

Peer Support Opportunities & Guidelines (Caused Accidental Death or Injury)

"I just want to talk to someone who's had the same experience, someone who gets it."

"Unless you've gone through something similar, it's really hard to understand what it's like."

Peer support is foundational to Accidental Impacts. When we are in the grip of trauma and moral injury, it can be helpful to talk with someone who has been through a similar experience and is further along on the path to healing. That is why we bring CADIs together online for fellowship meetings and other events. In addition, some participants have initiated informal contact with other CADIs in between these events.

We are now extending this tradition to make it easier for CADIs who want to seek support from peers on an individual, one-on-one basis.

Peer supporters are CADIs who, through their own lived experience, have learned valuable lessons about trauma, coping, and growth, which they are willing to share from the standpoint of their own experience, strength, and hope. The relationship between peers gives both parties the opportunity to reflect on their experience, learn, and grow.

These relationships are *not* a substitute for professional behavioral health treatment, counseling, or therapy, and peer supporters do *not* take on responsibility for the wellbeing of peers. We recommend that all CADIs obtain professional psychotherapy.

Peer support relationships are not supervised or overseen by Accidental Impacts. It is the responsibility of both peers, together, to forge a relationship that is helpful, balanced, and supportive.

If you are interested in finding a peer supporter, please review our suggested guidelines and then contact accidentalimpacts@gmail.com. We can send you list of the other CADIs who have signified their willingness to be peer supporters. You can either call someone from the list, or simply reach out to a peer you have met through the fellowship meetings or other events. Remember, while many CADIs have found that supporting and being supported by peers can be very rewarding, it's up to you to create and regulate your own peer support relationships.

If you are interested in serving as a peer supporter, please review our suggested guidelines and then contact accidentalimpacts@gmail.com.

Accidental Impacts
Suggested Guidelines for Peer Support

- ❖ Peer support is **not**:
 - Psychotherapy or counseling;
 - Instructing, directing, giving advice, or trying to change the other person in any way
 - “Fixing,” caretaking, rescuing, protecting, or taking responsibility for the peer’s wellbeing or healing
 - Assuming you know what someone else feels or thinks; assuming you know what they should do
- ❖ Peer support **is**:
 - “A system of giving and receiving help in relationship with others with shared experience, based on values of respect, shared responsibility, and mutual agreement of what is helpful” (Shery Mead, founder, International Peer Support)
 - “People with shared experiences come together to learn and grow” (SAMHSA)
 - Being curious about the other’s reality: Seeking to understand the peer’s experiences and the meaning he or she makes from those experiences
- ❖ Peer support is **non-judgmental**:
 - Be honest and direct, but open to other views
 - Accept the peer’s thoughts, decisions, choices, beliefs, and feelings as their own, even if you disagree. (But do feel free to share your own thoughts, beliefs, feelings from the standpoint of “I have a different perception/experience/belief about that, would you like to hear it?”)
 - Never criticize, condemn, or complain. This bears repeating:
 - Never criticize, condemn, or complain, even indirectly
 - Accept the right of the peer not to share, not to disclose
 - Stay aware of your own biases; respect diversity
- ❖ Peer support is **respectful**:
 - Maintain confidentiality
 - Keep your word; be reliable & trustworthy
 - Focus on strengths over weaknesses
 - Trust in your peer’s ability to cope, move toward health, and grow
 - Do not offer diagnoses or prescriptive advice; offer your own experience
 - Try to speak from the “I” position; avoid “you should,” “you ought to,” or “you need to”

- ❖ Peer support is ***reciprocal & mutual***:
 - Both peers learn from one another
 - Both share responsibility for the relationship
 - Both benefit
- ❖ Peer support is ***compassionate and empathic***:
 - You are a witness to suffering, but you cannot eliminate suffering
 - Recognize the feelings and thoughts that cause distress and offer hope
- ❖ Peer support is ***empowering***:
 - Trust in your peer's resilience and innate abilities to heal
 - Invite the peer to express his or her needs and goals for the relationship
 - Support the peer's efforts to re-gain a sense of personal agency

Crisis Intervention

If your partner peer is suicidal, or you suspect he or she might be, the single most important step you can take is to urge them to ***immediately*** seek professional help. In addition:

- Encourage the peer to call the Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1800 273-TALK (8255) in the US or in the UK call the Samaritans at 116 123.
- If you know where your peer lives, you can call the local police jurisdiction and ask for help (if the person is in immediate danger)
- You or your peer can contact the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) at 1800 662-HELP (4357).
- Please review this on-line article, "What to do when a friend is suicidal" at <https://www.verywellmind.com/what-to-do-when-a-friend-is-suicidal-1065472>