written, and electronic modalities.
3. Recognizes the importance of, and chooses to use person-first language.
4. Understands the importance of community and belonging that is needed for one's sense of well-being, and supports community inclusion.
5. Actively practices compassionate and empathetic communication.

Collaboration and ethical practice

1. Works respectfully and effectively with clinical and community staff, as well as with the peer's personal supporters.
2. Demonstrates an understanding of the non-negotiable nature of the Code of Conduct.
3. Effectively collaborates with stakeholders in a way that supports the overall existence of, reputation and respect for peer support within the province.

peer support canada's code of conduct

A code of conduct is like a set of ethics. **A professional code of conduct is non-negotiable.** Peer Support Canada has published this code of conduct for peer support services. We have chosen to use their code of conduct for this training and hope that organizations in B.C. integrate it into their policies and procedures.

We have permission from Peer Support Canada Code of Conduct to share this here:

- 1 I will act ethically, according to the values and principles of peer support.
- 2 I will treat all people with respect and dignity.
- 3 I will respect human diversity and will foster non-discriminatory activities.
- 4 I will honour the rights, beliefs and personal values of individuals.
- 5 I will behave with honesty and integrity in providing support to peers.
- 6 I will respect the privacy of individuals and maintain confidentiality within the limitations of program policies and the law e.g. potential harm to self or others.
- 7 I will not knowingly expose a peer to harm.
- 8 I will not take advantage of the peer relationship for personal benefit, material, or financial gain.
- 9 I will respect the boundaries of peer support work and will not engage in romantic or sexual relationships with the peers that I support.
- 10 I will not provide peer support in a manner that negatively affects the public's confidence in peer support.

CONTINUE

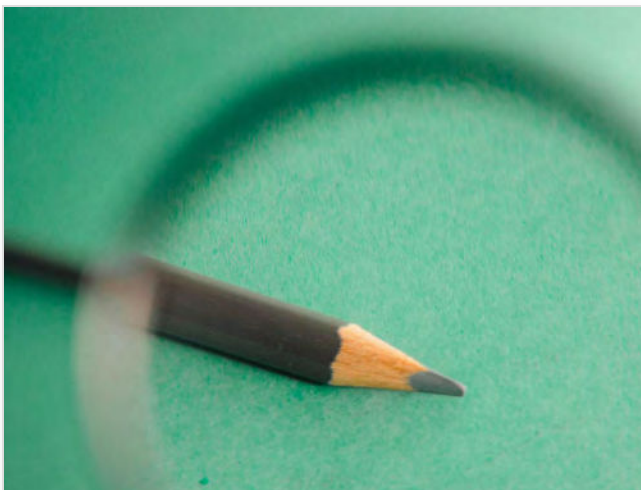
questions for reflection

Answer these questions in your reflection journal.

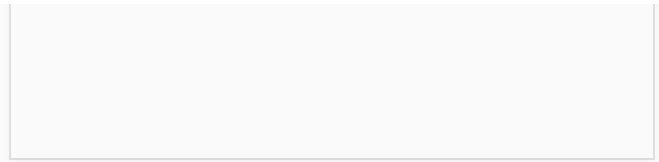


Out of all the statements in this list, which do you think will be the hardest to follow?

1 of 3



In reading these Code of Conduct statements, do you notice any differences between 2, 3, 5, 10 and the rest of the points in this code of conduct?



2 of 3



From the three documents in front of you (Core Values, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and SoP), find something to define “diversity” and “non-discriminatory activities.”

3 of 3

CONTINUE

Consider module **3. categories and containers: unpacking our biases**. How do you think our worldview, assumptions, and biases could impact our understanding of some of the points in the above code of conduct? Let's go through each of the points again.

Code of Conduct #1

I will act ethically, according to the values and principles of peer support.

We can only do this if we clearly know the peer support values listed on page 5 & 6, and The B.C. Peer Support Training Curriculum's Standards of Practice. Those two documents become our yardstick to acting ethically.

Code of Conduct #2

I will treat all people with respect and dignity.

What do respect and dignity mean? Can we assume that everyone has the same understanding of those words? As we covered in Module 3, everyone will have a different way of perceiving and assigning meaning to concepts, because of our differing worldviews. The word "respect" can mean very different things to different people if we don't define it.

In peer support we have a shared meaning, because "Respect, Dignity, and Equity" is a Core Value. Also, "Peer Support Proficiencies" and "Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity" are a part of the Standards of Practice (SoP). We can also refer to the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (see Appendix) as that document states the rights for all, and that in turn informs what offering dignity and respect means.

Code of Conduct #3

I will respect human diversity and will foster non-discriminatory activities.

Again, this can be unclear or subjective unless we create context around what diversity and "non-discriminatory activities" means. Basically, because of our implicit biases, we don't know we're discriminating if we don't know!

Code of Conduct #4

I will honour the rights, beliefs and personal values of individuals.

How can you support yourself to do this? What will you do to challenge your own biases? What will you do to support yourself to see another person's worldview and honour their belief system, especially when it's different from your own?

Code of Conduct #5

I will behave with honesty and integrity in providing support to peers.

Again honesty and integrity can mean different things to different people based on our experiences and worldview. From the documents in front of you, how would you create a shared definition of honesty and integrity?

Code of Conduct #6

I will respect the privacy of individuals and maintain confidentiality within the limitations of program policies and the law e.g. potential harm to self or others.

This statement is clear. It tells us that we need to understand confidentiality laws, provincial laws about potential harm to self or others and your agency's policies and procedures about confidentiality and potential crisis. Without knowledge of this documentation, you won't be able to meet this expectation.

Code of Conduct #7

I will not knowingly expose a peer to harm.

This is a clear action. Still, different people have different understandings of what harm is and the role of risk in self-determination. How will you create a clear understanding of what harm means in your peer support work? Consider talking about this with others doing this work.

Code of Conduct #8

I will not take advantage of the peer relationship for personal benefit, material, or financial gain.

How does this statement work in a program where mutuality is foundational to everything we do? What if someone gives you a small gift? What if you decide to work out together? When grounded in mutuality, you'll

experience personal gain from interactions. This one needs some clear context too. How would you define taking advantage for personal benefit, or material or financial gain? This is likely something you will need to work through when establishing boundaries and also with peer support teams to establish policies and procedures.

Code of Conduct #9 —

I will respect the boundaries of peer support work and will not engage in romantic or sexual relationships with the peers that I support.

This statement is clear – current romantic or sexual peer relationships are 100 percent off limits. Creation of clear boundaries will need to be established in cases when someone is not participating in a peer support program any longer, or if a former partner is referred to a program. What will you do in those situations?

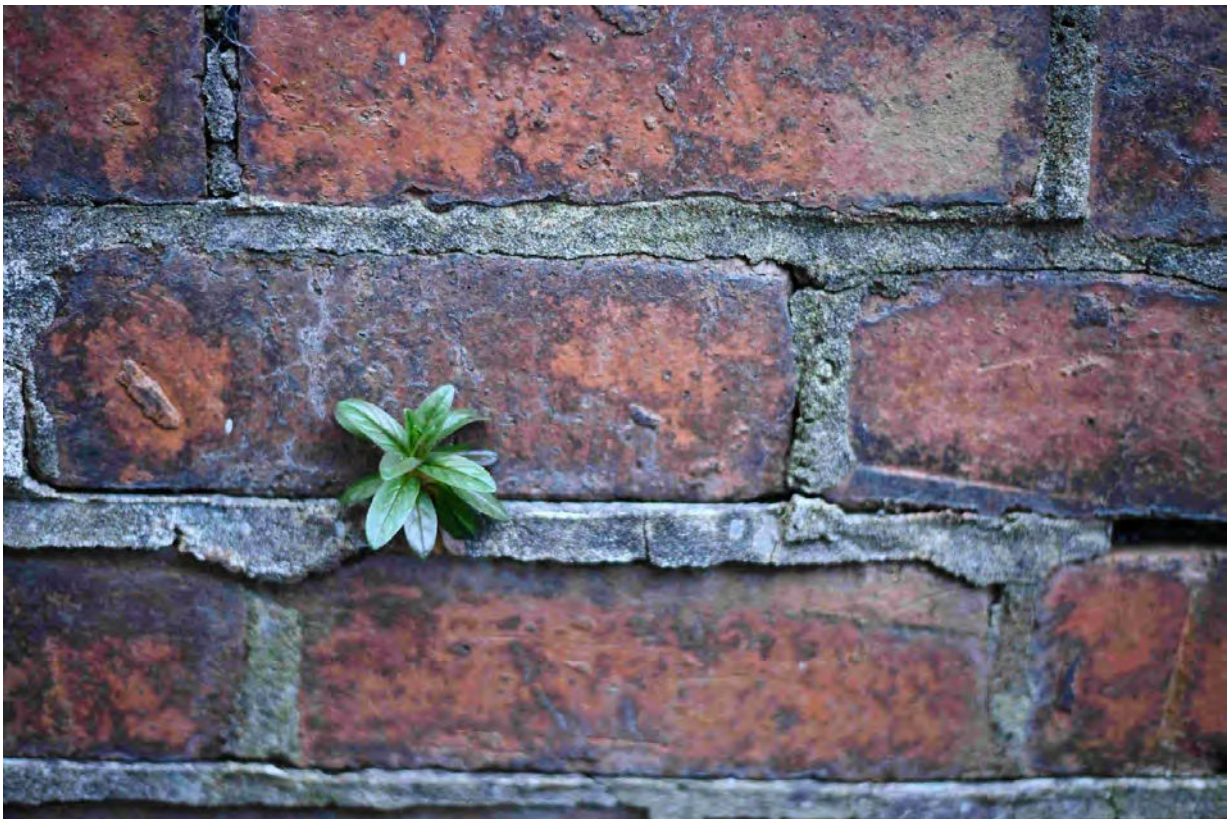
Code of Conduct #10 —

I will not provide peer support in a manner that negatively affects the public's confidence in peer support.

This one is very tricky, because we don't know what will negatively affect the public's confidence in peer support. For this one we can refer to all of the core values, the SoP document, and especially Collaboration and Ethical Practice.

11. clarity on boundaries from the beginning

**Boundaries are only respected if
they are made clear.**



There's little room for vagueness with boundary co-creation. If we're vague and unclear with our boundaries in relationships, then people are left guessing and are unable to respect them. Boundary creation can be really hard

for many people especially if we haven't learned about the connection between boundaries and our well-being. Many of us have missed out on learning how to identify and express our boundaries, and that can cause us much suffering. Engaging in constructive co-creation of boundaries with the people you support is actually a great learning opportunity for everyone involved.

Sometimes our boundaries change. We can find ourselves in a situation that brings awareness of new boundaries we need to create. We might also find that some boundaries that were really necessary for a season, are no longer needed as time moves on. Shifting and changing is part of being human. This means that our boundaries are very likely to change as well.

However, in peer support we often need to have a few very clear boundaries right at the start of the relationship. Though it might feel awkward, talking about them with the people we support is essential. Also when people step outside the boundaries we have created, there's a disconnect that happens in a relationship. This means it's really important to have open and respectful conversations when boundaries are crossed.





Some peer support workers choose to give the people they work with a document at the beginning of a one-on-one relationship that outlines the parameters of their role and what they can and can't do. The document can also outline things like their preferred forms of communication, availability of time and any other important boundary items. If you choose to do this, it's essential that it's written in language and a tone that upholds the core values. It's also essential that there's room for the person you are working with to participate in the dialogue and be able to add what they need to the conversation. If the person you are supporting can't read, you can read to them, have a discussion, or anything else that works for them.

If you're a peer support worker who works in a group environment, with many different people, it's still important to be clear about your boundaries with the people you support and with your colleagues. It's also necessary to have open dialogue about boundaries with your teammates and make decisions together so that you can all be on the same page with the people you support. Make sure to write down these decisions so everyone can see and remember them.

the fluidity of boundaries

Boundaries are not rigid like ethics. Like we talked about, boundaries are more fluid and can shift and change as we move into different seasons of life or when we experience growth. Your boundaries will look different with people depending on how close they are to you. For example, one day you might feel good about a hug from a coworker and another day you might not be okay with it. If you're someone who goes to bed early, you might likely say no to babysitting a coworker's kid until late on a weekday night, but you might decide it's okay for you to do it for family, especially in an emergency situation. Other times, depending on where you're at, you might find yourself needing to say no to family.

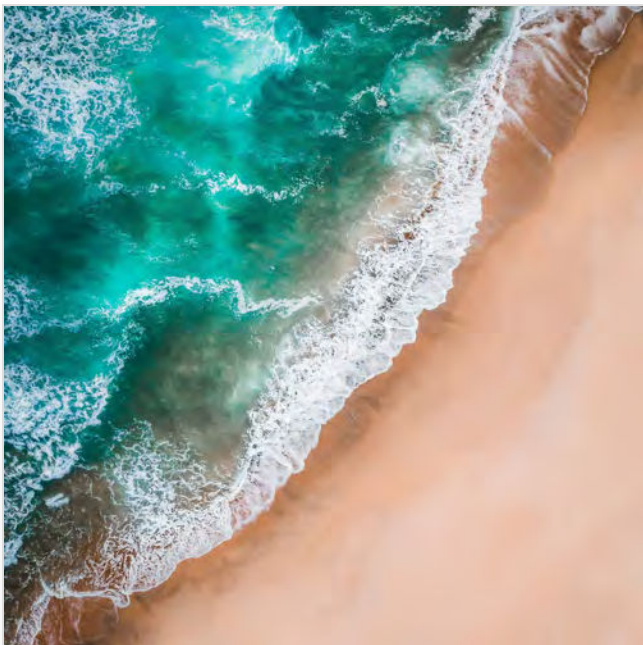
Assessing where we are emotionally at any given time is an important piece of boundary creation.

You always have a right to change your boundaries.

CONTINUE

questions for reflection

Answer these questions in your reflection journal.



Do you have fluidity with your boundaries? Have you noticed yourself creating different boundaries with different relationships? Are some of your boundaries non-negotiable?

1 of 2



What are some potential boundary situations that can come up at work?

12. role clarification & boundaries



As we mentioned earlier in this module, clarity is very important in anything we do. Trying a new recipe that simply lists ingredients without clear instructions on method could result in a big flop. When we aren't clear on expectations and instructions, things can get messy and can easily go off the rails.

In peer support, clarity around roles is essential. When you begin your work in peer support, it's essential that you have clarity around your role. You must also be aware of expectations that come with your position. Each organization might approach peer support work differently, so it's important that you get this clarification from your direct employer. It's not uncommon for peer support workers to have more clinical backgrounds in nursing or social work. However, when we're hired for a peer support position, it's essential that we leave our former "hat" at the door and seek clarity on our new peer support role.

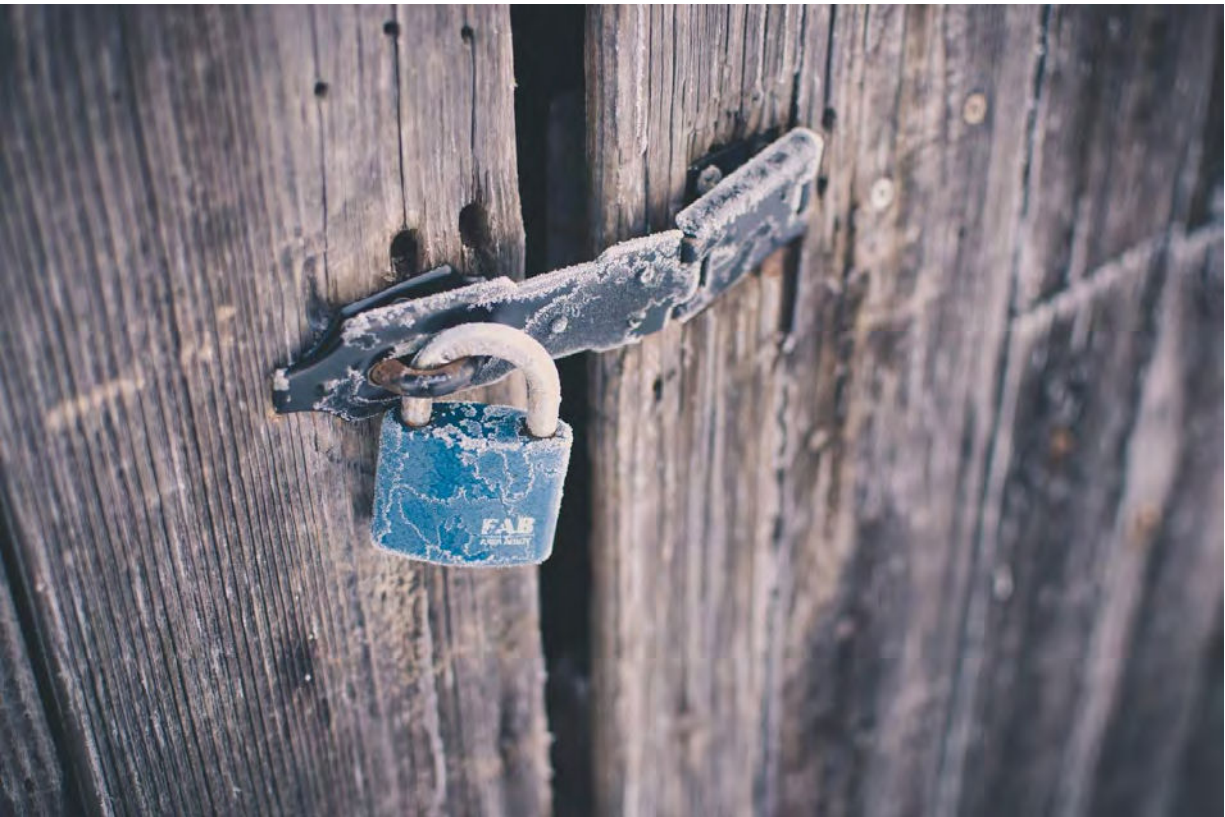
Without clarity around roles, it's easy for peer support services to morph into the dominant culture of the agency, and the uniqueness of the program can get lost. Understanding your role is the first step in creating boundaries in the workplace. It's hard to know if you should say yes or no to something if you aren't clear on your role.

Many organizations are excited to bring peer support workers onto their teams. Some do so before they have adequately done the work of creating job descriptions, peer support specific policy and procedure manuals, and before they have educated existing clinical staff about peer support and the peer role. You may find yourself in a position where your agency isn't clear about the role of a peer support worker. If that's the case, you may need to speak with a manager or supervisor and request role clarity and support from them to educate your colleagues on the role of a peer support worker. Getting this information in writing will be important, and you should make sure the written role definition is available to all peer support workers for reference.

CONTINUE

differences in boundaries with peer support & clinical work

Boundaries for a peer support worker will be different than boundaries for a clinician.



A common boundary in clinical work is that clinicians don't tend to disclose personal information. Clearly that's very different in peer support work! You're hired because of your lived experience, so sharing some of your personal experiences comes with the job itself. Having said that, YOU are in charge of your own story, and YOU get to decide what you share and what you don't. It's likely that if you're working on a team with clinical staff that you'll need to establish clear boundaries about what you're okay with other teammates sharing about your story.

The other thing about peer support that's different than clinical work is that peer support is based on the core value of mutuality. That means that you're on a level playing field with the people you're working with. You can together decide if you want to work on something like a fitness goal or take a workshop together. This is not something that would happen with a clinician.



What about gifts? Very often agencies have very firm policies about gifts. It's understandable why that is. It's very easy to cross a line where a staff person can take advantage of a person receiving services. This policy is there

because it happens. People have been abused, hurt and taken advantage of.

However, what does this mean in peer support – a program grounded in mutuality? What if someone you support makes you a card and brings you your favourite donut? What if they want to buy you a latte one day? Or if they give you a cigarette? What if you're given a small token of thanks like a chocolate bar or some flowers? Is it okay to accept these things? Is it hurtful if we don't accept them?

In these cases we are moving into some grey areas that are important to explore with an open mind. These are topics to dialogue with your teams and leaders about. We must always remember that these policies are created for the safety of the people we support. Situations might not be as clearly right or wrong as they first seem.

CONTINUE

questions for reflection

Answer these questions in your reflection journal.



Do you think it's ever okay to receive gifts? Why or why not?

1 of 4



If you think it's okay, where is the line when it crossed into not being okay?

2 of 4



Do you think it's okay to pay for a peer's coffee one week, and then they pay for you the next week? Why or why not?

3 of 4



Would you ever give something



would you ever give something
to a person you're supporting?
Why or why not?

4 of 4

CONTINUE

boundaries with your health care

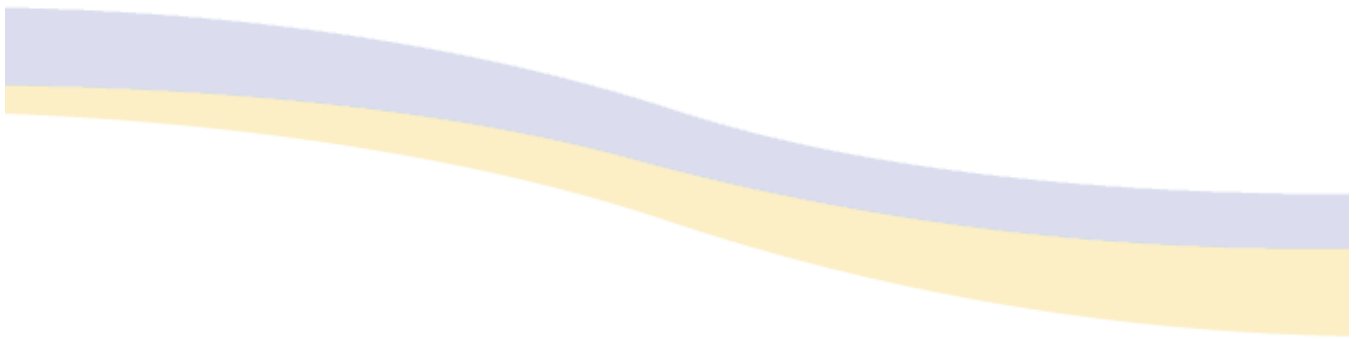
You may also end up working for an organization or health authority where you've received services in the past or are still receiving services. It's not uncommon for this to happen, especially in smaller, more rural communities.

It's normal for people living with a mental health diagnosis or problematic substance use to experience ebbs and flows in recovery. Setbacks are a part of the process. There's a possibility that a peer support worker may need support again. There is absolutely no shame in that.

Another possible situation you may find yourself in: someone you have helped support may in turn later become your co-worker. This possibility, as well as the reverse situation mentioned before it, help us remember that having good boundaries and treating people fairly and compassionately are essential practices.

In either situation, it's really important for you to know that you have legal rights to have your personal information remain confidential. You have the right to have clear boundaries around your personal health care and your work. It's essential that these boundaries are formed and enforced by the agency, leadership and staff of the organization. These boundaries should actually be policy and not be fluid or flexible.

Privacy between your work and your personal care is absolutely non-negotiable. Organizations must create policies to protect your privacy and well-being. If you are noticing boundary problems with that, you will need to speak to a supervisor or manager to address that. If you work for a unionized agency, then you may also need to speak with your union.



13. mutuality & co-creating boundaries in the peer relationship

Like we've covered earlier in this module, unlike ethics, boundaries are flexible; they can vary from person to person and from day to day.

Boundaries in peer support are going to look different than boundaries in the clinical world, because everything we do in peer support is grounded in mutuality. That greatly impacts how we approach boundary setting.

When we think of boundaries as defining what's okay and what's not okay, and we hold mutuality as a core value, then both participants in the peer support relationship are needed in boundary creation. It's essential for both people to share and be heard. Having this conversation at the start of the relationship is very important.

In this training we recognize the importance of community and connection. Hopefully community is something you have focused on with your own well-being. Community will continue to be important for you as you work in your peer support role.

There's a chance that at some point you will end up working with or around people with whom you have pre-existing relationships. Or perhaps you run in the same social circles as someone you are supporting. This can add some layers to boundary creation and increases the need to co-create boundaries and communicate transparently together. If you have a pre-existing relationship with someone, clarity around this with your supervisor is also important as it could affect the peer relationship. As stated in the Peer Support Code of Ethics, it's never okay to engage a romantic relationship with someone you are supporting.

Some peer support workers have very clear boundaries about things like what they choose to share from their story, their preferred method of communication, topics that are triggering to talk about, or social media. When certain boundaries are especially important to you, it is essential to be clear about them up front so that there is no room for ambiguity.

If you're a peer support worker who works with different people all the time, then it's important to create your own set of clearly defined boundaries in your work.



CONTINUE

some topics to consider when co-creating boundaries

Together with the person you will be supporting, you have the opportunity to come up with the boundaries you wish to set. The following list provides examples of boundary topics that some peer support workers and the people they support have discussed in boundary creation. This is by no means an exhaustive list.

☐

Meeting places – where do both of you feel comfortable meeting? Are there places that feel uncomfortable?

☐

What topics are okay to discuss?

☐

Are there topics that are NOT okay to talk about together? If a topic makes you uncomfortable, for whatever reason, be clear on that.

☐

How will you get in touch with each other?

☐

Are there any forms of communication that are not okay for either of you?

☐

Are there any cultural, religious or spiritual considerations to keep in mind?

☐

Are there any accessibility needs?

☐

Any scents to avoid?

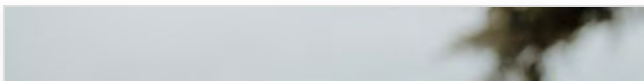
☐

Do you need to face the person when speaking so they can read lips?

CONTINUE

questions for reflection

Answer these questions in your reflection journal.





What are some other topics you think would be important to discuss when co-creating boundaries?

1 of 3



Some people find conversations around boundaries difficult. What challenges can you see happening in the relationship if this dialogue never happens?

2 of 3



Why do you think some people struggle with boundary



creation?

3 of 3

CONTINUE

boundaries when one person is paid & the other isn't

Looking at the dictionary definition of a particular word can bring us to a deeper understanding.

Let's look at how Dictionary.com defines "peer":

noun

1

a person of the same legal status:

e.g., "a jury of one's peers"

2

a person who is equal to another in abilities, qualifications, age, background and social status

3

something of equal worth or quality

Right away we can see that there's an inconsistency and a potential power differential when one person in a relationship is paid and the other isn't.

peer = mutuality and equality

This brings up another set of questions. How do you think this influences the mutuality of peer support? Does it have a lot of impact, no impact or some impact?



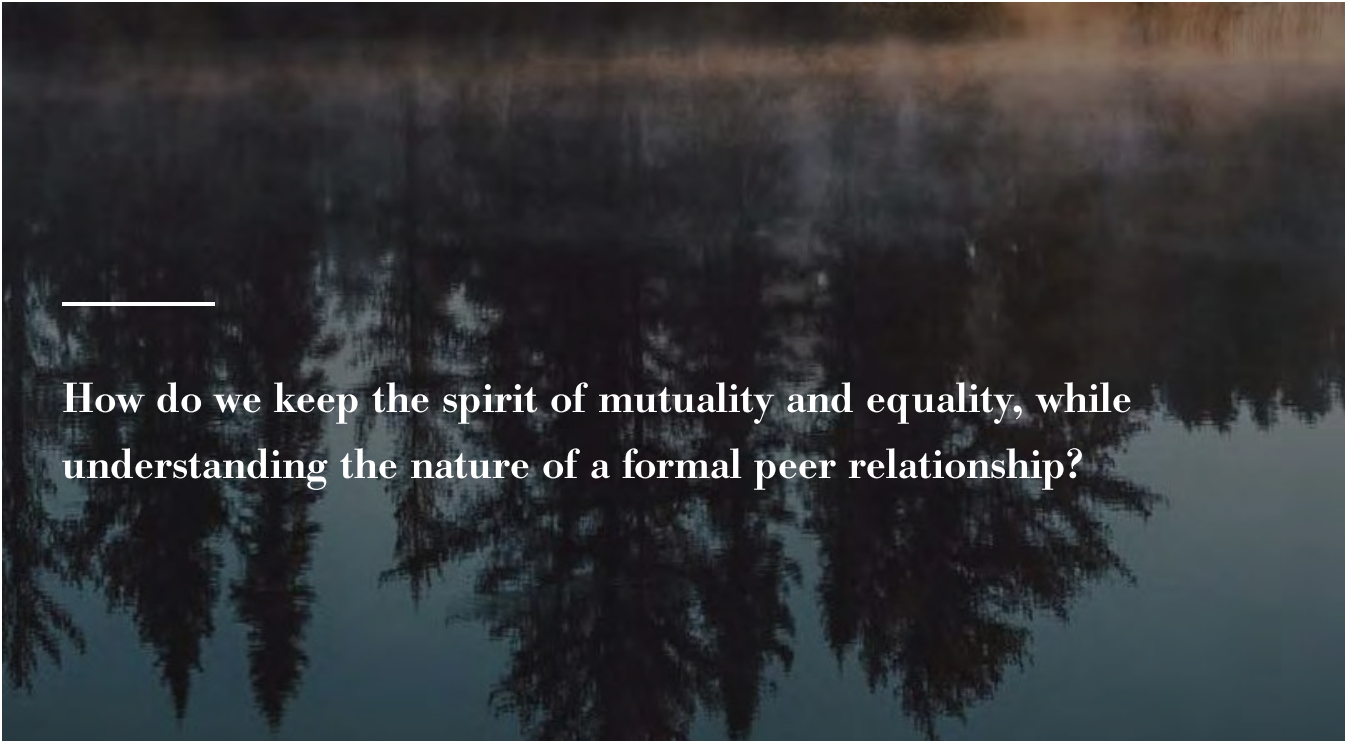
This potential power differential is an important aspect to keep in mind when thinking of boundaries. Formal peer support is different from friendship. When we meet someone out in the community the relationship is organic. Formal peer support is different, because there are more parameters around the relationship. It can tend to be a time limited connection. It brings up some different guidelines and limits than a regular friendship will.

What do you think about continuing the relationship after the formal service time is over?

Do you think it's OK, not OK, or are you unsure? There have been many situations where a friendship afterwards has been great. There have also been situations where it has been difficult. Sometimes when a relationship begins where one person is paid, there can be a struggle to achieve mutuality and the kind of give and take needed in a friendship.

Whether or not it can be shifted to an equal, regular friendship following formal peer support is a question that needs to be talked about with the person you are working with, and perhaps your organization and your manager.

As mentioned earlier, another amazing thing that can happen in peer support is that someone who has received services could end up becoming a peer support worker and joining your team. Then you will end up working together as colleagues!



How do we keep the spirit of mutuality and equality, while understanding the nature of a formal peer relationship?

14. awareness of your worldview & biases



As we talk about in module **3. categories & containers: unpacking our biases**, your worldview is the lens through which you see the world. Your worldview is a cumulation of all your life experiences. We also all have biases – that comes with being human. Becoming more aware of our assumptions and biases will go a long way with boundary co-creation.

Because of our past experiences, we may have formed some rigid categories of “right and wrong.” However, someone else has different experiences and may perceive the very same thing quite differently. The most important thing we can do when we find ourselves engaged in this kind of either/or thinking is ask questions.

we can ask ourselves these kinds of questions:

☐

What has led me to believe what I believe?

☐

Is there any flexibility in my own belief? Why or why not?

☐

Can I make room for a different perspective on this?

☐

Who can I talk to who believes differently than me? How can I listen to them to understand vs. try to convince them that I am right?

the problem of “othering”

What happens when we don't allow for this type of questioning? Exactly the kind of polarizing points of view that are currently affecting the world today. “Othering” is the act of perceiving or portraying someone as alien or different. It's creating a sort of false dichotomy where there is always an “us” and “them.” When we adopt this mindset, it's harder to see the possibility for connection. It helps people justify horrible acts of violence and hatred because they see another group as a threat to their own favoured group. But often this stance is taken because people haven't taken the time to genuinely know the people they are “othering.” Instead, they create biases that create wall and barriers between them.



Creating space for a different perspective does not mean that you have to change your belief about something. You will always have the freedom and right to believe what is right for you.


The goal is to also have space for other people to have different perspectives. Others may have had different experiences, different treatments and approaches may have worked for them, and they may also come from different cultures. In this work it's essential that we give up the desire to convince someone we're working with that we're right. When both people in a conversation seek to understand, rather than convince the other person they are right, both people often find their perspectives expanding.

Expanding perspectives leads to growth and learning. Think of a time you may have really listened to someone with a different perspective and thought, "interesting...I hadn't thought of it that way." Community and connection is about embracing diversity, and that includes diversity of thought and perspective (even when we think we are right and the other person is wrong).


All of this means that people we work with will have a different approach to their wellness and recovery than we do. This will show up in boundary co-creation.



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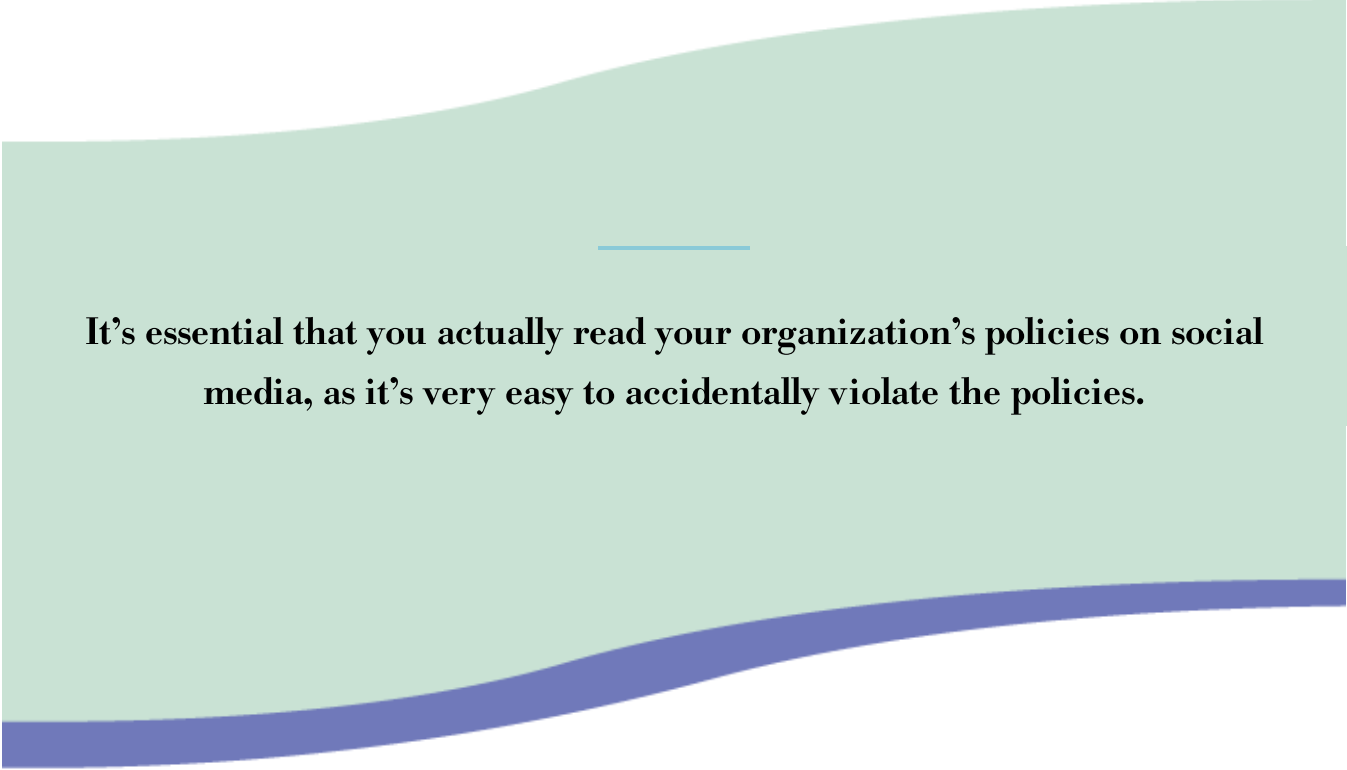


examples of how different perspectives can show up in the work we do:

- ☐ You have a strong belief and grounding in harm reduction, and the person you are working with is having success with AA, or vice versa.
 - ☐ You're a vegan, and the person you are working with eats meat, or vice versa.
 - ☐ You have strong religious beliefs and the person you're working with is an atheist, or vice versa.
 - ☐ You take a natural approach to your wellness, and you don't believe in taking medications. The person you're working with takes medications and expresses satisfaction with them, or vice versa.
 - ☐ You've had a ton of success with a certain treatment like Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), and the person you're working with had a negative experience and doesn't want to try it again, or vice versa.
 - ☐ You're very against electroconvulsive therapy (ECT), but the person you're working with has had success with it, or vice versa.
- 

15. peer support & social media

Many people today use social media as a form of connecting with others. There's lots of different ways people choose to use social media. Some use it as a social justice tool. Others like to share jokes and pictures of pets. Some share family pictures, or even political thoughts. **It's up to you to decide how social media fits into your work and life. However, before you consider sharing your content with people you work with, you must be aware of any policies your workplace might have regarding social media.**



It's essential that you actually read your organization's policies on social media, as it's very easy to accidentally violate the policies.

CONTINUE

It's important to remember that anything you post online has the potential to be out there permanently, even if you don't share it publicly. This is the case because people can screenshot your posts. Also, some say that nothing actually gets deleted from the Internet. When you sign up for social media accounts you are giving those companies permission to keep your data. Some things get cached and stored around the Internet, meaning you won't have control of them or be able to delete them.





In light of this, it's important that we really think about what we post. We obviously know that it's never okay to post blatantly racist, homophobic, defamatory, indecent, hateful, sexist or vulgar things on the Internet. However, if we look at module **3. categories and containers: unpacking our biases**, we know that people interpret information differently. We might post a funny meme, and someone else can be very offended by it.

Also, if you're posting pictures of your family, children or things like vacations or your home, consider who you want to be seeing that part of your life.

If you choose to share social justice or activism posts, it's important to make sure that you separate your work from your personal opinion. Know that you are openly identifying as an employee of an organization, and people you work with are following your posts; it's likely that people will associate your opinions with your role. This has the potential to create controversy that might affect your work. Some people choose to create a public account to share with people they work with and also have a private account.



Social media can also be amazing. We live in an era in history where being a part of global social movements is really possible. We have the opportunity to use our voices to make a difference in the world. We can create connections, networks and friendships with people all over the world!

With all this in mind, there are many things to consider around social media. It's certainly a bit of a grey area. Consider spending some intentional time deciding the role social media will play in your life and work.

CONTINUE

check your knowledge

Which of the following might be specific things to consider when it comes to social media, boundaries and peer support work? Choose ALL that apply.

☐

What is the purpose of social media in my life?

☐

Could people be offended by this post?

☐

How is my tone in this post or comment?

☐

Why am I sharing this? What's my intention with this post? (Is it to make people laugh, educate people, create awareness, share my opinion, encourage people, tell people about my life?)

☐

Who do I want to follow me? Who do I want to follow?

☐

Who will see this post?

SUBMIT



CONTINUE

questions for reflection

Answer these questions in your reflection journal.



**How does social media fit in
with my life?**

1 of 3



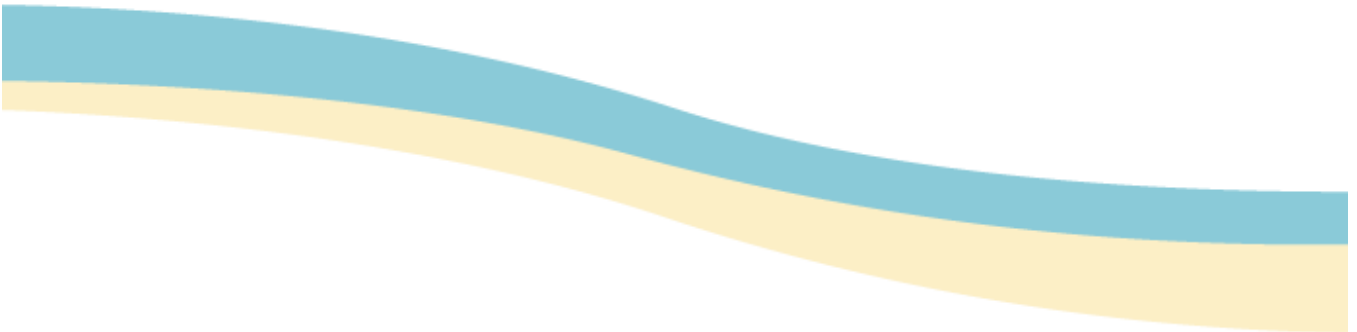
**What are some major things I
need to consider around my use
of social media?**

2 of 3

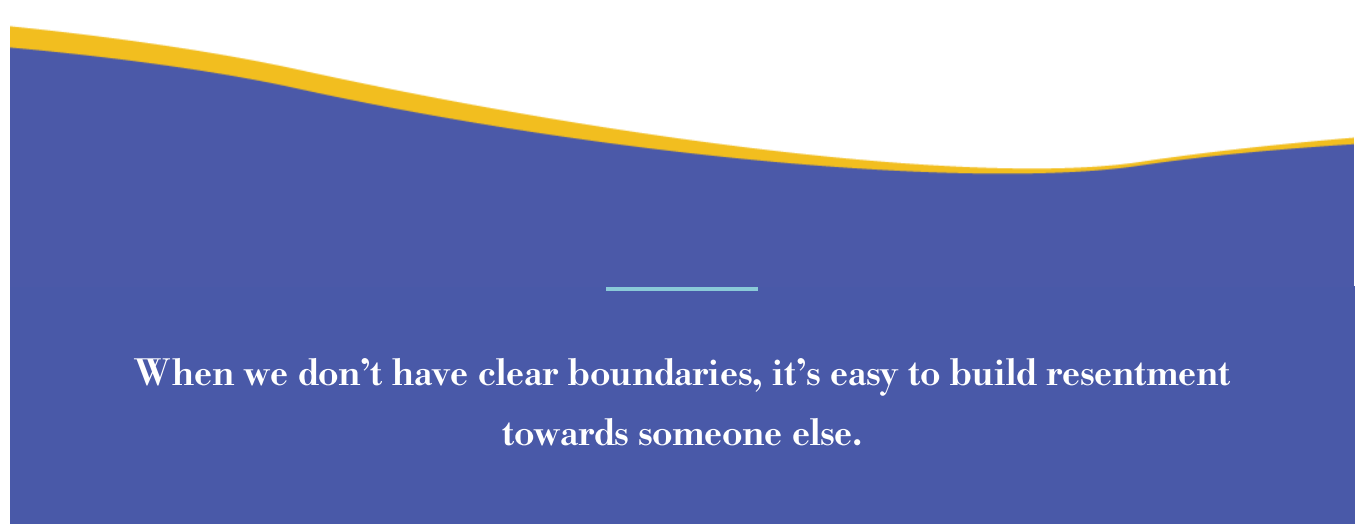


What were the workplace policies around social media use in some other jobs you've had in the past? How did you feel about that and adapt to those policies?

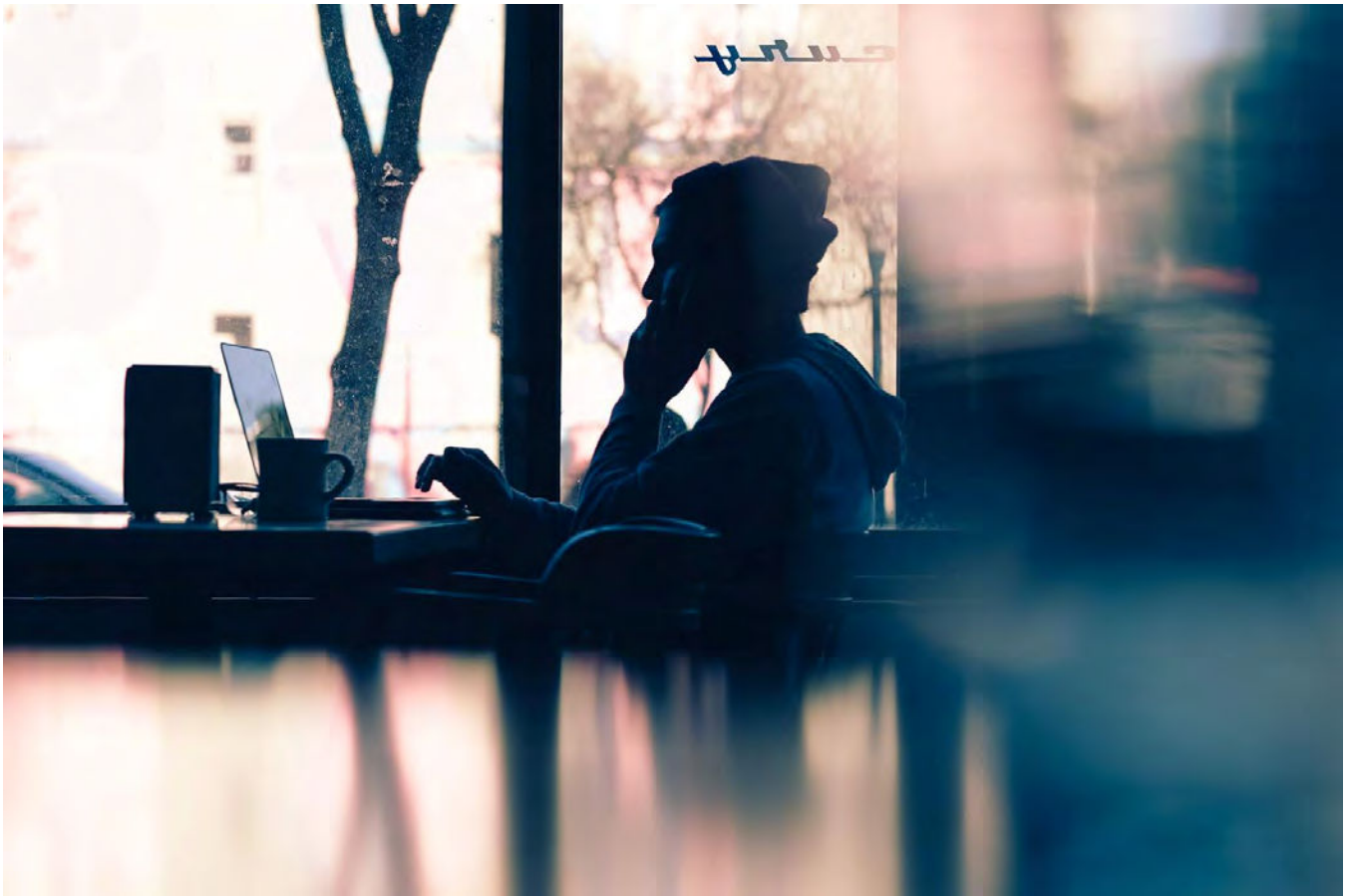
3 of 3



16. boundaries in communication



When we don't have clear boundaries, it's easy to build resentment
towards someone else.



Imagine your bedtime is 10:00 pm. You need to go to bed at that time to be able to feel good in the morning. If you go to bed later, you feel groggy and it's hard to get through the day. What if a person you are working with calls or texts you consistently at 9:30 at night? If you don't express your needs and boundaries and you continue to accept the calls, over time you might start to feel resentful. It also has the possibility to negatively affect your sleep patterns.

The resentment can start to build slowly, until something small can trigger anger or frustration. If we aren't clear with our boundaries, people are left guessing, and it ultimately affects our communication and connection.

Not having clearly defined boundaries can affect communication and connection.

We can't control how the people in your life (including those you will be supporting or working with) will treat you, but you can control your own boundaries.

When boundaries are crossed, talking about it in an honest, direct and respectful way is really important. Most of us have been in relationships where we haven't been clear on our personal boundaries, and the relationship has derailed and fallen apart. Lack of boundaries can show up in things like conflict that can't be managed, disrespectful and rude language, yelling or even resentment that comes from doing what we perceive as "too much."

If the relationship is not working for both people involved, then it's just not working. Boundary clarification is essential to relationships. Talking about boundaries, even if it's awkward, keeps the relationship healthy and on track.

Sometimes we find ourselves working with people who consistently cross or disregard our boundaries, and we begin to feel unsafe. At that point, it may be important to talk to a supervisor and plan to step away from the relationship for a time or even permanently.

17. summary

Let's review some of the key concepts covered in this module.

☐

In any relationship, boundaries offer a clear guideline of what is okay and what is not okay for each person.

☐

In keeping with the Core Value of mutuality, boundaries in peer support work need to be **clear, defined** and **co-created**; co-created means that both participants in the relationship have input in creating the relationship boundaries.

☐

You can always return to the Core Values of peer support as your guide when building peer support relationships and co-creating boundaries.

☐

Boundaries are fluid and flexible, whereas ethics (the way we behave) tends to be more rigid; both have a role to play in peer support work.

☐

Peer Support Canada has a code of conduct that is in essence a set of ethics; this code of conduct is an excellent guide for peer support services and relationship building while focusing on healthy boundary creation.

☐

As you learned in Module 3, our worldview, assumptions and biases can impact our understanding and how we interpret things like the Code of Conduct, our belief around recovery and other topics; it's important to reflect on this as you work to co-create boundaries.

☐

Your boundaries can change depending on where you're at in life, the people you're with, how close you are to them and many other factors – assessing where you are emotionally is an important piece of boundary creation.



Boundaries differ in different contexts; for example, boundaries for a peer support worker will be different than boundaries for a clinician because everything we do in peer support is grounded in mutuality.



Social media is a wonderful tool for connection and for making a difference, but when it comes to boundaries, you need to think carefully and strategically about how you'll use social media.



Talking about boundaries, even if it feels awkward, keeps any relationship healthy and on track.



18. next steps

We want to thank you for taking the time to walk alongside peer support workers on a shared path of learning from lived experience.

You are now ready to visit another module of the Peer Support Worker training curriculum!

Please head home to <https://peerconnectbc.ca> where you will find the individual training modules and facilitation guides. You will also find a [resource page](#) at that site to continue your learning about peer support work and the issues surrounding it.

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Curriculum Developer and Writer: *Jenn Cusick*

Project Manager: *Jonathan Orr*

Consultant and Former Project Manager: *Corey Ranger*

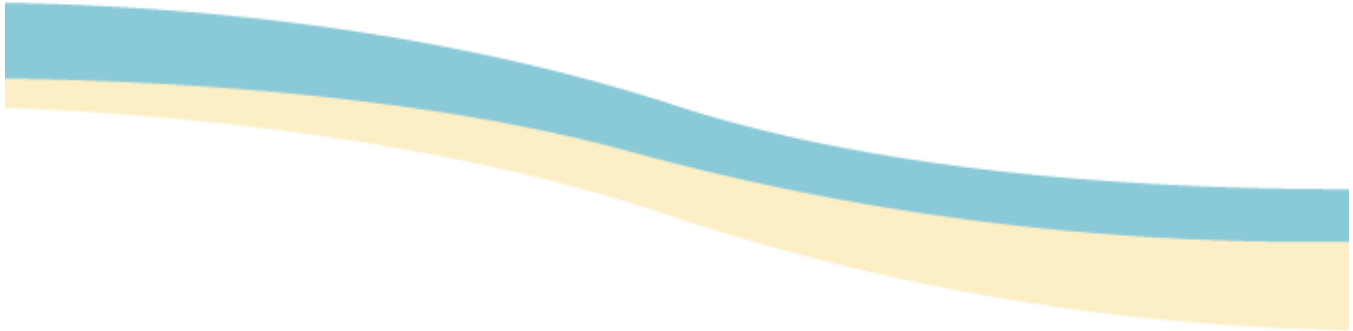
Life Application Story Writer: *Robyn Thomas*

Editor: *Annie Brandner*

Graphic Designer: *Jeseye Tanner*

Peer Portraits: *Jesse Winters Photography*

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