

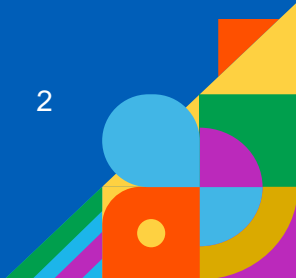


Jennifer Habert, MA, BSH, RRT-NPS, C-NPT

Jennifer has worked on the Critical Care Transport Team at Children's Mercy Kansas City for over 20 years. She has also completed training as a chaplain and served at Freeman Hospital in that role. Jennifer helped develop the peer support team for Children's Mercy Critical Care Transport and currently serves as the Peer Support Coordinator. Jennifer is passionate about peer support and strives to continue to build the team.

Reaching New Heights with Peer Support

Jennifer Habert, MA, BHS, RRT-NPS, C-NPT, Chaplain

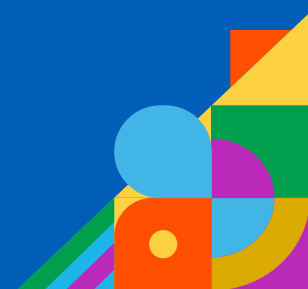


Objectives

- To define peer support and the purpose it serves
- To review the history of peer support in healthcare
- To discuss building a peer support team
- Trial and error – growing a peer support team



Jacob's Story...



Peer Support

What it is...

- A powerful tool to help staff cope with difficult situations
- A bridge that helps provide resources for individuals that may need help
- A team of peers that can direct staff to their EAP or a higher level of help when needed

What it is not...

- Formal Counseling
- Psychotherapy
- Replacement for mental health providers
- Replacement for EAP

What is peer support?

- Peer support assists staff in coping with the stress that comes from their work
- It is a means to provide both emotional and social support for those who share common experiences
- There may be variation in the clinical experiences one has encountered but the struggle and emotional pain will be similar
- Peer support recognizes individual experiences and is a means to help staff move toward recovery

Common Resources at our Fingertips

- Hospital Chaplain
- ASAP team (or other support services)
- Department Managers
- Friends/Family
- Pastor/Priest
- Counselors



Why would peer support be helpful?

- Peer support team members are trained to have difficult conversations and help during times where there is a struggle
- Other resources are often not utilized
 - Individuals don't want to admit to a problem
 - Fear of how others (family, friends, co-workers) may view them
 - Need to find a place to work through the struggle



Peer Support

- Fills an important gap
- Offers a safe place for processing and venting
- Meets individuals who are struggling
 - Personal
 - Professional



Peer Support

- Is proactive in nature (vs. reactive)
- Has been integrated into EMS, fire, and police departments since there have been first responders
- Continuing to be integrated into more hospital systems than ever
 - Early hospital based peer support dates back to the early 1990s
 - The COVID – 19 pandemic inspired a dramatic rise in these programs as burn out was at an all time high for health care providers

Peer Support

- “Peer Support offers a confidential, nonstigmatizing, and non-therapy-based approach to health care workers affected by vicarious trauma or lower-level workplace stressors. Peer support provides space for one professional to simply listen to the stress of another professional.” (Geyer, 2023)



Was there really a need?

- Prior to building a peer support team we sent out a survey to our staff
- 47 surveys were returned (roughly 50% of staff)
- We asked our staff where their struggles were
- This was to mitigate high stress levels and burnout on the team



The Survey

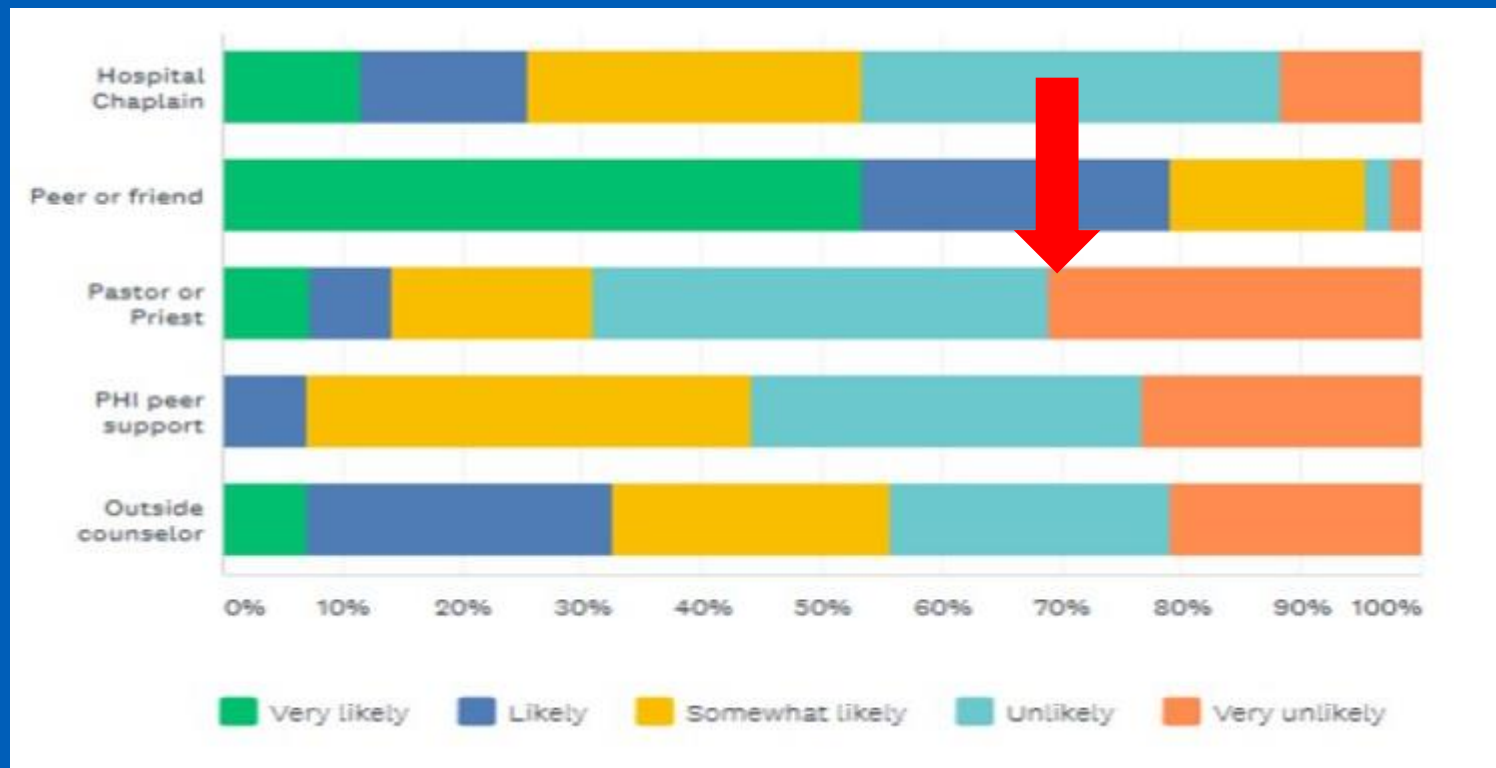
- How long have you been in your current role on our team?
 - 0-5 years – 63%
 - 6-10 years – 19%
- What do you see as the greatest challenge on our team emotionally?
 - Pt death
 - No downtime
 - High acuity patients
 - Cumulative stress of a demanding job
 - Feeling of personal responsibility for patient outcome

The Survey

- What kind of coping mechanisms have you developed to work through the stress?
 - Exercise, talking with a friend, debriefing, counseling, separating work from home, alcohol
- How likely are you to seek help after a difficult transport?
 - Likely to seek help – 33%
 - Somewhat likely to get help – 37%
 - Unlikely to seek help – 30%

The Survey

- How likely are you to utilize the following resources for additional support?



Building from the ground up...

- Get leadership on board
- Decide who your peer support team will serve
- Select individuals from your group that are strong communicators
- Decide how you will train your team in peer support
- Develop department guidelines for peer support (Department Policy)
- Facilitate offering peer support to your department
 - How will peer support be activated?

Resources / Training

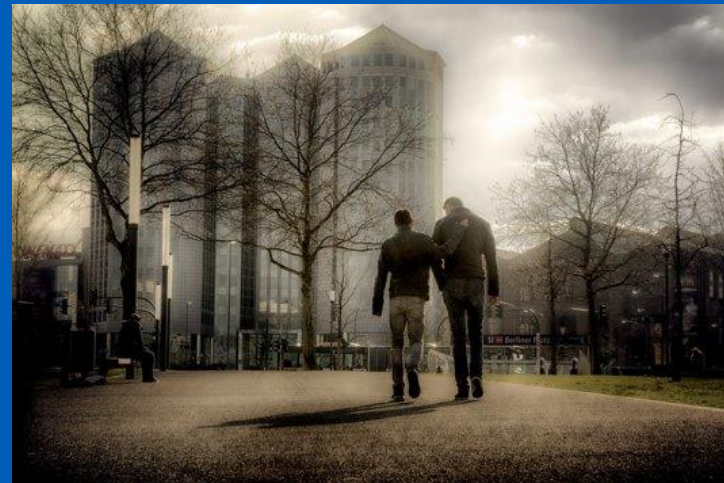
- International Critical Incident Stress Foundation (icisf)
- Training on assisting individuals and groups in crisis
- CISM
- Diffusing/CISD
- <https://icisf.org>



International Critical Incident Stress Foundation, Inc.
HELPING SAVE THE HEROES

Resources

- Regional Peer Support Team
- FRST Midwest
- www.frstmidwest.org
- Peer Support training - 40 hour class
- Jennifer Prohaska, Ph.D.
- Pat Hinkle, MA, LCPC, LCMFT
- Angie Jones, Special Agent KBI



What makes a good peer support team member?

- Someone who has a good deal of experience
- An individual who is a great listener
- Someone who can respect confidentiality
- A staff member who displays empathy
- An individual that can draw on their own insights from emotions they have faced themselves



What is your skill set?

- What will make you a great asset to your peers?
 - Showing empathy
 - Being attentive
 - Being genuine
 - Being available



Peer Support for Children's Mercy Transport

- Informal Interaction
 - Build relationships
 - Facilitate sharing and trust
 - Set a positive tone
 - Get to know your co-workers
 - Be available!



Peer Support for Children's Mercy Transport

- Formal Interactions
 - Providing help after an event
 - Emotional support and processing
 - Being an advocate
 - Making connections with additional resources

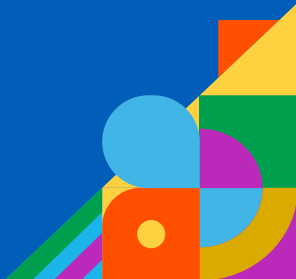
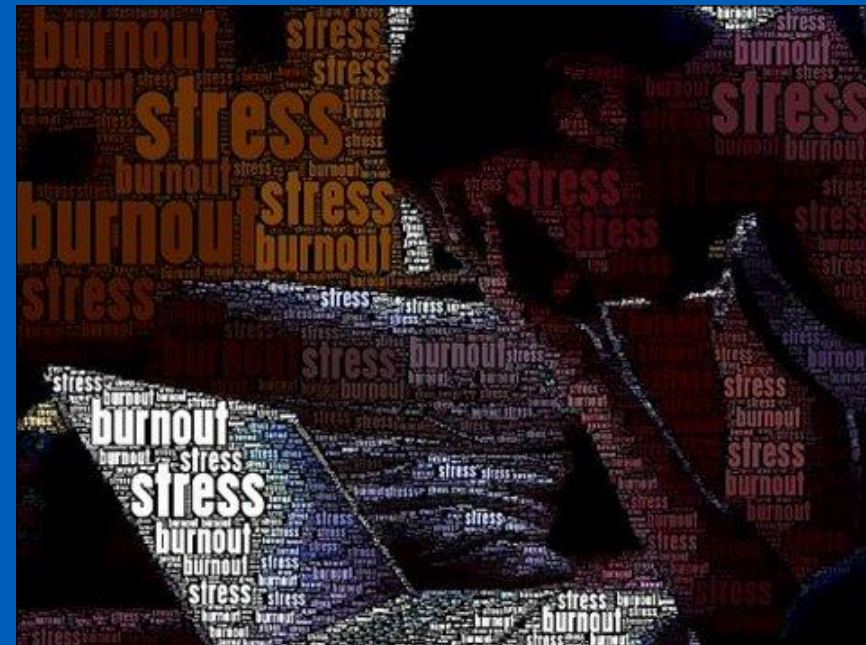


Confidentiality

- Peer Support conversations are confidential. The exceptions to confidentiality are the following
 - Staff member is a threat to themselves
 - Staff member is a threat to someone else
 - Child/Vulnerable Adult Abuse
 - Job performance concerns involving the safety of self, peers, or patients
- If one of the exceptions become apparent, then the conversation must be escalated to the Assistant Director/Director level

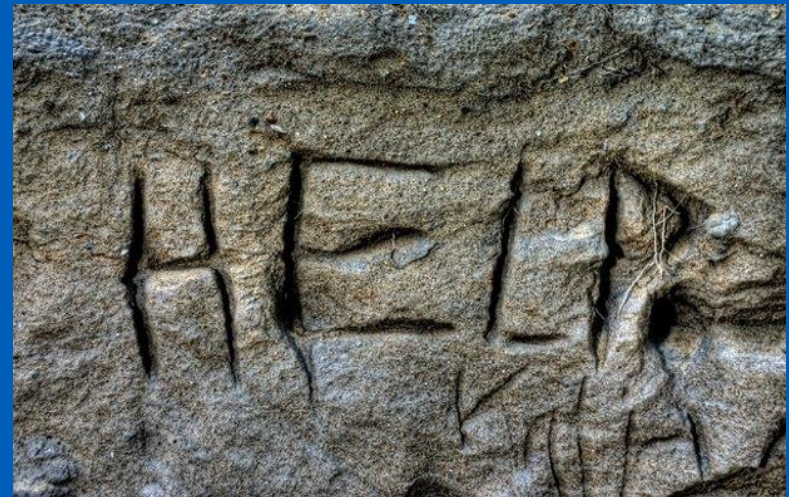
Common Psychological Reactions

- Eustress - Motivating stress, processing normal challenges
- Distress - Excessive stress, resilience can kick in and help
- Dysfunction - Impairment in one's ability to perform functions



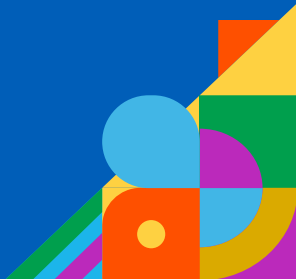
Common Psychological Reactions

- Distress - this can be a normal reaction to a difficult situation - follow up with them later (24 hrs)
- Examples: struggle to concentrate, anger, grief, sleep disturbance, fatigue, exhaustion, crisis of faith



Common Psychological Reactions

- Dysfunction - If you see these things, you need to get additional help. Delayed help leads to worsening symptoms and outcome!
- Examples: suicidal ideation, disabling guilt, panic attacks, immobilizing depression, symptoms lasting greater than 30 days, self-medication, recurrent headaches, loss of faith



Common Psychological Reactions

- If you see evidence of dysfunction or escalating symptoms you must move to the next level of help
- **When in doubt - refer for further help**
- What does help look like?
 - Critical Incident Stress Debrief (early)
 - EAP activation
 - counseling
 - inpatient management
 - time off work



The Goal

“A peer who interacts with a peer supporter should feel the empathy and connectedness that comes from similar life experiences, and this interaction should also foster hope. Hope in the possibility of a recovery that includes health, wellbeing, quality of life, and resilience.”
(Williams, 2020)



Activation of Peer Support

- Primary Communication Specialist
- Shift Coordinator
- Leadership Team
- QR Code



Questions?

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References

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Williams, Richard, et al. “Peer Support - an Introductory or Briefing Document.” *The Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh*, 1 May 2020, pp. 1–11.

Additional Resources

- International Critical Incident Stress Foundation, Inc. <http://www.icisf.org>
- Prohaska, J., Hinkle, P. (July 2020). Peer Support – 40 Hour Basic Peer Support Course. Lenexa, KS