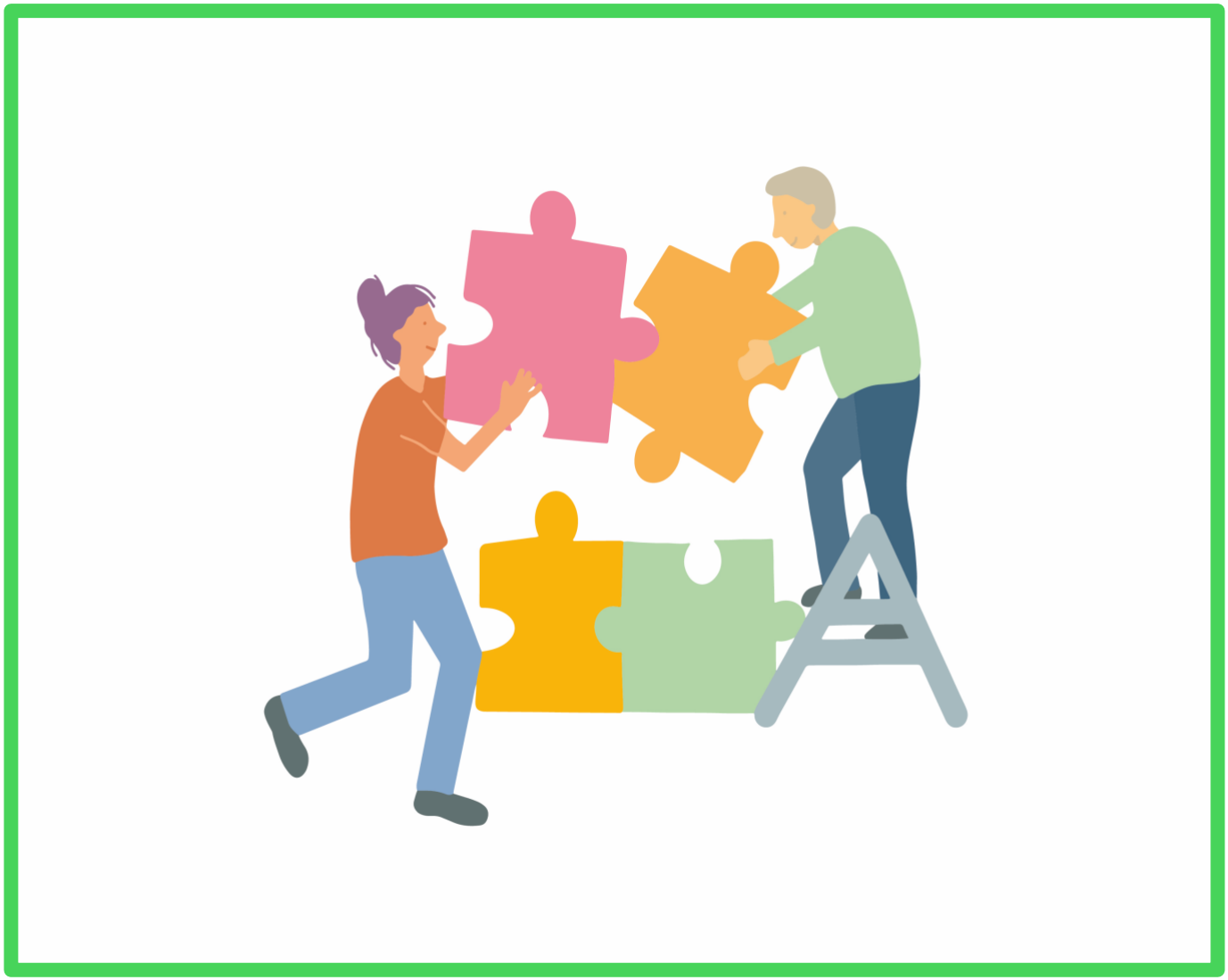


MINI KNOWLEDGE MODULE 3

MODULE 3: *PEER CONCEPTS AND PRACTICE*: Preparing to put peer knowledge and skills into practice.

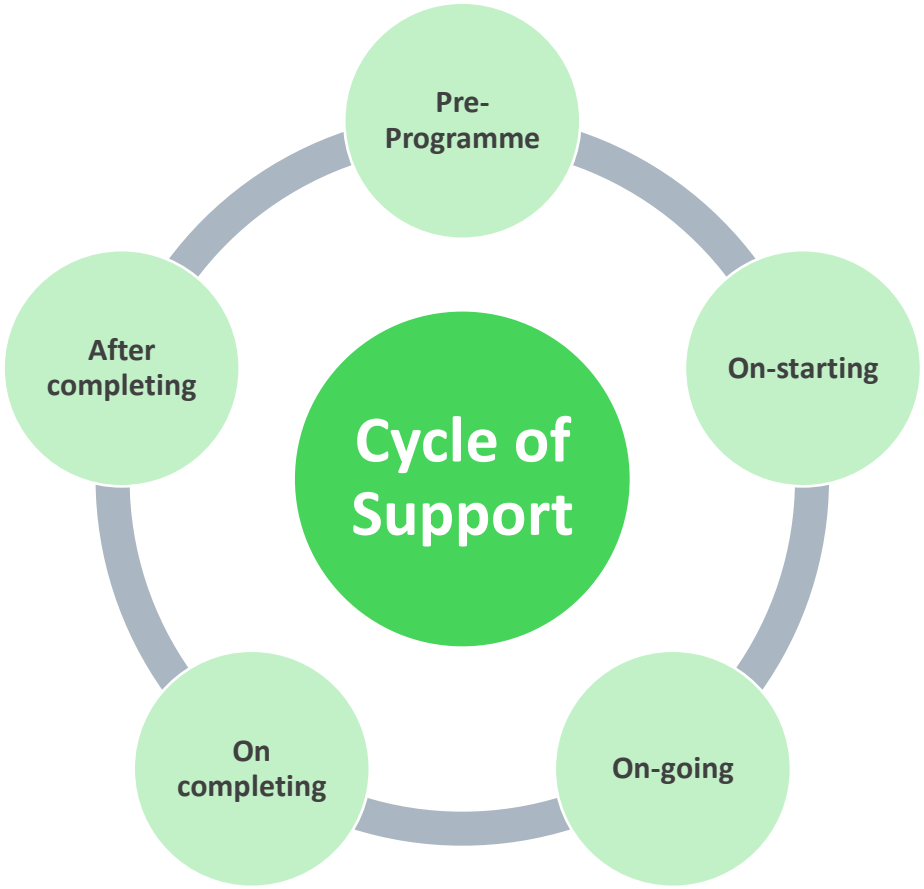
This module builds on the work completed in ***The Peer Support Relationship*** should you decide to deliver this next. It will also work as a stand-alone module. This module explores the application of peer knowledge and skills in a practical way to support the recovery journey of others. If you deliver this after ***Introducing Peer Support*** or ***The Peer Support Relationship*** you will recognise some duplication of knowledge, as well as additional material. This is inevitable in trying to meet flexible delivery needs.

SESSION 1: SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN EMPOWERING AND SAFE ENVIRONMENT

- Agree core behaviours that produce an empowering and safe learning environment.
- Define the key physical, learning resources and emotional components in preparing to facilitate P2P.
- Identify learning styles and plan to respond accordingly.
- Recognise the early warning signs that may indicate a trigger or setback for individuals and plan to respond in an empathic manner.
- Practice responding to a challenging situation.

GUIDANCE FOR EACH STAGE OF THE PROGRAMME

The diagram below provides an overview to the cycle of support that could be helpful, from pre-programme to post exit. This can be tailored to your own programme. The detail of what may be of value at each stage can be found in the Facilitator Handbook.



LEARNING STYLES

There is a mixture of feeling around the identification of learning styles. Some research suggests that it is helpful for learners to understand how they like to learn whilst other research claims there are no measurable advantages and that it can be limiting for learners to identify themselves in this way. In the area of peer support, facilitators can offer this information, as the start of a conversation, ensuring that people understand that it is a framework for consideration and not a judgement or constraint.

The VAK Learning Styles Model was developed by psychologists in the 1920s. It indicates the most common ways in which people learn and consists of three classifications, namely the **Visual**, **Auditory**, and **Kinaesthetic** learning styles. Everything we perceive with our eyes is visual, that which we can hear is auditory, and all our physical interactions belong to the kinaesthetic.

People may have a dominant learning preference, the important thing to remember for facilitators and learners is that it is a preference and does not mean that people cannot learn in other ways. For example, one person may be able to concentrate by talking about a certain topic or listening well (auditory), whereas others may excel more when taking direct action (kinaesthetic) or by looking at pictures and creating sketches and drawings (visual).

According to the VAK Learning Styles, one or two of these learning styles are dominant and help people properly absorb new information. However, this preferred style doesn't have to be the same in every situation.

Nonetheless, people use all three modalities to receive, process, and learn new information and experiences.

By asking people how they like to receive and process information, then as peer supporters it is possible to ensure that those preferences are covered at some point during learning sessions and more generally in the peer relationship. This extends now into how technology is used to send and receive information and how this is aligned to personal preferences. Equally there needs to be cognisance of neurodiversity and associated preferences and reasonable adjustments.

Visual

Visual learners learn better if the information is presented through images, mind maps, graphs, or diagrams. In addition, there are also two sub-classes of the visual: the linguistic and spatial.

In the visual-linguistic learning style, people have a strong preference to learn through written language. They like to read and take notes and write extracts. In this way, they often remember the lesson material immediately.

In the visual-spatial learning style, people prefer to receive information through demonstrations, videos, graphs, or other visual material. Compared to people with a visual-linguistic learning style, they have difficulty absorbing information through written language. They think in images and often visualise certain situations.

The following tips may be useful for integrating this learning style into a learning environment:

- Use graphs, illustrations, flipchart and handouts.
- In PowerPoint, include clear keywords and images that support the story.
- Invite participants to write down questions.

Auditory

People with an auditory learning style within the VAK Learning Styles tend to talk to themselves or move their lips when reading, according to the VAK Learning Styles. Auditory learners often find reading and writing tasks difficult and will have trouble concentrating on those.

They prefer talking to others and discussing the material. During presentations, people with an auditory learning style will mainly focus on what's being said.

The following tips may be useful for integrating this learning style into a learning environment:

- When introducing new information, provide a short explanation and conclude with a summary.
- Ask the participants powerful questions and use interactive methods.
- Make frequent use of brainstorming sessions and record discussions with a voice recorder.
- Create dialogue between listeners and participants and have them enter into conversations and listen to each other's points of view.

Kinaesthetic

Someone with a kinaesthetic learning style will prefer to interact with learning material through direct contact or motion. For kinaesthetic learners, the physical experience is most important.

They prefer a more practical approach. Like the visual learning style, the kinaesthetic style also has two sub-classes: one has more affinity for learning through motion, the other prefers learning through direct contact.

People with a kinaesthetic learning style lose their concentration when there is little or no external stimulation or movement. They often use high-light pens to keep busy and emphasise specific passages in texts. They also like to doodle or sketch while listening. By remaining active, they are better able to understand the learning material.

The following tips may be useful for integrating this learning style into a learning environment:

- Use game activities to keep people active.
- Use background music.
- In PowerPoint presentations or on flip charts, use coloured markers to emphasise important points.
- Regularly take breaks and have students 'stretch their legs'.
- Offer listeners or participants kneaded balls to squeeze while listening.
- Ensure interaction with listeners/ participants, allowing them to actively participate.

NEURODIVERSITY AND REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS

Neurodiversity is a basic scientific truth: people vary in the way that their brains take in, process, and respond to information. This diversity of information processing gives rise to a diversity of experiences in the world. The presence of neurodiversity in the human race explains why it is that we are not all the same and gives rise to the types of variation that are often labelled with a diagnosis – neurodiversity such as autism, ADHD and many others. As always labels are unhelpful as one person with ADHD is as unique as one person without ADHD.

The biggest group of people are neurotypical, many manage to function well in the systems that are typical in life, workplaces, and learning environments. Neurodivergent people may struggle in these systems because of the mismatch between the way their brains process information and the way the system implicitly expects them to operate.

It is important to recognise and adopt the language preferences of individuals talking about themselves. While we refer to non-neurotypical people as 'neurodivergent', many individuals might describe themselves as neurodiverse, or using other language altogether, and these preferences should always take precedent when referring to a specific person.

Instead of making assumptions and over complicating things a focus on strengths is healthier – and more aligned with the natural variability that is central to neurodiversity – when considered at a group level. Neurodiversity brings collective strengths to the table, drawn from variability in experience, helping to drive innovation and empathy. In a learning environment, a focus on collective strengths is apparent when the people learning celebrate their ability to get along together and their willingness to accommodate each other.

As always in this work an empathic inquiry works best:

- How do you like to learn, what works for you, and what gets in the way?
- If I could support you to play to your strengths in a learning environment, what would you need from me?
- What adjustments would make a big difference to you?

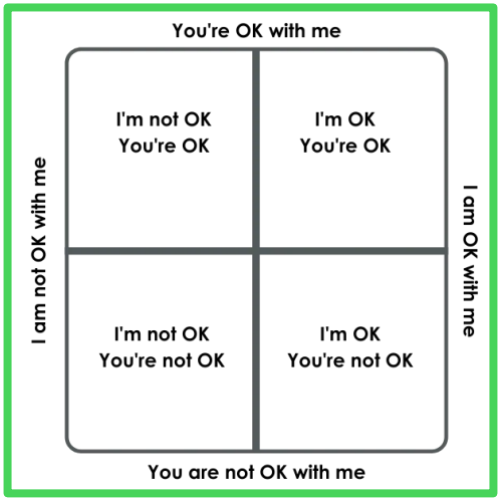
TRIGGERS AND SETBACKS

To be triggered is to experience an emotional reaction to something based on a previous negative experience.
Triggers can be broken down into two categories: ***internal and external***, both can strongly impact the individual.
External triggers can be people, scents, places, harmful substances or anything else that serves as a reminder for intense or distracting emotions. These triggers often result in strong emotions and actions which may result in a setback.
Internal triggers can be shame, guilt, anger, regret, anxiety and loss.
Any trigger is likely to leave the person feeling unsafe and misunderstood. This can lead to feeling judged, feeling attacked and feeling invalidated.

As peer supporters the role is to support the individual to minimise the impact of the trigger and engage with healthy coping strategies that they have previously found beneficial. Use of language and measured responses to anger and despair will be critical at these points.

WORDS MAKE WORLDS

The language that we use has a huge impact on how what we say impacts others. **The OK Corral**: this is a helpful reference for thinking about intent and impact in terms of language.



In a peer support relationship either one or both of the people may not be 'OK' as a result of factors external to the relationship. The following tables can help you to choose the best language to engage, and also alert you to the types of language you might hear.

As a Controlling Parent (CP)		As a Nurturing Parent (NP)	
Behaviours	**Words**	**Behaviours**	**Words**
Sets limits/boundaries	could	Gives advice	let me, what I found was…
Disciplines	should	Coaches/develops	how might you?
Keeps traditions	always	Protects	don't worry
Judges	never	Comforts	it will all be fine
Criticises	ought	Encourages	what do you need?
Makes rules	must	Nurtures	I can show you how to…

Positive Controlling Parent - communicates the message 'You're OK'. This is the boundary setting mode, offering constructive criticism, whilst being caring but firm.
Negative Controlling Parent - communicates a 'You're not OK' message and is detrimental.

Positive Nurturing Parent - communicates the message 'You're OK'. When in this mode the person is caring and enabling.
Negative Nurturing Parent - communicates a 'You're not OK' message. When in this mode the person will often do things for others, which they can do for themselves. When in this mode the person is engulfing and overprotective.

As an Adapted Child (AC)		As a Natural Child (NC)	
Behaviours	**Words**	**Behaviours**	**Words**
Obedient	No chance/I'll try	Asks questions	I'm wondering?
Conditioned/conventional responses	Please/thank you	Natural/free	I'm curious?
Insecure	Sorry/I don't care!	Creative/Innovative	What about?
Anxious/scared	I can't do that/I won't do that	Experimental	Try this
Sullen/rebellious	I'm only a…	Joyful	It's possible
	I was told xxx	Lacks boundaries	Why?
		Selfish	I want to….

Positive Adapted Child - communicates an 'I'm OK' message. From this mode we learn the rules to help us live with others.
Negative Adapted Child - communicates an 'I'm not OK' message. When in this mode the person over-adapts to others and tends to experience such emotions as depression, unrealistic fear, and anxiety.

Positive Natural Child - communicates an 'I'm OK' message. This is the creative, fun loving, curious and energetic mode.
Negative Natural Child – communicates an 'You're not OK' message. In this mode the person has no restrictions or boundaries.

As an Adult	
Behaviours	**Words**
Asking questions to gather data/information	When/where/what
Analytical	Who/why
Rational and logical	This feels like/ sounds like/ is connected to
Non-judgemental	I can understand how you feel, my role is to xxx
Unemotional	Let's look at what's working
Detached	How might you move things forward?

Adult Accounting mode - communicates 'We're OK' messages.

The Adult can assess reality in the here and now. It's the Assertive place 'off the emotional seesaw' of the Parent/Child transactions. In Adult mode it is possible to choose which of the other effective modes to go into, dependent on the situation. When stable in this mode we are then able to respond appropriately, rather than flipping into archaic or historic ways of being, thinking and behaving which could be inappropriate and unhelpful.

However, the Adult can also be viewed as cold and detached and lacking emotional intelligence that is so critical in relationships and organisational life.

The results when you consider this are powerful and all sit in the I'm OK/ You are OK quadrant:

- Inclusiveness: the ability to use your presence in a non-verbal way to say; 'we are all in this together' (Nurturing Parent and Adult).
- Human-Centred-Listening: listen for the whole, without interrupting, suspending personal feelings (Nurturing Parent and Adult).
- Speaking-Up: the ability to speak one's truth with clarity and precision (Adult) - without aggression (Controlling Parent) or collapse (Adapted Child).

SETBACKS AS PART OF THE RECOVERY PROCESS

Setbacks are obstacles or challenges that hinder progress or cause a temporary regression in recovery. These setbacks can come in various forms, such as personal triggers, external stressors, or unforeseen life events. Experiencing setbacks can lead to a range of emotions, including frustration, disappointment, sadness, and even hopelessness. It's crucial to acknowledge and validate these emotions while actively seeking strategies and supporting others to overcome them.

THE ROLE OF PEER SUPPORT

Cultivating self-compassion
Self-compassion is the foundation for resilience. Treat people with kindness, understanding, and patience during setbacks. Practice and encourage positive self-talk, challenge self-critical thoughts, and remind people that setbacks are temporary detours, not permanent roadblocks.

Seeking support
Encourage people to reach out to their support network during challenging times. This could include trusted friends, family members, or professionals like therapists or counsellors, as appropriate. Sharing your journey and how you overcame setbacks can provide perspective, guidance, and reassurance.

Reflecting on progress
Take time to reflect with people on how far they have come on their mental health journey. Celebrate their accomplishments and remind them of the progress made. This reflection can reignite motivation and instil confidence in the ability to overcome setbacks.

Developing coping mechanisms
Identify healthy coping mechanisms that work. Encourage engagement in activities that bring joy, relaxation, or a sense of fulfilment. This could include exercise, mindfulness practices, journaling, art, or connecting with nature. Finding healthy outlets can help navigate setbacks more effectively.

Setting realistic goals
During challenging times, it's essential to reassess and adjust goals. Set realistic expectations that align with current circumstances. Break larger goals into smaller, achievable steps, providing a sense of accomplishment along the way.

Moving Forward: Maintaining Progress

Learning from setbacks

Setbacks offer valuable opportunities for growth and self-reflection. Take the time to analyse what led to the setback and identify any patterns or triggers. Use this knowledge to empower people to develop strategies for preventing future setbacks and strengthening resilience.

Practicing self-care

Support people to prioritise self-care as an integral part of maintaining progress. This includes getting enough sleep, nourishing the body with healthy food, and engaging in activities that promote relaxation and rejuvenation. Self-care enhances overall well-being and supports the recovery journey.

Building a support system

Encourage people to surround themselves with individuals who uplift and inspire them. Develop a relationship with people where you understand their challenges and provide appropriate support. Reinforce that a strong support system can offer encouragement and accountability, making it easier to navigate setbacks.

Setbacks are a natural part of the recovery journey, but they don't have to derail progress. By embracing resilience, seeking support, and implementing effective strategies, people can bounce back from setbacks and continue moving forward. Remember, setbacks are opportunities for growth and learning.

SESSION 2: EXPLORE THE USE OF POWERFUL QUESTIONS TO SUPPORT LEARNING

- Agree core behaviours that produce an empowering and safe learning environment.
- Explore the levels of listening and inquiry and how this supports an equitable learning environment.
- Encourage participation through the use of powerful questions and listening.
- Practice preparing and using powerful questions.

LEVELS OF LISTENING AND INQUIRY

Levels of listening and inquiry

level	listening	inquiry
1 **Downloading** *(About self)* ***Closed Mind, Heart and Will***	*Listening from habits; filtered by what you already know, reaffirming your own thinking*	*Asking from a place of judgement; you already know the 'right' answer*
BLOCKING POWERFUL CONVERSATIONS: VOICES OF JUDGEMENT, CYNICISM AND FEAR		
2 **Factual** *(About self)* ***Open Mind***	*Listening for learning; noticing new facts, new information*	*Asking from a place of clarification; you want to clarify your understanding of the facts*
3 **Empathic** *(About other)* ***Open Mind and Heart***	*Listening from the place the other person is speaking from; experiencing and sensing an emotional connection*	*Asking from the place the other person is speaking from; encouraging deeper thinking and reflection, through inquiry into their story*
4 **Generative** *(About the whole)* ***Open Mind, Heart and Will***	*Listening together to connect to the emerging future; listening to possibilities and ideas, uncertainties and hopes for the wider system*	*Asking to connect to the emerging future; inquiring about possibilities and ideas, about living with the uncertainties and hopes for the wider system*

The model on the left shows the levels of listening and inquiry and the subsequent impact. This is a strengths-based model.

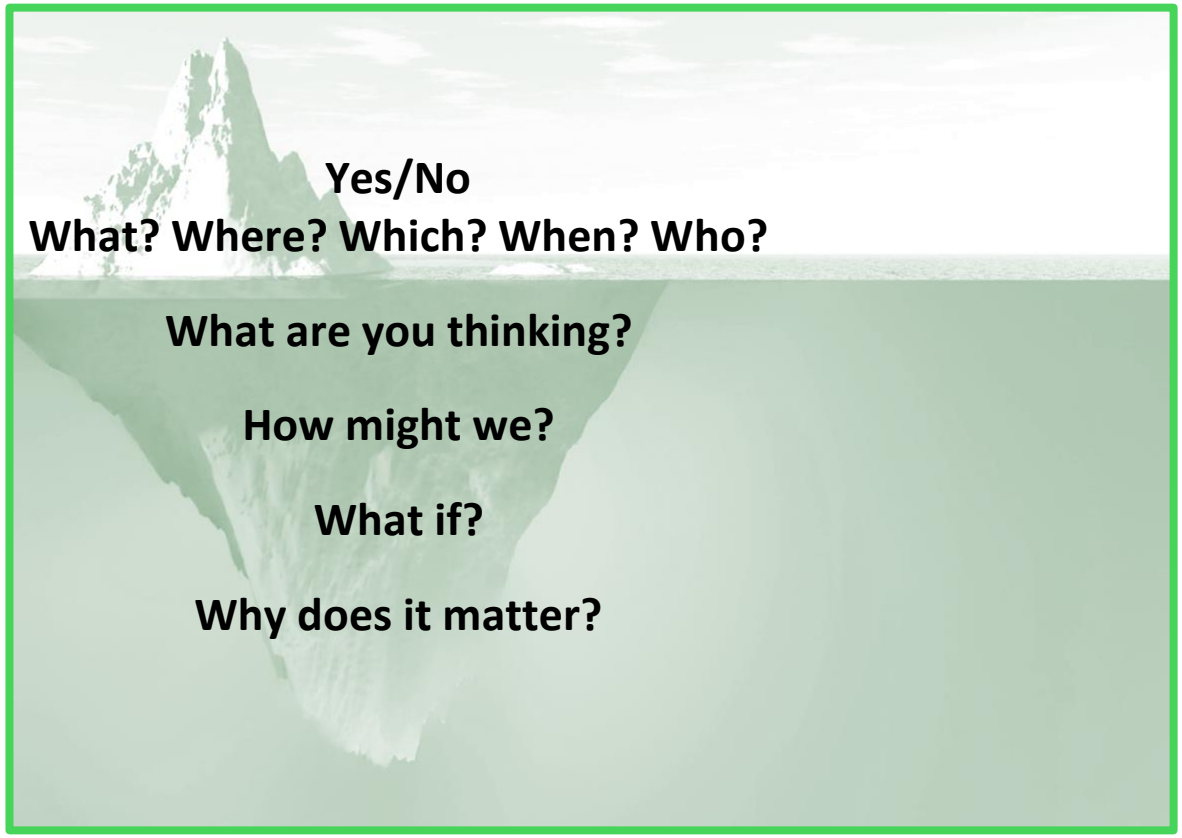
Whilst all the levels have their value, levels 2,3 and 4 dig below the surface and reveal new information and emotion.

Within a peer support relationship level 2 is useful for gathering the facts about people that you are intending to support. This could be particularly helpful when establishing boundaries.

Level 3 is useful to listen and inquire from when developing the peer relationship, it demonstrates empathy and encourages reflection.

Level 4 is valuable in supporting others to connect to their future self, the possibilities and potential.

POWERFUL QUESTIONS AND LISTENING



To get deep thinking below the horizon we need to ask the questions that are powerful. Thinking about which questions we want to ask in advance and planning the space for responses is at the heart of this way of inquiring.

The scope of the question is the membrane or the boundary within which the responses can be made. If the question is about eliciting stories of strengths, then that needs to be explicit in the question. All roads lead back to the question because you get what you ask about.

ASSUMPTIONS

All questions hold assumptions and the language that we use has a huge impact. The difference with Powerful Questions is that they are designed explicitly with a positive assumption. They assume there is a positive story to be shared, an idea to be explored or a decision that can be agreed. So "Why does it matter to you?" assumes that it does matter, "What if you could turn this situation around?" assumes that you can and "What would you do now if you had no fear?" assumes that you have ideas that could be valuable.

USING POWERFUL QUESTIONS

Powerful Questions are helpful in almost any situation. We encourage you to try them anywhere and everywhere. If you are faced with silence and a puzzled expression, then you are on the way. You will need to manage silence, wait with interest, and listen with appreciation and ease. On no account interrupt or disagree. Just listen and learn and then ask, "What more do you think or feel or want to say?"

Examples of Powerful Questions for peer support relationships are available in The Facilitator Handbook, meantime here's a taster around strengths.

- Tell me about what you consider to be your top 3 strengths?
- When you think about playing to your strengths, what happens next?
- Think about something you want to improve; how could you use your strengths to achieve your goal?
- How can I support you to use your strengths more intentionally in your role as a peer supporter?
- In what situations do you find it easy to step into your strengths and make a difference?
- What's feeling a bit stuck for you in terms of your contribution and how could you use your strengths to shift that?
- If you knew you would be supported, what would you say about where you would like to apply your strengths moving forward?

SESSION 3: DEFINE THE ROLE OF FEEDBACK AND APPRECIATION IN PEER SUPPORT

- Agree core behaviours that produce an empowering and safe learning environment.
- Explore the benefits of giving and receiving constructive feedback to peer support and the recovery journey.
- Define a format for giving and receiving feedback using a whole person approach.
- Practice giving and receiving feedback.

CONSTRUCTIVE FEEDBACK

Feedback is an opportunity to see what may not be currently seen. It's a small conversation where a lot can happen and change. Feedback done well, allows growth, empowerment, positive goal setting and a potential to be a better version of ourselves. Ideally feedback is face-to-face and from one person to another, not on behalf of an absent third party. Feedback can be offered and requested and either way it widens our perspective of impact and potential. Feedback conversations enable sharing of proud moments, obstacles, support required and how to engage more intentionally with strengths.

Culturally we may be predisposed to feedback being negative, this will get in the way of how feedback is asked for and offered. For it to work well for everyone, feedback needs to come from a place of optimism and hope for the future, building on strengths. The best way to begin a feedback conversation is to ask the person what they think, how they think they are doing, the progress they think they are making. Asking to understand first and then be understood, creating a conversation of accountability and growth.

In mental health, feedback is the practice of offering or receiving insights, observations, or evaluations about an individual's behaviour, emotions, or overall mental wellbeing. It is aimed at fostering growth and improvement.

Feedback boosts self-awareness

Feedback offers a path to self-discovery. It provides individuals with a mirror to their actions, behaviours, and tendencies. By receiving feedback, we can gain insights into our less helpful behaviours and better understand our emotional triggers and reactions.

Feedback enhances relationships

Feedback, when given constructively and received openly, helps build trust and understanding in relationships. It creates an environment where ideas can be exchanged freely, leading to stronger, healthier personal and professional relationships.

Feedback encourages personal and professional growth

Feedback provides insights into areas of strength and improvement. By receiving constructive feedback, individuals can identify their growth areas, leading to better performance and personal development.

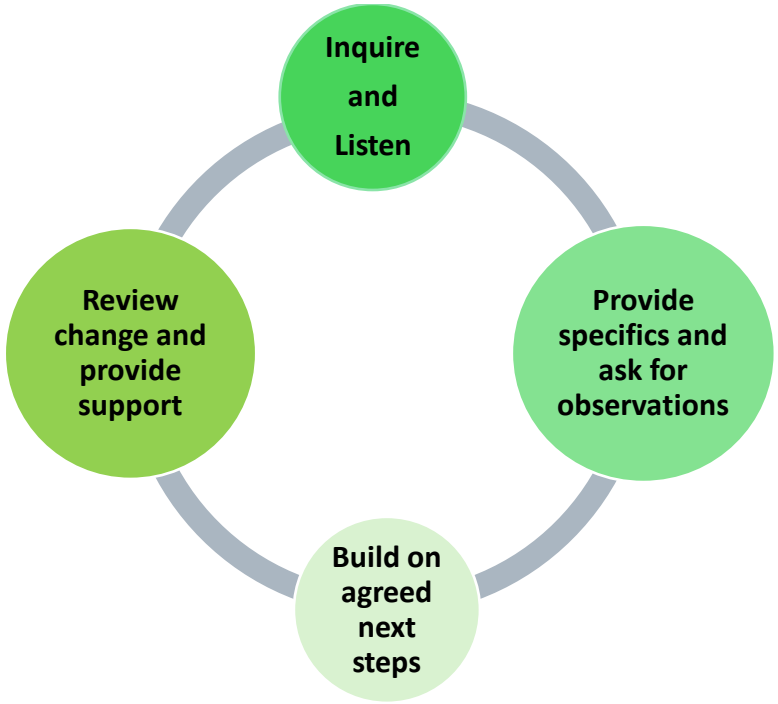
Feedback reduces anxiety and uncertainty

Feedback communication skill helps minimize doubt and uncertainty. Knowing one's proficiency, what's expected, and areas to improve can alleviate anxiety and boost confidence, contributing to better mental health.

Feedback facilitates conflict resolution

Feedback can play a crucial role in resolving conflicts. By creating a platform for open communication, it allows for issues to be addressed promptly and constructively, preventing misunderstandings and promoting harmony.

A FEEDBACK MODEL TO PLAN CONVERSATIONS



The way to ask for and to offer information on the impact of another's behaviour in a specific situation.

The provision of information on what has worked or not, backed up by specific, factual examples.

The process by which we can learn and help others to learn, by surfacing ideas about how we can make things better by building on strengths or changing things that haven't worked.

NOT personal comment about things that can't be changed.

SESSION 4: SHARE YOUR PERSONAL RECOVERY STORY AND RECEIVE FEEDBACK ON IMPACT

- Agree core behaviours that produce an empowering and safe learning environment.
- Create your personal recovery story using the guidelines provided.
- Sense check that your personal recovery story has the potential to inspire others.
- Share your personal recovery story with a view to inspire others.
- Experience listening to a personal recovery story and offer encouragement on impact.
- Review and plan to develop the personal recovery story based on feedback.

RECOVERY STORY

USING LIVED EXPERIENCE TO INSPIRE AND EMPOWER OTHERS

Valuing lived experience is an important principle of recovery approaches. It is unique in that it asks participants to apply their lived experience of mental health and recovery in support of others. This means using the experience of mental health problems as part of the solution. This has a role to play in promoting and supporting recovery. This can promote hope as well as strengthen a sense of purpose and a positive identity for people affected by mental health issues.

Peer support is a way of offering help and support on a more equal footing. It's about people finding a way forward together, where people are recognised as experts in their own experience. Good peer support also works in a way that acknowledges that both parties can learn things from each other and support each other's recovery journey. They are not based on trying to fix people or one person being the professional expert, this is different from the expert-patient dynamic.

In the peer support relationship, using and drawing on your personal recovery experiences is a powerful tool in communicating hope and creating connections with others. Sharing your recovery experiences provides others with the opportunity to learn, about how role modelling can communicate possibility and potential.

In the workbook Preparing for Peer2Peer participants are invited to complete their recovery story. See the detail In the Workbook in the Preparing for P2P Tab in the toolbox.