



Silver Linings Foundation

How Can A Peer Mentor Support You in Your Recovery?

Outline developed by Clinical Supervisor, Lakshmi Krishnan MSW

The Peer Support Program was created to provide hope and real-life evidence that recovery is possible. Alongside this hope, peer support helps to *clarify* what full recovery means and the phases required to get there.

We tend to define eating disorder behaviours *only* as the behaviours we like the least. For example, a person who restricts, then binges and compensates by throwing up may not consider restriction as the main problem. Instead they may define recovery in terms of whether or not they are bingeing and purging. The trouble here is that the bingeing behaviour is the result of restriction- both bingeing AND restriction must go for full recovery to be achieved. The idea of recovery, therefore, gets confusing because giving up some behaviours and holding on to others can eventually start to feel like recovery is perhaps not possible.

This is where peer mentorship comes in: Meeting a person who has actually transitioned into a different way of life – beyond ALL behaviours of an ED – helps anchor the idea that full recovery is actually possible. The function of a mentor is, first and foremost, to represent this truth.

Full recovery is possible, but each person's journey will be different.

The road to recovery is subjective and meandering and each person has their own particular path. The mentor is simply available to remind the mentee, in moments of doubt and desperation, that:

- All change happens one step at a time
- Others have walked this path too and there is a light at the end of the tunnel

The mentor may share their own life experiences, while keeping in mind that each person's way is different and similar at the same time. The mentee must remember that their journey is different from their mentor's journey and that they are a unique person with their own unique story. What has worked for a mentor may not work for a mentee.



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The mentor is NOT required to find solutions to problems or fix anything. The primary function of the mentor is to be the “living reminder” that recovery is possible.

It is up to the mentee to use this resource actively: To decide how often they would like contact and what they would like to be reminded of. **This is NOT a relationship of “tips and tricks” to recover. That is the role of your therapist.**

The importance of accessing full treatment, not just peer support:

At Silver Linings, it is our experience that when a mentee does not have a treatment team or has not received treatment in the past, the peer support relationship takes on the weight of a *therapeutic relationship*, as the anxiety of recovery has no other outlet. Therefore, **it is a requirement that those interested in peer support are actively receiving or seeking out professional treatment from a registered therapist and/or dietician.** If a mentee’s level of support exceeds what peer support can offer, Silver Linings will assist in providing additional treatment resources.

Recovery is a gradual process that requires ongoing focus and support. **A therapist and dietitian are crucial to bringing this process to a reliable landing where the mentee looks back and can know that they will never revert to disordered behaviours.** The mentor provides a living example of this goal by simply existing and walking alongside. In this way, everyone is within their role without confusion- The weight of the recovery process stays with the therapist and dietitian and the mentor empathizes and affirms that life outside an eating disorder exists.

If you have further questions or would like to be connected to a list of eating disorder specialized therapists and dietitians, please do not hesitate to contact us:

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