



Accommodating a travelling life

WEEKLY DIGEST N°9

ATL Trainer curriculum
Peer relationship

This Unit 9 will present the role of Peer supporters, and the many advantages that come from having similar experiences to share with people approaching social services. Recovery can be tough and Peer supporters can foster this process by building a positive relationship with their client. Having common backgrounds implies not only understanding the struggles one has to go through during the recovery process, but also inspiring hope for those who are just beginning their journey towards a more stable and socially integrated life. Acting as role-models, peer supporters can represent an arrival point, while also providing support to achieve recovery.

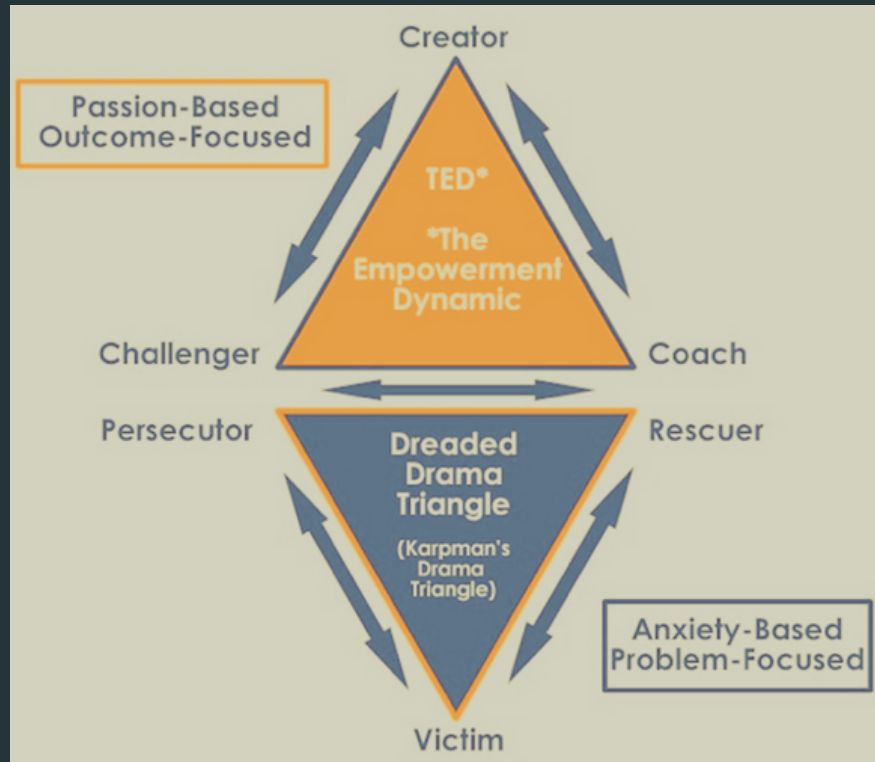


In the first stages of the relationship, peer supporters can act as icebreakers and, by actively listening to the requests and life narrative of their clients, they can make them feel understood, facilitating their engagement and building a sense of trust towards the social services' staff. By sharing their own story, peer supporters can provide a helpful reference to those who might feel lost or overwhelmed by the number of challenges they'll have to endure along their way to recovery. Building a positive relationship is also useful for the social services professionals who can benefit from the information gathered by peer supporters to better calibrate the plan of intervention.





There is much value in having a common experience to share in a friendly way with the clients, but we must always keep in mind that we are professionals! Being a professional is about empowering the people in need and not about solving their problems on our account, the latter mechanism is part of what is called a “helper type relationship”, which can be detrimental to the recovery process because it takes the responsibility away from the client, reducing their self-efficacy and the control they have over their lives. Peer supporters should work towards building an “empowering peer relationship”, which seeks to equip their clients with the necessary tools for recovery. This approach will allow the clients to overcome their fears and gain confidence in their ability to face change and embrace a different way of dealing with their problems.



Learn more:

[The story of Jessica, who became a peer mentor](#)

[Peer Support, a tool for recovery in Homelessness Services](#)

Learning how to build an effective empowering relationship is not easy and takes time. To better navigate through all the steps and changes involved in this process, this chapter will present a few theoretical references you should always go back to when you're in doubt. The Drama Triangle is a useful tool to better read dysfunctional situations and understand who are the actors that are part of it. By working on the parts involved, we can help transform it into the Empowerment Triangle which represents its positive equivalent.

Moreover, building relationships with clients may naturally lead to becoming emotionally involved in their life. However, working with them implies the need to be focused and capable of evaluating objectively at each point in the course of their recovery. Thus, this chapter will also discuss boundaries and the importance of being friendly while always staying professional.