

7

SESSION

**Empowering peer
relationships**



7.1 Introduction

Peer support agents work basically with relationships. It is important to know the aspects and the techniques useful to build and maintain a healthy relationship. At the same time a peer support agent should know which risks are in a professional relationship, how to manage the power in the relationship and the importance of setting a good system of boundaries to protect his well-being.

7.2 Learning outcomes

- Understand and point out benefits of relationships
- Familiarize with the techniques to build trust and relationships
- Define and clarify the characteristics of Peer Relationships
- Familiarize with the power relations using the Drama Triangle scheme
- Understand the importance to set clear boundaries
- Define and clarify characteristics wanted and not wanted in a peer relationship.
- Learn how to maintain our peer relationships

7.3 Training session plan

DURATION

3,5 h

MATERIALS

- ATL Trainer Curriculum
- JCS Manual (it includes worksheets, case scenarios and self-assessment exercises)
- Worksheets and case scenario
- Stationery (paper in different sizes, cardboard, pens, pencils, markers, sticky notes, etc.)
- Flipchart/whiteboard
- Power Point presentations of the contents (optional)
- Computer (optional)
- Projector/TV (optional)

CONCEPTUAL CONTENTS

- ATL Trainer Curriculum, Unit 9, Peer relationships
- JCS Manual, Unit 7, Empowering peer relationships

NOTES/OBSERVATIONS

The videos proposed to carry out some of the activities are in English, but similar ones can be found in other languages. A case scenario is proposed as an alternative activity (activity 6) in case not all video-related activities are easily adaptable to the local context.

INTRODUCTION

Welcome s and propose an ice breaker exercise based on relationship to highlight how difficult is to know someone:

2 TRUTHS & A LIE

Each has a turn to share 3 facts about themselves, 2 of which are true and 1 of which is a lie. The rest of the group has to guess which fact is in fact not a fact.

DURATION OF THE INTRODUCTION

10 min



ACTIVITY 1	Introduction, Building Trust and Relationship
DURATION	25 min
WORKSHEET REFERENCE	JCS Manual, Unit 7, Worksheet 1 “Strategies to build a meaningful relationship”
PROCEDURE	<p>Introduce to the group what you are going to talk about today. Why are peer relationships so important? Which are the basic elements to build a positive peer relationship?</p> <p>Once we understand what it means to build a healthy relationship, we must then learn how we can develop peer relationships. Building a relationship is something you can do by using different strategies. Some are positive strategies, and others are negative strategies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do I mean when I say I want to give you a ‘strategy’? • Does anyone know what a strategy is? <p>(Wait for answers).</p> <p>Explain that a strategy is a method that you use to achieve a goal. It can take time and practice to develop, e.g. In soccer, if you want to improve your kick you need to practice shooting at the net every day. The more and more you go to the field and practice this skill, the better you will get. Eventually you will get much better at playing soccer and at scoring goals!</p> <p>Explain that the group will learn a variety of strategies that can help us develop positive peer relationships, and in particular to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • contact peers more easily • have appropriate conversations and interact in a positive way with the peers <p>Explain that there are also some attitudes to avoid when trying to form positive peer relationships.</p> <p>Underline that it takes practice to learn how to use the strategies more effectively and to build positive peer relationships.</p> <p>Show the video to the classroom</p> <p>How to Build Trust and Relationships</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Describe the main points (strategies) mentioned in the video: 2. Show a genuine interest in the others rather than trying to get people interested in you 3. Being a great conversationalist is about being a good listener 3)Remember the name of the person and the information about him you collected in the previous meetings

PROCEDURE	<p>4. Do not be critical, do not judge but propose your different point of view through questions. Show your criticism in a correct way</p> <p>5. Respect other people’s points of view and perspective</p> <p>Ask the student to write down their own strategy to build a relationship in the Worksheet 1.</p> <p>Conclude the activity with a plenary discussion.</p>
------------------	---

ACTIVITY 2	Peer relationship
DURATION	40 min
WORKSHEET REFERENCE	JCS Manual, Unit 7, Worksheet 2 “Characteristics of a peer support agent”
PROCEDURE	<p>Learn what characteristics are and are not wanted in a peer relationship. Understand how you can bring unique qualities to a peer relationship as well.</p> <p>Now that we understand the importance of peer relationships and some of the positive characteristics of these relationships, we are going to complete an activity.</p> <p>Show the video:</p> <p><i>Peer recovery specialist: Careers in Mental Health</i></p> <p>On the worksheet provided, participants should work independently to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write down characteristics that they can bring to a peer relationship. This means that they should write down what characteristics they possess that a peer would be interested in • Write down characteristics they would want in a peer when looking to form a relationship • Write down characteristics that they DO NOT want a peer to possess when looking to form a peer relationship <p>Participants may then turn to a partner and discuss their answers finding a synthesis. At the end one for the couple presents in a plenary session the results of their job.</p>



ACTIVITY 3	Drama Triangle vs Presence
DURATION	30 min
HANDOUT	JCS Manual, Unit 7, Handout 1 “Drama Triangle”
PROCEDURE	<p>Show the video</p> <p><u>Understanding the Drama Triangle vs. Presence</u></p> <p>Understanding the Drama Triangle vs. Presence (more information in the ATL Trainer Curriculum, Unit 9. Peer relationship).</p> <p>Ask the s if they knew the drama triangle and invite them to bring experiences of their life in which they observed the Drama Triangle roles reproduce.</p> <p>You can stimulate the discussion using the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Have you heard about the drama triangle before? -Did you experience this dynamic in your recovery process? -Some of you would like to describe a situation in which he/she was a victim? -Have you ever experienced a situation in which you acted as a persecutor/villain? Can you describe the situation? -Do you think a peer supporter should be a hero? Why?
ACTIVITY 4	Boundaries
DURATION	30 min
WORKSHEET REFERENCE	JCS Manual, Unit 7, Worksheet 3 “Boundary exploration”

PROCEDURE

This activity is designed to help reflect about people whom they may struggle to set healthy boundaries with and then identify strategies for creating healthier boundaries with these individuals.

Define “healthy boundaries” and their importance.

Introduce the students to the concept of boundaries and the importance of setting boundaries in our relationships. Personal boundaries are the physical, emotional, and mental limits we establish between ourselves and other people. Healthy boundaries allow us to maintain our own identity and respect the identity of others. Clear and consistent boundaries are critical to create a healthy relationship.

Lack of boundaries will pull you away from being your best. Personal Boundaries are designed to protect and honor important parts of our lives.

Discuss with the group the following strategies for identifying personal boundaries:

A. Identify your limits – Clarifying what your emotional, mental, physical, spiritual limits are. Do this by paying attention to yourself and noticing what you can tolerate and accept as well as what makes you feel uncomfortable and stressed.

B. Pay attention to your feelings – Notice the three key feelings that are often cues that you need to set boundaries: 1) discomfort; 2) resentment; 3) guilt. If a particular situation, person, or area of your life is leading you to feel uncomfortable, resentful, or guilty, these are important cues that boundaries may need to be set or re-assessed.

C. Give yourself permission to set boundaries – when you fear how a person will respond if you set or enforce boundaries, reaffirm to yourself that you do indeed have this right.

D. Consider your environment – your environment can either support your setting boundaries or present obstacles to boundary setting.



<p>PROCEDURE</p>	<p>Using the strategies listed above as a starting place, invite the s to complete the “Boundary Exploration” activity, Worksheet 3. Based on their experiences in relationship with a peer, a co-worker or an acquaintance.</p> <p>At the end of the exercise, you can use the key points below to stimulate the discussion in a plenary session.</p> <p>Key Points</p> <p>What other cues let you know if you need to set or reinforce your boundaries? (E.g. you think about work even when you are home, you relate to peers you’re working with outside of work, the relationship with a peer makes you suffer emotionally, you can’t say no to a peer, etc.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is this something you would be willing to try? • Are there individuals that are more difficult to set boundaries with? Why? • Does this activity feel like it could help create a positive work environment
<p>ACTIVITY 5</p>	<p>Maintaining healthy relationships</p>
<p>DURATION</p>	<p>30 min</p>
<p>WORKSHEET REFERENCE</p>	<p>JCS Manual, Unit 7, Worksheet 4 “Healthy Relationships” JCS Manual, Unit 7, Worksheet 5 “Maintaining healthy relationships”</p>

PROCEDURE

Now we will work on some key points to maintain healthy relationships.

PART 1

Give to the class a list of the following key points (Worksheet 4) and ask them to reflect upon:

- their meaning
- how they can serve to improve and/or maintain a healthy relationship

Moderate a discussion about the significance of each key point.

6. Accept responsibility.

(Forget about 50-50. Take full responsibility for your relationships. Relationships require regular attention and adjustment.) Note: Description only for the trainer

7. Be reliable.

(Regardless of the type of relationship, reliability is a key component. It's imperative that you can be trusted and relied upon. The importance of trust and reliability can't be overstated.) only for the trainer

8. Forgive easily.

(Everyone makes mistakes and everyone has bad days. Every person you know will hurt your feelings or let you down at some point. But it's okay, since you'll sometimes do the same.) only for the trainer

9. Listen.

(Communication is key, and quality communication can't take place without giving the other person your full attention. Turn off the television and close your laptop. Give others in your relationships the time they need to communicate with you.) only for the trainer

10. Communicate your needs.

(Let others know what you need and expect from them. Most disagreements in all types of relationships are the result of someone's expectations being violated. It's not weak to speak up and make your needs known. It's assertive.) *only for the trainer*



ACTIVITY 6	Trust and boundaries a practical exercise
DURATION	30 min
WORKSHEET REFERENCE	N/A
PROCEDURE	<p>This is a strong exercise to support s in expressing their boundaries and equally, to feel trust in others.</p> <p>Ask two people – preferably who do not know each other – to pair. They should stand 10–15 feet apart, facing each other.</p> <p>Explain that one person is going to walk, one will stand still, and that the person who is standing is learning what feels okay to them in terms of physical space.</p> <p>Explain to the standing person that they can use three motions that are signals: first, both hands at your sides and up (stop!) – means the walker has to stop, even if they have not started walking; second, arms halfway down, palms out – they can come very slowly; and third, palms open, arms down – you can come towards me.</p> <p>Both partners have to maintain eye contact the whole time.</p> <p>Ask the other person to walk towards their partner very slowly.</p> <p>Ask the standing person to feel in their bodies the person coming towards them, and to use the signals that feel right to either stop them or to encourage them to come closer</p> <p>Some people may never be able to put their arms down – that is fine, the walker needs to know that. The pair can repeat the exercise a few times to gauge this within themselves. They do not have to use all of those movements; they can mix them up.</p> <p>The partners then switch roles.</p> <p>Once the group has observed the exercise, ask everyone to pair up and to practice the exercise with their partners, making sure that everyone has a chance to play both roles.</p> <p>After the exercise, the trainer can give an opportunity to reflect on how it felt for them, in both roles. It should have given an opportunity to feel and clearly communicate their own boundaries, and to also understand their own power to protect themselves, to receive support and experience trust.</p>

ACTIVITY 7	Case scenario analysis
DURATION	30-40 min
WORKSHEET REFERENCE	Story of Sophie
PROCEDURE	Read the case scenario to the group or ask one of the participants to read it aloud. Ask participants to respond collectively to the questions or do it in small groups. In this case, then, ask each group to share their conclusions.

CLOSURE OF THE SESSION

At the end of the session, ask reflection questions, such as: “How do you think today’s session brings you closer to becoming a peer supporter? Then invite participants to note what caught their attention, what they have learned and what they want to keep as a point of reference from today’s session, as well as to ask any related questions.

7.4 Bibliography / Webliography

- Litmos Heroes (2014, Decemeber 12) [How to Build Trust and Relationships](#) [video]
- Oshmp, (2018, June 15) [Peer Recovery Specialist](#) [video]
- Andrew Mills, TEDxEdenHighSchool, (2017, April 13) [The Power of Relationships](#) [video]
- The Conscious Leadership Group, (2015, July 16) [Understanding the Drama Triangle vs. Presence](#) [video]



HANDOUT

Drama Triangle

To describe dysfunctional social interactions, a transactional analyst Stephen Karpman has created a model called “Drama Triangle” where he distinguished three different roles: Victim, Rescuer and Persecutor. Knowing this scheme can help you identify in which direction your or your collaborator’s and client’s roles are going, and adapt your actions to be more effective.

Victim: victims frequently feel betrayed, imprisoned, powerless, and despairing. They believe they are at the mercy of the universe. They refuse to accept responsibility for their unfavourable circumstances and believe they lack the capacity to change their condition. Victims believe they are helpless or inept, and they place responsibility on the persecutors (can be other people or a particular situation). They are continuously looking for Rescuers to help them solve their problems. If the Victims remain in their ‘dejected’ condition, they will be unable to make decisions, solve issues, change their present status, or feel any sense of satisfaction or accomplishment.

Rescuer: always interceding for the sake of the Victims and attempting to spare them from harm. They feel blameworthy for standing by while individuals drown. Rescuers have the great purpose of saving others and consider it essential. They come up short figuring it out that by providing short-term fixes to Victims, they keep them subordinate and disregard their real needs. This may be the reason why rescuers often feel tired, overburdened and unable to respond adequately as they are always engaged in the emergency of rescuing victims.

Persecutors: they are severe, and forceful, and establish rules and limits. They tend to believe that they must win at any cost. Without offering proper direction, support, or a solution to the situation, persecutors blame the victims and condemn the behavior of rescuers. They are critical and adept at spotting flaws, and they maintain order and rigidity in their management. They oppress the victims and may be a bully at times.

The roles described, composed the Drama Triangle, a model of dysfunctional social interactions. You can change the Drama Triangle in its relative positive model, called the Empowerment Triangle.

In the Empowerment Triangle Victims transform themselves into **Creators**, who focus on outcomes, rather than problems. Creators focus on objectives instead of problems. They clarify their objectives and take responsibility to achieve wanted outcomes.

Rescuers change their role to Coaches, who are careful and trust in the Creators. They work for the empowerment of the Creators, and they work with them to reach the objective. **Coaches** do not solve the problems; they help and coach the Creators in finding their solutions.

Persecutors become **Challengers**, who show the creator the limits they can overcome. They think Creators are capable of making progress by taking action and making progress, they stimulate instead of criticizing or blaming.

7 UNIT

worksheets and case scenario



Accommodating a travelling **life**



Worksheet 1- My strategy to build meaningful relationships

Describe how you can show a genuine interest in the others

Describe a situation in which you tried to get people interested in you

In which ways you could stimulate others to speak about themselves. Can you describe some techniques about an active listening?

Imagine someone having an opposite point of view than you about something very important to you. How can you show him your perspective without being judgmental and critical?

Worksheet 2 – Characteristics of a peer support agent

Which of your personal characteristics might be important to the person you are supporting?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="radio"/> empathy | <input type="radio"/> patience |
| <input type="radio"/> credibility | <input type="radio"/> mediation skills |
| <input type="radio"/> trustworthiness skills | <input type="radio"/> conflict management |
| <input type="radio"/> organizational skills experience | <input type="radio"/> homeless |
| <input type="radio"/> ability to cooperate experience | <input type="radio"/> services |
| <input type="radio"/> problem solving knowledge | <input type="radio"/> welcoming |
| <input type="radio"/> humour attitude | |

Describe your own specific characteristic you think can help you in building a positive peer relationship

Write down characteristics you would want in a peer when looking to form a relationship

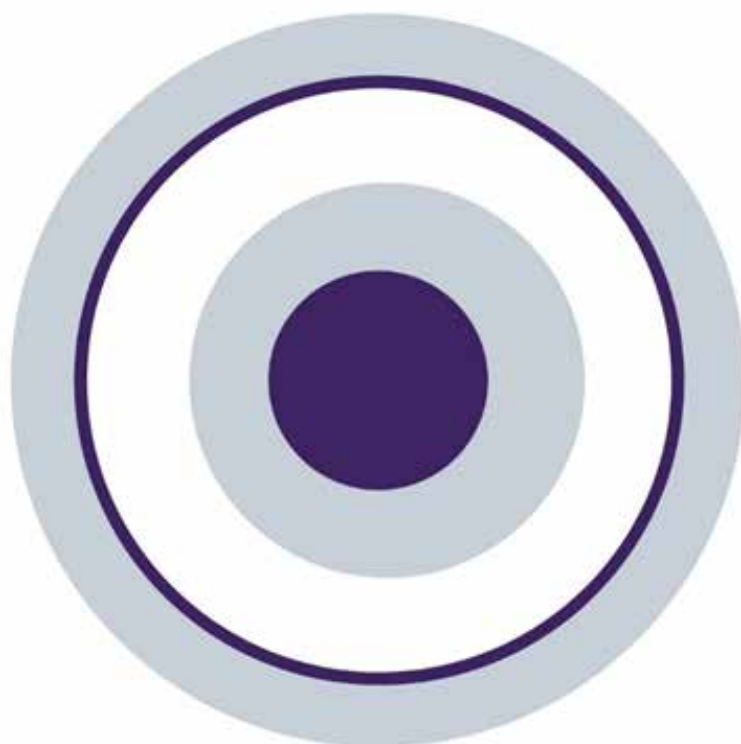
- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)



Write down characteristics that you DO NOT want a peer to possess when looking to form a peer relationship

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)

Put in the dartboard the characteristics wanted in a peer supporter in order of importance (in the center the more important ones)



Worksheet 3 – Boundary exploration

Consider the following strategies for identifying your personal boundaries:

A. Identify your limits . – Clarifying what your emotional, mental, physical, spiritual limits are. Do this by paying attention to yourself and noticing what you can tolerate and accept as well as what makes you feel uncomfortable and stressed.

B. Pay attention to your feelings – Notice the three key feelings that are often cues that you need to set boundaries: 1) discomfort; 2) resentment; 3) guilt. If a particular situation, person, or area of your life makes you feel uncomfortable, resentful, or guilty, these are important cues that boundaries may need to be set or re-assessed.

C. Give yourself permission to set boundaries – when you fear how a person will respond if you set or enforce boundaries, reaffirm to yourself that you do indeed have this right.

D. Consider your environment – your environment can either support your setting boundaries or present obstacles to it.

Using the strategies listed above as a starting place, complete the “Boundary Exploration” table below. Imagine a peer relationship, with someone you know, in your workplace and fill in the following table trying to clarify the level of your boundaries:

BOUNDARY CATEGORY	POROUS	RIGID	HEALTHY	OTHER
Physical Boundaries				
Mental Boundaries				
Emotional Boundaries				
Material Boundaries				
Material Boundaries				



Take a moment to imagine what it will be like when you begin to establish healthy boundaries with this person. If your boundaries are too rigid, that might mean you need to open up. If they're porous, it may mean you shall set limits and say "no".

What are some specific actions you can take to redefine your boundaries?

How do you think the other person will respond to these changes?

How do you think your life/job will be different once you've established healthy boundaries?

Worksheet 4 – Healthy relationships

Reflect and write down your thoughts on the key points introduced during the session, at the end write two words to summarize your thoughts for each topic:

1. Accept responsibility

2. Be reliable

3. Forgive

4. Listen



5. Communicate your needs

[Empty light blue rectangular box for notes]

6. Mind your tongue

[Empty light blue rectangular box for notes]

7. Accept

[Empty light blue rectangular box for notes]

8. Regularly evaluate your relationships

[Empty light blue rectangular box for notes]

Worksheet 5 – Maintaining healthy relationships

Describe the strategies you chose with your colleague to maintain a healthy relationship

Describe in a few words what happened in your one-minute skit



CASE SCENARIO – Story of Sophie

Sophie (48) was the only child of rather aged parents. She was born with some perinatal problems. Scrupulously taken care of by her parents she has always been somewhat withdrawn, reluctant to socialize. She presented learning difficulties, but the school took little notice of it. Beset with problems at school she spent most of her time at home with her parents who took care of her needs and imbued her with useful habits concerning personal hygiene, everyday tasks like preparing food, keeping things in order. Finally, she graduated from elementary school only. She grew more and more estranged socially; her parents took her to a psychologist on several occasions. However, the advice they received was too general and, in practice, it was not heeded. No one considered psychiatric intervention as she did not meet the common criteria for psychiatric disorder, such as hearing voices, hallucinations etc.

The only peer with whom Sophie interacted in any meaningful way was her cousin Jane but they grew apart over the years. In her thirties, Sophie developed psychiatric symptoms —voices, hallucinations, sleeplessness, paranoid thinking. She was diagnosed with schizophrenia and was prescribed medication. She received a small disability pension. Her parents made sure that she took medication, but as the years passed, they grew older and eventually, passed away. At first, Jane helped Sophie considerably with the funerary arrangements and other related issues, but over time, busy with her own life, she contacted Sophie with less frequency. Sophie led a solitary life of growing neglect and almost complete ignorance as far as social and official aspects of life were concerned. Subsisting on her small pension, she kept herself and her flat relatively orderly and clean. Occasionally, the neighbors helped her with food or small repairs. With little money at her disposal, and no professional or even basic social skills to seek employment, she ceased paying the rent for the apartment her parents left her with. The debt accumulated for years and, finally, Sophie was evicted at the age of 42. No one made any attempts at assisting her until the eviction was a reality. Only then did the municipal social service take up the case, relegating her to the homeless shelter. This was a shock to Sophie, whose medication patterns became even more irregular, aggravating her condition.

Sophie never adapted to the precarious and impersonal conditions of the shelter. Eventually, she left the shelter to fend for herself in the streets. She slept in the night buses, railway stations and park benches. She ate what people gave her or what she could buy for the little money they put into her hands. In fact, she became known to people in the neighborhood who saw her every day. It was one of them who alarmed an NGO who started paying visits to Sophie. One of the street workers, Max, thanks to his easy, open and helpful manner, has gained Sophie's confidence and has started unraveling her health, social and personal situation. It has become obvious to him that Sophie suffers from a mental condition through the way she communicates and talks to herself. On the other hand, she seems to be in relatively good physical health, shows no signs of aggressiveness and is able to express herself rationally and objectively on certain subjects. She has a rational fear of the cold winter months. She remembers when she last took the medication and understands why it is necessary. The years of homelessness taught her to rely on herself and distrust others but, in a way, they were a continuation of the isolation of her younger years. Still, she has the all-human need of another person and is not completely cut off in her inner world. She sometimes recalls her cousin Jane, who probably lives somewhere not too far away; judging by her stated previous residence.

Throughout Sophie's life, the attempts at intervention were half-hearted and impersonal to say the least. In her early years, the school system failed to support the family. The healthcare system limited to prescribing medication but failed to offer psychological therapy or integrative/community care. The social services only offered rudimentary and temporary accommodation once Sophie had already been evicted.

It was only after six years of homelessness that Sophie was offered meaningful assistance by an agent who brought a personal relationship, human warmth, and genuine interest in her situation. Only with the help of such an agent could the doors to the various forms of assistance begin to slowly open, since Sophie is not able to manage any bureaucratic procedures by herself. The bureaucratic hurdles have piled up and it needs time and perseverance to sort them out – the question of a valid ID, health insurance, recovering the disability pension, regulating the debt issue...

Questions for reflection

1. What qualities and knowledge should one have and what tactics should one employ to get over the initial barrier cutting Sophie off from help?
2. What contacts would be necessary for the social assistant to procure help for Sophie?
3. Who would be the key people in the consecutive interventions in various fields?
4. What kind of help is needed on behalf of these professionals? What services should be put in place?
5. Which could be your role as peer support agent? How could peer support help?
6. Besides the professionals and the peer supporter, who else could be involved in Sophie's healing process? How would you involve this person?



7

end of session

Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

