

orygen

POWER OF PEERS IN PRACTICE

PEER WORK IN YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

WHAT WILL WE COVER?

- Introduction
- Peer Support overview
- Peer Work Program at Orygen
- Adaptations during COVID-19
- Working with Peer Workers
- Why Peer Support?



ORYGEN SPECIALIST PROGRAM

Previously known as Orygen Youth Health, Orygen Specialist Program provide specialist mental health services for young people aged 15 to 25 who reside in the western and north-western regions of metropolitan Melbourne.

~200,000 young people aged 15-25 years live in this catchment area



A BIT ABOUT ME

- Nic Juniper ☺
- Queer (they/them pronouns)
- Student
- Artist
- Service user/consumer/survivor
- Advocate
- Peer Support Work Specialist



MY JOURNEY



Image source: freepik

MY ROLE AS PEER SPECIALIST

- Sessional Peer Support Worker at Orygen for ~3 years
- Started Feb 2020
- First lived experience leader in the Specialist Program
- Supervise sessional and employed Peer Workforce
- Workforce expansion & development



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PEER SUPPORT WORK

LIVED OR LIVING EXPERIENCE

Mental health and wellbeing are ongoing components of Lived Experience Workers lives.

As recovery advocates, we connect with our own recovery journeys, and actively bring this part of ourselves to the role, yet we may be still experiencing mental distress in some way.

Recovery does not equal absence of symptoms.

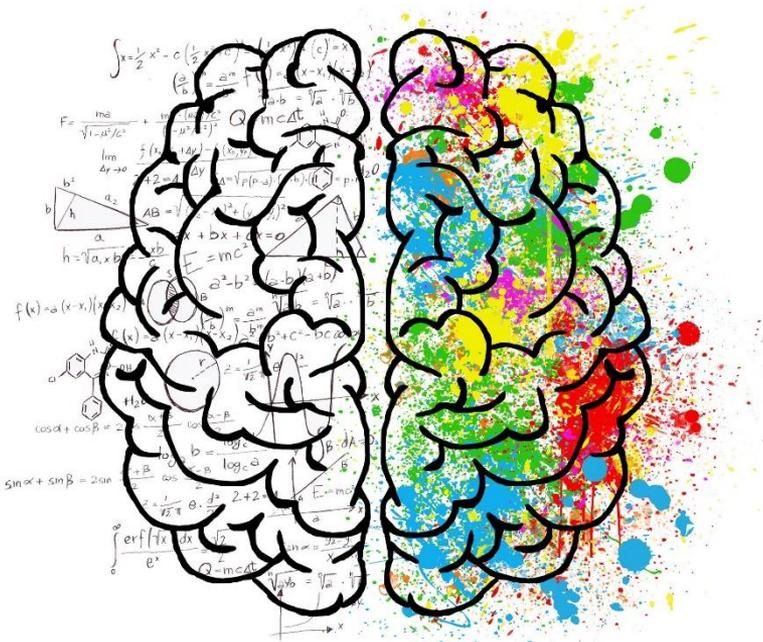


Image source: pixabay

PEER SUPPORT

“A system of giving and receiving help founded on the key principles of respect, shared responsibility, and a mutual agreement on what is helpful” – Shery Mead

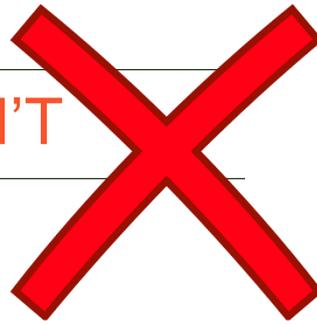


WHAT YOUTH PEER WORK IS



- Sharing experiences & what works for us
- Establishing relationships based on trust & mutuality
- Advocating for consumers
- Provide positive social interaction/ modelling positive relationships
- Support young people in discovering their own personal strengths
- Active listening & recovery language
- Direct young people to resources
- Assist young people to engage in meaningful activities
- Breaking the boredom & having fun

WHAT YOUTH PEER WORK ISN'T



- Problem oriented
- Assessments or evaluation
- Medical framework
- A friendship
- Clinical or case management
- Breaking confidentiality without reason
- Doing tasks that others don't have the time for



PEER WORK PROGRAM

PEER WORK AT ORYGEN SPECIALIST PROGRAM

Who are the Peer Workers?

Our Peer Support Workers are young people who have used Orygen's services in the past and now volunteer their time to share their own experiences of service use and recovery.

- Developed in response to client feedback that young people want to talk to 'someone who has been there'
- Helps young people to connect with the service so that they can get the most out of their time at Orygen.

TYPES OF PEER WORK

Sessional Peer Support Workers:

- Volunteer (reimbursed) roles
- Past consumers of Orygen services
- Engage with young people on the inpatient unit or in groups



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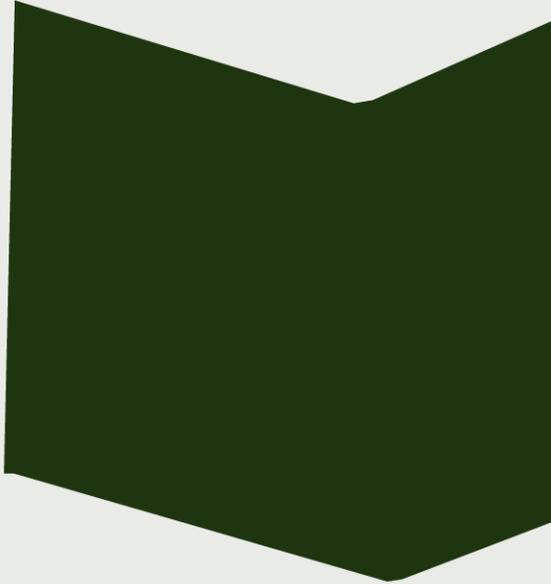
EMPLOYED PEER SUPPORT WORKERS

Current:

- Post Discharge
- Oxygen at Home
- Forensic Youth Mental Health

Future:

- Hospital Outreach Post Suicide Intervention (HOPE)
- Youth Access Team (YAT)
- Region Peer Workers
- Youth Prevention and Recovery Centre (YPARC)



ADAPTATIONS DURING COVID

PEER WORK IN GROUPS

The psychosocial program is running groups co-facilitated by Peer Workers

Peers can:

- Connect with interested young people
- Join and facilitate activities
- Check-in between groups
- Plan and provide feedback about the group



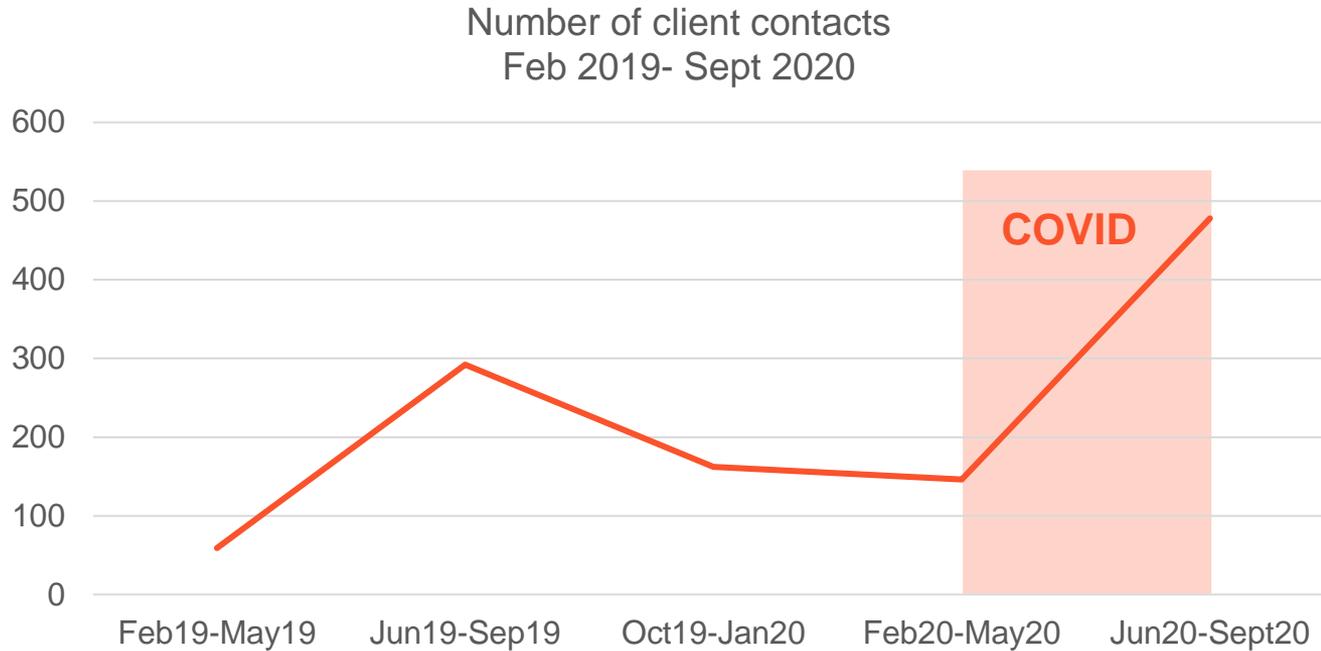
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ONLINE GROUPS

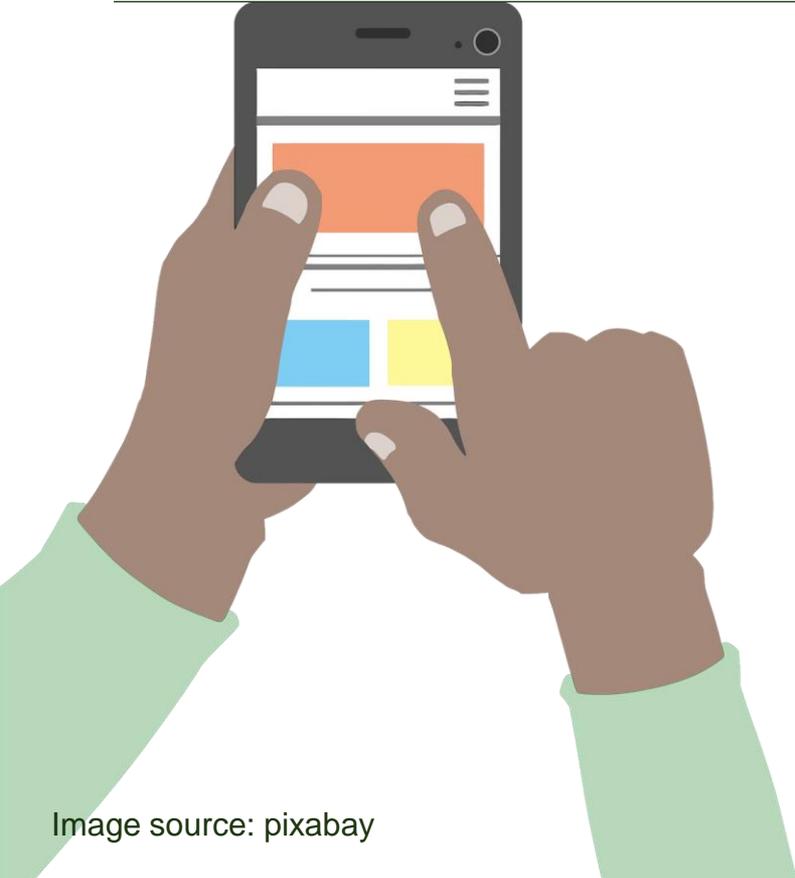


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PSYCHOSOCIAL RECOVERY SERVICES DURING COVID



THE ROLE OF PEER SUPPORT IN GROUPS



- Engage with referred young people during month prior to group commencement via text/phone
- Peer Worker co-facilitates group with 2 clinicians
- Peer Worker becomes main point of contact with young people
- PSW continues to support engagement between groups

THE ROLE OF PEER SUPPORT IN GROUPS

- Supporting individuals within a group to understand their common experiences and goals
- Provide examples of recovery in action and open space for sharing experiences
- Engage, connect and help people move through the process as a group
- Help structure conversations to keep discussions on task and supportive in nature
- Foster participation and get people to come up with ideas, thoughts and perspectives that add value

FEEDBACK ON PSW IN GROUPS RECEIVED SO FAR

“Um, so it made me a lot more comfortable with sharing. That was a big one that I noticed like... She would share from her own experience, and then I'd be like, “Oh Okay, I can share too. That's okay.”

“She... for the first two or three weeks... she called the week after to check in. Which even though I didn't really have that much to say was still like nice. And kind of like made me feel like, connected to the group even, like, in between sessions. So that was pretty nice.”

FEEDBACK ON PSW IN GROUPS RECEIVED SO FAR

“Um, I think personally for me, it allowed me to open up which was something, I wouldn't have done in the past... in all the groups I've attended... I didn't open up. And having [the peer support worker] there, it a kind of like allowed others to open up, but she was also able to lead a conversation. So, it didn't have that awkward silence...because we kind of knew that she understood.”



FEEDBACK ON PSW IN GROUPS RECEIVED SO FAR



“So, [the peer support worker] kind of made it really easy to like feel more comfortable with each other because I could tell all of us felt comfortable with her... because she’d like introduced herself... and like, she’d run the games and everything. So, she was kind of like the buffer in the awkwardness.”





WORKING WITH PEER WORKERS

BARRIERS

- Power dynamics
- Lack of support
- Emotional content
- Role confusion and Peer Drift
- Aging out



ENABLERS

- Organisational commitment
- Workplace culture
- Diversity & inclusion
- Ongoing development



Image source: shutterstock

SHIFTING POWER



Power imbalances are clear barrier in Peer Work

- What do they look like?
- What causes power imbalances?
- How do we shift power?

- What is it like challenging your colleagues?
With more or less power?
- What would it be like for a Peer Worker to challenge someone with more power? What about their a past clinician?

COLLABORATION: WHEN POWER IS SHARED

- Connection and trust
 - Sharing ownership and responsibility
- Continued learning, reflection and dialogue
 - Valuing consumer perspective

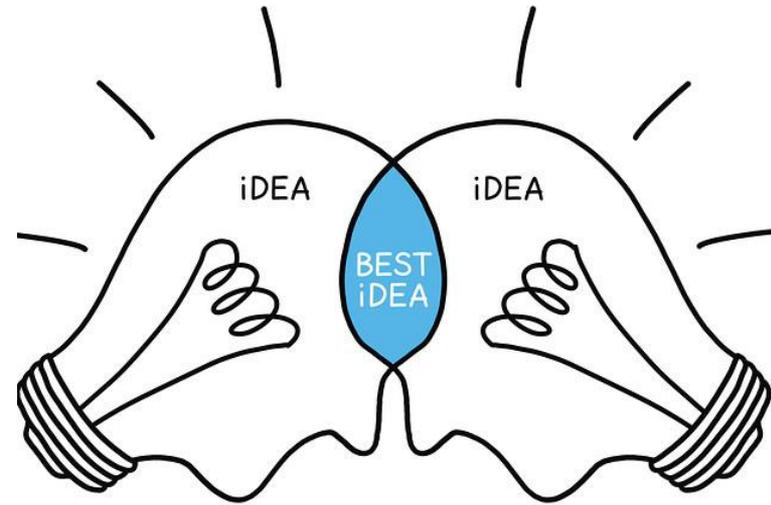


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AVOIDING TOKENISM

Peer Support Workers sometimes feel like their involvement is tokenistic – just ticking a box or a second thought.

- Providing opportunities to grow and learn
 - Transparency & Accountability
 - Supporting them to do their job
- Keeping the uniqueness of Peer Work



Image source: pixabay

SUPPORTING PEER WORKERS

- Peer Support Workers lead and manage their own health and wellbeing
 - Creating mutual space
 - Feedback processes
 - Practical supports
 - Co-Reflection

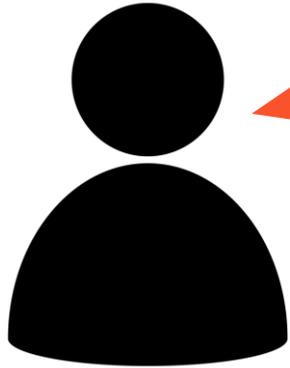




WHY PEER SUPPORT?

BENEFITS FOR CONSUMERS

- Increased connection to the service
- Increased hope in recovery & knowing they're not alone
- Better understanding of experiences, decreased self-stigma & increased self-esteem
- Increased social connection
- Increased sense of empowerment
- Increased confidence in pursuit of goals
- Better decision-making skills
- Development of self-advocacy skills
- Increased community connection and participation
- Increased self-advocacy skills
- More positive feelings about the future



Provides opportunities to people that have been through the system and allows patients going through recovery to safely voice their opinions free from judgement and speak to someone on an equal level

Sessional Peer Worker

BENEFITS FOR PEER SUPPORT WORKERS

- Increase self-esteem, confidence and self-worth
 - Develop advocacy and facilitation skills
 - Increased hope and empowerment
 - Larger social networks
 - Enhanced knowledge of self-care
- Better understanding and acceptance of experiences
 - Development of identity as a professional
 - Contributing to something important



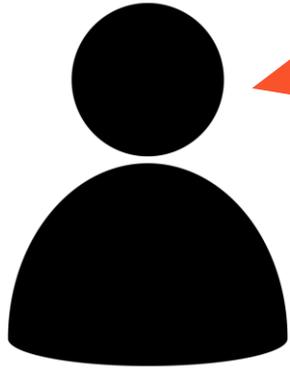
An opportunity to give back, solidify our own recovery, stay motivated to keep going when things get difficult, and the potential to feel useful and helpful.

It's a chance to interact and know others who've been in our situation and to learn new things and ways of taking care of ourselves.

Sessional Peer Worker

BENEFITS FOR THE SERVICE

- Increased engagement from consumers
- Positive change in organisational culture
- Improving the recovery orientation of service
- Increased awareness of language and recovery
 - Reduction in coercive practice



Identify others who are still out there and functioning with mental illness, change the mental health system to work for consumers and to create a system that is what people experiencing distress need - rather than what a textbook wants.

Sessional Peer Worker

CLOSING THOUGHTS

“And kind of that, like, even though she went through mental health she’s using it to help others... which I...I love the idea of being able to help others.”

- Young Person



QUESTIONS



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**CARE IN
MIND**

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THANK YOU

