

# PEER VOLUNTEER TRAINING MANUAL

## The ART of Conversation

AIDS COMMITTEE OF TORONTO (ACT)  
CASEY HOUSE

**Created 2017**

Andrew D. Eaton  
Adam Busch

**Updated 2020**

Andre Ceranto  
Andrew D. Eaton

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## SECTION I: GUIDELINES & NORMS

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### GROUND RULES FOR THE ART OF CONVERSATION

One key to developing the safety that is so important for Peer Matches is to establish ground rules that are discussed, agreed upon and adhered to by both the Peer Volunteer and the Participant. Some ground rules might include the following.

#### Confidentiality

What is discussed in each meeting stays in each meeting, particularly any identifying information.

#### Start and end on time

By starting and ending promptly, people develop trust and learn what they can expect from the ART of Conversation. This also respects people's busy schedules, which might include medical appointments or returning home to care for a loved one.

#### Be present or let someone know you won't be

Participants need to know that their peer volunteer will attend their meeting or that they will call the participant to inform them of their upcoming absence, and vice versa.

#### Responsibility to raise issues

Peer Volunteers will not be able to guess what the participant may want to share. Participants are responsible for getting their needs met in the ART of Conversation. Important issues should be put out on the table in a timely way.

#### Alcohol or substance use during the sessions

People are expected to come to ART meetings without being impaired by alcohol or other non-prescription drugs.

#### No sex between Peer Volunteers and Participants

Sexual contact between a Peer Volunteer and a Participant can be detrimental to the process. Sexual behavior has the potential to be destructive to the Participant as well as to the Peer Volunteer. Knowing from the start that sex and romance with the Peer Volunteer is not a possibility can allow some people to feel safer and more comfortable.

#### Informal, outside-of-pre-arranged-meeting support

Support between Peer Volunteers and Participants may continue outside of scheduled meeting times. This may include phone calls, text messages, or emails. It's important to set clear guidelines about what kind of and how much support is appropriate and needed.

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### Conflicts and disagreements are OK

Allow Participants to voice conflicts and disagreements that they are experiencing as long as they happen in a respectful way. Stress to Participants that discussing tough issues can often be a source of growth.

### Discuss non-sexual physical contact

Every person is unique in how they view touching and hugging. Cultural or gender differences, boundary or abuse issues, loneliness, simple likes and dislikes can influence how comfortable someone is with physical touch. For some Peer Matches, a Peer Volunteer may give a hug or put a hand on the shoulder of a Participant who has revealed something painful or shared an emotional issue or seems to be hurting. This response can be both natural and beneficial. However, no matter how well-intentioned and innocent the gesture, some people might feel violated and unsafe with any form of physical contact. Be sure to discuss this before anyone spontaneously and unknowingly oversteps another's boundaries.

### Check-ins and check-outs should be brief

Check-ins and check-outs are tools to use at the beginning and end of each Peer meeting. During check-in, the Participant briefly shares what happened to them between meetings, how they are feeling at the moment, what they'd like to talk about that session, etc. Check-in is a time for Peer Volunteers and Participants to get a sense of the general mood and feelings of each other. (Peer Volunteers should check in as well). Let Participants know that if they raise an important issue during check in, there will be time in the meeting to allow them to fully explore their issue. Similarly, check-out is an opportunity for the Participant and Peer Volunteer to share how they are feeling at the end of the meeting.

### Set guidelines for entering and leaving the ART of Conversation

In the ART of Conversation, Participants will come and go. When a Peer Volunteer is meeting a new Participant, it helps to let the person know that there may be an end-date to their support. Suggest that Participants who decide to leave should try to schedule a meeting to find closure with the Peer Volunteer and/or the Program Coordinator and give at least one week's notice of their intention to leave the ART of Conversation.

Adapted from NATIONAL HIV/AIDS VOLUNTEER TRAINING KIT (1998: AIDS Committee of Toronto), Training Module 2: Support Group Facilitation: Support Group Manual (p.8-11)

## SECTION I: GUIDELINES & NORMS

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### THE ESTABLISHMENT OF NORMS IN THE ART OF CONVERSATION

Every interaction, whether social, familial, supportive, etc., is regulated by guidelines of behaviors which can be either implicit or explicit. In a Peer Match, these 'guidelines' are known as norms. The underlying purpose of norms is to establish a 'culture' between the Peer Volunteer and the Participant. Norms provide a guide for interaction between people, and as such may be a prescription for as well as a prescription against certain kinds of behavior.

In an ART of Conversation context, norms are both explicit and implicit. The explicit norms are those which are verbalized and established within the first meeting. The implicit norms are those which are understood, but not directly expressed, and develop over time. An example of an implicit norm would be a Participant and a Peer Volunteer feeling more comfortable with each other over time.

The establishment of explicit norms provides the important first step towards creating an atmosphere of safety in the Peer Match. Explicit norms help to provide people with guidelines and establish expectations about how the Peer Match will 'operate'. As well, positive explicit norms contribute to the development of positive implicit norms. While Peer Matches generally benefit from the establishment of certain universal norms, (presented by the Peer Volunteer), it is important that Participants have the opportunity to decide upon additional norms which are important to the unique culture they wish to create. Peer Volunteers might choose to elicit input from Participants about norms with a statement like, "What do you need to have happen in our Peer Match so that you can feel safe and are prepared to participate?"

Peer Volunteers play an important role not only in assisting people with establishing norms, but in modeling the behavior associated with the norms. For example, Peer Volunteers model the use of "I" statements when expressing their ideas and opinions. Peer Volunteer adherence to, and modeling of, norms provides a reference point for Participants.

#### UNIVERSAL NORMS

Confidentiality

Respect for differences

Use of "I" statements

Participation – Share the air

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### ROLE PLAYS: PURPOSE & GUIDELINES

Role playing is a vital and major component of the AIDS Committee of Toronto's ART of Conversation Training Program. Role playing creates an opportunity for training volunteers to build confidence, generate problem-solving strategies, utilize core Peer Volunteer skills, confront challenges and develop a personalized style of being a Peer Volunteer. Role playing also provides an opportunity for the trainers to monitor the skill development of the training participants.

Role playing, for many volunteers, can be very challenging, uncomfortable and cause anxiety. That said, it is important for the *trainers and volunteers* to create and ensure a safe, positive and enhancing learning environment.

The purpose of the role plays is not to "outwit, outsmart, or outlast" the other training volunteers. When participating in a role play as a Participant, the goal is not to ambush the Peer Volunteer.

When you participate in role play, please observe the following guidelines:

- take a turn at different roles, including Peer Volunteer (take a risk);
- if you are playing a Participant, it is OK to be difficult, but not too difficult. Be *realistically* challenging and be prepared to shift into non-resistance;
- keep focused on process;
- when giving feedback, emphasize what went well, what seemed to work, what you learned, etc. Avoid criticism or dwelling on what was 'wrong'.

Remember, role plays are a brief moment in time of a make-believe Peer Match. Role plays are an opportunity to learn from each other, and identify our areas of strength and challenge.

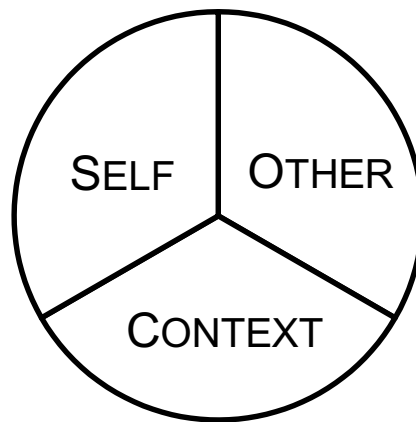
## SECTION II: COMMUNICATION

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### CONGRUENT COMMUNICATION FOR PEER VOLUNTEERS: A BALANCED APPROACH

*Congruence is a state of being and a way of communicating with **ourselves** and **others**. When we decide to communicate congruently, it is not because we want to win, to control another person or a situation, to defend ourselves, or to ignore other people. Choosing congruence means choosing to be ourselves, to relate to and contact others, and to connect with people directly.*

*-Virginia Satir*



<b>COUNT THE SELF, OTHER AND CONTEXT</b>		
<b>WORDS</b>	<b>FEELINGS</b>	<b>BEHAVIOUR</b>
<b>Real:</b> Words match the body position, the voice, the tone, and the inner feelings.  Words show an awareness of feelings	<b>Consistent with words:</b> Expression flows	Alive Creative Unique Competent
<b>INNER EXPERIENCE</b>	<b>PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS</b>	<b>PHYSIOLOGICAL EFFECTS</b>
Harmony Balance High Self-worth	Healthy	Good Health

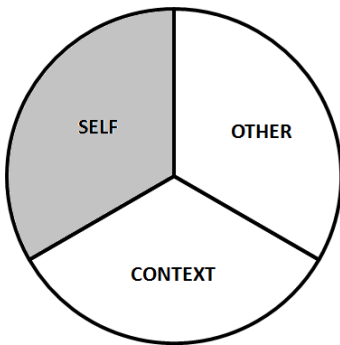
Congruence should first be established from within, intrapersonally. When we are able to match our feelings with our words and behaviours it allows us to live a life of harmony.



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We are able to act independently and autonomously. As seen in the previous table, when we are able to truly express our feelings and opinions without hurting the other person we are able to live more authentically. Our self-worth is higher and we are then able to lead more balanced lives. This however requires an awareness of the self, the other person and the context in which to communicate. It requires acknowledging your rights, the rights of 'the other' and the situation at hand. It requires being present when relating to others. It requires an awareness of your body messages. Is your body feeling tense? Uncomfortable? Tired? Etc.



### **SELF**

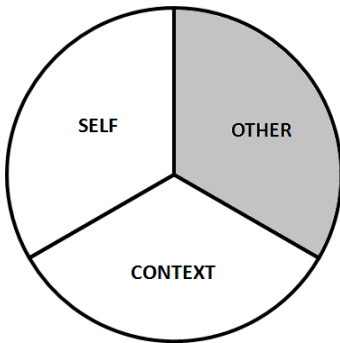
#### **Effects on Self**

- Self enhancing at the expense of others
- You are expressive and Aggressive
- You achieve your goals by hurting others
- You choose for others
- You deprecate others

### **SELF**

#### **Effects on Others**

- Denies other's selves
- Others become hurt, defensive, humiliated
- They do not achieve desired goals



### **OTHER**

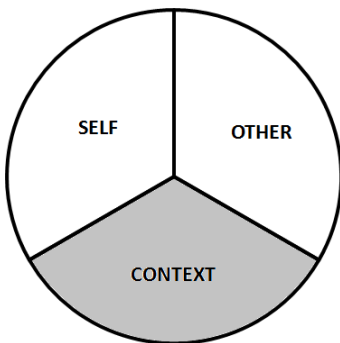
#### **Effects on Self**

- You become self-denying
- You become inhibited, passive
- You do not achieve your goals
- You allow others to choose for you
- You become hurt and anxious

### **OTHER**

#### **Effects on Others**

- Others can become guilty or angry
- Depreciates others
- Achieve goals at your expense



### **CONTEXT**

#### **Effects on Self**

- Clear boundaries
- Professionalism
- Communication is non-reactive

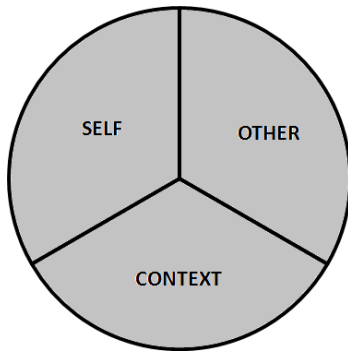
### **CONTEXT**

#### **Effects on Others**

- Clear boundaries
- Professionalism
- Communication is non-reactive

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### **SELF, OTHER, CONTEXT**

#### **Effects on Self**

- Is self-enhancing
- You are expressive and active
- You are most likely to achieve your desired goals
- You choose for yourself
- You feel good about yourself

### **SELF, OTHER, CONTEXT**

#### **Effects on Others**

- Enhance others
- Encourage expression in others
- They are more likely to achieve desired goals

### **TIPS FOR CONGRUENT COMMUNICATION**

When we communicate take into account three things: The self, the other person and the context.

#### **THE SELF**

- The key is to be true to ourselves: Be aware of your thoughts, feelings and body responses
- Knowing and understanding your boundaries and your position as a Peer volunteer
- It is important to respond and not react to situations
- It is always OK to ask for some time to think things through before responding
- To reflect on how you could have handled the situation differently the next time around
- Debrief the situation with someone you trust (keep confidentiality in mind)
- Balance how you are able to communicate your rights and needs without trampling on the other person's rights and needs
- Communicating congruently requires empathy, understanding and patience for the other

#### **THE OTHER**

When communicating with a Participant remember the following:

- Be gentle and understanding about the other person's needs, feelings and level of understanding
- Do not assume what the Participant has experienced just because she/he is HIV Positive
- Understand that your Peer Match may have had past trauma issues

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- Participants may be in survival mode which may make them think, feel and act differently
- Understand that your Peer Match may seem manipulative, but in fact it is how they survive and cope with their daily struggles
- The Participant's cultural factors may make communicating with them challenging:
  - Country of origin
  - Gender
  - Sexual orientation
  - Socioeconomic status
  - Support systems in place or lack of supports
  - Racial background
  - Religion
  - Age
  - Immigration/ refugee status
  - Abilities/ disabilities visible or not
  - Their ability to speak English

### THE CONTEXT

- Make sure that communications are appropriate for that time and place
- Ensure that communication is done privately
- Ensure your safety and the Participant's safety
- Context includes taking into account their HIV status and other barriers/ oppressions
- Context includes past experiences/ conflicts with Participant
- Context includes your past experiences in similar situations

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### EMPATHY

Empathy is the ability to enter into the life of another person, to try to accurately perceive his/her feelings and what those feelings mean. It is not the same as being sympathetic or feeling sorry for someone; rather it means sharing their experience and being in tune with their thoughts and emotions while still understanding that it is *their* experience. While you work to understand and share his/her experience, maintain an appreciation and respect for the fact that the experience belongs to them.

Consider the following definition of empathy:

“Empathy isn’t just remembering to say, *“that must really be hard”* – it’s figuring out how to bring difficulty into the light so it can be seen at all. Empathy isn’t just listening; it’s asking the questions whose answers need to be listened to. Empathy requires inquiry as much as imagination. Empathy requires knowing you know nothing. Empathy means acknowledging a horizon of context that extends perpetually beyond what you can see: an old woman’s gonorrhea is connected to her guilt is connected to her marriage is connected to her children is connected to the days when she was a child. All this is connected to her domestically stifled mother, in turn, and to her parents’ unbroken marriage; maybe everything traces its roots to her very first period, how it shamed and thrilled her.

Empathy means realizing no trauma has discrete edges. Trauma bleeds. Out of wounds and across boundaries. Sadness becomes a seizure. Empathy demands another kind of porousness in response.

Empathy comes from the Greek *empatheia* – *em* (into) and *pathos* (feeling) – a penetration, a kind of travel. It suggests you enter another person’s pain as you’d enter another country, through immigration and customs, border crossing by way of query: *What grows where you are? What are the laws? What animals graze there?”*

- Leslie Jamison  
*The Empathy Exams* (2014)  
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[www.graywolfpress.org](http://www.graywolfpress.org)

In the ART of Conversation, empathy can be demonstrated towards Participants through Active Listening.

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### LISTEN POEM

Anonymous

When I ask you to listen to me and you start giving advice  
you have not done what I asked.

When I ask you to listen to me and you begin to tell me why I shouldn't  
feel that way, you are tramping on my feelings.

When I ask you to listen to me and you feel you have to do something  
to solve my problem, you have failed me, strange as that may seem

Listen? All I asked was that you listen; not talk or do – just hear me.

Advice is cheap; 75 cents will get you both Dear Abby and Billy Graham  
in the same newspaper.

And believe it or not, often I can do for myself; I am not helpless –  
maybe discouraged and faltering, but not helpless.

When you do something for me that I can and need to do for myself,  
you contribute to my fear and weakness.

But when you accept as a simple fact that I do feel what I feel,  
no matter how irrational, then I can quit trying to convince you  
and get about the business of understanding what's wrong.

So please listen and just hear me. And if you want to talk,  
wait a minute for your turn and I will listen to you.

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### ACTIVE LISTENING

Active listening is an essential component of being a Peer Volunteer. Generally, active listeners defer their own judgment about the speaker, resist giving feedback until the speaker is finished speaking, seek clarification, and paraphrase and check their understanding of the speaker's message.

Active listening has two parts: looking like you are listening and sounding like you are listening. Everything which follows is culture-bound whether that culture is based on nationality, gender, sexual orientation, age, or whatever. "Matching" the person you are listening to is a good (not perfect) general starting point.

**Looking like you are listening** is communicated non-verbally through position, posture, facial expressions, eye contact, etc.

A rough guide would be to:

1. Face the person who is speaking more or less directly and
2. At the same level (don't stand over the speaker) with a
3. Distance of about two arms' lengths between.
4. Maintain a relaxed (not slouched) posture.

The most important facial expression (apart from keeping your eyes open) is probably appropriate smiling. A fixed, expressionless face interferes with good listening. Head nods are encouraging.

In the absence of bodily contact, eye contact is probably the most important dimension of communication in active listening. Matching the eye contact of the speaker is a good place to start. Be sure not to completely avoid eye contact.

**Sounding like you are listening** is essential. This would include "minimal encouragers" (uh huh, yes, mmhh hmm, I see, etc.); repetition of a key word or phrase also communicates good listening.

Other ways of sounding like you are listening and encouraging the speaker are:

1. **Rephrasing** reflecting back something in your own words without adding anything new.
2. **Paraphrasing** is to rephrase essential content using different words without compromising the meaning of what is being said. The response must be interchangeable with the client's statement.

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3. **Summarizing** what has been said is another verbal listening skill. It is used to highlight themes or threads in what the client has said.
4. **Clarifying** by asking, "Is that right?" (called "**checking out**" or a "**perception check**")
5. **Open-ended questions** (who, what, when, where, etc.) which put the focus on the speaker and allow for elaboration.
6. **Close-ended questions** (which can be answered with one word like 'yes' or 'no' or are multiple choice/either-or questions) usually reflect what the *listener* is thinking.

### S.O.L.E.R.

Giving another person your undivided attention is the first step in gaining their trust. Your body plays a large part in communicating the focus of your attention. To show that you are actively listening, try using the acronym S.O.L.E.R.

S – Face the other person Squarely. This says, "I'm available to you."

O – Adopt an Open posture. It is a sign that you are open, not defensive (crossed arms suggest resistance or defensiveness).

L – Lean slightly toward the person. People who are interested or involved tend to do this rather naturally. Leaning back may suggest boredom or retreat.

E – Maintain Eye contact, but do not stare. Consider culture and gender roles, make no assumptions.

R – Be Relaxed. It makes the other person feel comfortable talking.

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### CONTENT & PROCESS (ASKING QUESTIONS)

**Content:** What the Participant is talking about. It refers to what is being said or talked about.

**Process:** What is happening in the moment. It refers to the impact or effect of what is being talked about.

**Example:** When a Participant is talking about the winter blues, getting emotionally a bit off-topic from the content of the meeting.

**Content:** Budget portion of ODSP to buy small amount of crack and still have money for food. This piece comes from the Participant's goals' notes.

**Process:** Feeling depressed about how difficult the winter is to get through. This piece comes from the Participant's feelings at that moment and may be off-topic.

ART of Conversation Peer Volunteers focus on content more than process (although not all of the time or to the exclusion of process). This requires focusing on the content of the Casey House patient's goal forms and not getting lost in tangential side conversations that maybe have a lot of emotional charge to them (e.g. something that is annoying them that day), but aren't really about the patient's goals. As with all Peer Volunteer skills, maintaining a gentle but firm focus on the content and not getting lost in the processes of other topics takes practice and attention.

*Focus* on open-ended questions that include or make note of process, but which are focused on the content topics that arise from the Goal Forms. Examples:

- That's tough. Winter is blah for a lot of people and I can hear it's tough for you too. How are you keeping with your goal even though you feel that way?
- I can see this is really affecting you. How do you stick with your goal when that's happening?

*Minimize* asking elaborating questions concerning emotional issues. It is important to name the emotion or the process piece. Often unless process pieces are heard, can we address content. The key is to honour the process and ask about addressing the goals anyways, or even in spite of process challenges. Avoid asking questions out of your own curiosity or personal emotional interest, but do empathize and make an understanding statement when emotion comes up. Then move on to exploring content. Examples of questions to minimize:

- When did you first start feeling this way?
- What else has been going on for you that makes you feel "blah"?

*Avoid* asking about the history of challenging emotions, and for elaborations of them. These questions may dig up other difficulties and sidetrack things.



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Coping is the goal of the conversation. Ask instead how people are coping even while there may be emotional difficulties. Ask about historical instances of coping, or for elaborations of other kinds of situations where the person has managed even when experiencing some of the sorts of challenges they are expressing. Examples:

- When you experienced sadness in the winter before, what did you do to move forward anyways?
- What are some other times when you felt like this? How did you cope then?
- What worked then that might work now?

Avoid "Why" questions. "Why" questions emphasize the authority and control of the person asking, (e.g. the Peer Volunteer) and can appear judgmental, and are often difficult to answer. Examples:

- How did you get into drug use? Why did you not slow down when you first saw things getting out of control?

*Redirect* conversations that glorify or illustrate drug using. This is because such conversations can trigger the person into wanting to use now, which may sidetrack them from their goals. It is useful to listen to drug use talk in a non-judgmental tone, but to redirect the conversation so that it stays more or less on the surface, and avoid getting into vivid, explicit descriptions of using. A way to think about this, is to keep drug use topics as "headlines," not as "articles." Like other process pieces, it is important to name the process piece, but direct it back to the goals. Examples:

- You are really craving using right now. You'd like to spend more money than you've budgeted right now. That's understandable given that winter can be hard.
- E.g. 1 Redirect: How do cope with that craving?
- E.g. 2 Redirect: What are some things you can do to deal with that now?
- E.g. 3 Redirect: What are some things you do to take you mind off of cravings and think about something else?

Tip: try just 1 question and wait for the answer, and avoid firing off too many questions all at once.

An easy way to redirect the focus back on track with the goals if process gets a bit heavy, is for the Peer Volunteer to simply identify what is going on right now in the meeting and to invite responses from the Participant. Example:

- I can see that our discussion is affecting you emotionally. That makes sense. Some feelings have come up. At the same time, we have this goal to work on. We have about 10 minutes left for our meeting. How would you like to spend the rest of our time?

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### WORKING WITH EMOTIONS

An important function of the ART of Conversation is to help participants identify and express the feelings associated with their experiences. While feelings may not be the sole focus of a Peer meeting, it is important that Peer Volunteers encourage the creation of an atmosphere which allows for and encourages emotion.

*When we avoid emotion in a Peer context, we send a message that feelings are not safe or valued.*

The result is that Participants may deny the existence of and/or suppress the expression of their feelings. Consequently, the Peer meetings may stay on a superficial level, never going beyond an intellectual expression of individual experience. When this happens, the Peer meetings cease to be a supportive service.

In all human endeavors, the element of emotion is always present, and how we deal with expressed emotion is culture-bound. In a Peer context, we are often confronted with very deep and intense feelings. For both Peer Volunteers and Participants, the expression of intense emotion can be frightening and/or anxiety-producing for a number of reasons, including:

1. the expressed emotion may echo emotions which we are not yet ready to explore or have not resolved;
2. the expressed emotion may evoke responses in ourselves which we feel uncomfortable with;
3. we may have concerns that the expression of strong emotion will “open the flood gates”, resulting in an outpouring from Participants that will become overwhelming or ‘out of control’;
4. as Peer Volunteers, we may feel that making space for the exploration of Participants’ feelings may “trigger’ an emotional response in ourselves;
5. we may feel responsible for making the expresser feel ‘better’;
6. we may believe we will be unable to respond to the emotion.

It is absolutely essential that Peer Volunteers become comfortable with the expression of emotion by Participants, and are prepared to encourage its expression. How one reaches this comfort level is highly individualized and beyond the scope of Peer training. However, there are a few key elements which are helpful in working with emotion as it emerges. If you sense that a Participant has ‘shut down’, that they are going in circles, not moving beyond the surface, etc., you may want to refer to this checklist:

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### EMOTIONS CHECKLIST

- Have I encouraged Participants to name their feelings?
- Have I 'allowed' Participants to express feelings and stay with them?
- Have I stayed focused on the person(s) expressing strong emotion?
- Have I offered encouragement by paraphrasing, summarizing, empathizing?
- Have I been respecting Participants' boundaries/limits of exploring emotion?
- Have I sought support for myself outside of the Peer context (i.e. ensured that I have time to debrief with my supervisor after meetings, utilized consultation opportunities, talked with someone who I know is understanding and supportive, etc.)?
- Have I been ignoring expressions of feeling instead of acknowledging them?
- Have I been stifling the expression of feelings by reassuring, questioning the feeling, or changing the topic?
- Have I been turning feeling expressions into intellectual statements?
- Have I been pushing Participants to express more than they are comfortable with in the moment?
- Have I been interpreting/labeling Participants' feelings (i.e. "I think you have a lot of anger underneath your issues."), instead of asking the person to describe what she/he is experiencing (i.e. "You've been saying a lot about what you think about... I wonder if you can talk about the feelings that go along with that.")?

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### REFLECTING FEELINGS

When you are working with emotions, the most important Peer Volunteer intervention is to reflect those feelings back to the Participant. Reflecting feelings opens up the exploration of felt experiences and sends a signal that feelings are acknowledged.

Of primary importance when working on reflecting feelings is the avoidance of interpretations. What this means is that you do not express your theories about what a person is feeling or experiencing. Instead, you encourage the Participant to describe or name what she/he is feeling. Even when it may seem obvious (i.e. a person is crying/yelling/etc.), we do not truly know what the person is experiencing until we ask. As you will know from your own experience, tears do not always mean sadness, yelling does not always signify anger, silence does not always equal disinterest, etc.

There are four elements which can be utilized to work with feelings in the Peer context which avoid interpretation and encourage Participants to express what they are experiencing:

1. When a Participant is speaking, listen for feeling words. Playback the feeling words you heard in a paraphrase. Example:

Participant: "I've been thinking a lot about John lately. He's been dead for a year now, and I should probably be moving on with my life. I just get so overwhelmed with sadness sometimes and I can't seem to get past it."

Peer Volunteer: "So there are times when you just feel overwhelmed with sadness, and you just can't seem to get past it."

2. Play back the feeling and check out the accuracy of your paraphrase. Following on the above example:

Peer Volunteer: "So there are times when you feel overwhelmed with sadness, and you just can't seem to get past it. Did I get that right?"

3. Acknowledge and honour the feelings and seek out ideas for coping. Following on the above example:

Peer Volunteer: "You feel overwhelmed with sadness – have you felt that way in the past? How did you deal with this feeling at that time?"

## SECTION II: COMMUNICATION

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### **Core Skills Training – Concepts in Communication - Feeling Words**

Accepted	Embarrassed	Livid
Affectionate	Free	Lonely
Afraid	Frustrated	Loving
Angry	Grateful	Rejected
Anxious	Guilty	Respected
Ashamed	Happy	Sad
Attracted	Hopeful	Satisfied
Bored	Hurt	Shocked
Competitive	Inferior	Shy
Confused	Interested	Superior
Defensive	Intimate	Suspicious
Desperate	Jealous	Trusting
Disappointed	Joyful	

\* this is not an exhaustive list \*

## SECTION II: COMMUNICATION

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### WORKING WITH FEELINGS

1. Very seldom
2. Occasionally
3. Sometimes
4. Often
5. Most of the time

\_\_\_\_\_ I am aware of my feelings  
\_\_\_\_\_ I am able to name my feelings  
\_\_\_\_\_ I am able to express my feelings  
\_\_\_\_\_ I am able to sustain a conversation about my feelings

\_\_\_\_\_ I notice other people's feelings  
\_\_\_\_\_ I am able to encourage others to talk about their feelings  
\_\_\_\_\_ I am able to reflect other people's feelings without interpreting them  
\_\_\_\_\_ I am comfortable conversing with other people about their feelings

\_\_\_\_\_ I initiate conversations with others about my feelings  
\_\_\_\_\_ People initiate conversations with me about their feelings

Comments:

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## SECTION II: COMMUNICATION

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### STATEMENTS THAT MAY HELP A PARTICIPANT TALK

#### Door Openers:

Purpose: To get someone started in talking about their goals.

Method: State the purpose and length of the meeting and use open-ended questions to invite the person to jump in talking about this wherever they would like

Examples: “So today’s meeting is for about 30 minutes, and it’s to check in around your goal of taking meds at the prescribed time, so you don’t miss a dose. Where would you like to start?”

#### Encouraging:

Purpose: To show interest; to keep the person talking.

Method: Use neutral words, don’t agree or disagree, vary your tone of voice

Examples: “Can you tell me more about it?” “What happened next?”  
“Mmm Hmm”, and “Oh yes” and “I see.” These are called Minimal Encouragers

#### Reflecting:

Purpose: To show respect without agreeing with what the person says.

Method: Identify the speaker’s emotion

Examples: “That was humiliating!” “Sounds like it made you very angry.”  
“You sound worried.” “You said you were devastated.”

#### Validating:

Purpose: To show respect without agreeing with what the person says.

Method: State what was said to you briefly, in your own words

Examples” “I know it takes a lot of courage to...”  
“You take pride in...” “Their respect must be important...”

#### Paraphrasing:

Purpose: To show you are listening and understand; to check what you think you heard; to make sure you understand correctly

Method: State what was said to you briefly, in your own words

Examples: “So the way you see it is...” “You think...is that right?”  
“If I heard you correctly...” “So you feel...”

#### Clarifying:

Purpose: To help you understand what the person is saying; get more information

Method: Ask open-ended questions for more details; ask about coping strategies

Examples: “When did this happen?” “Describe that for me.”  
“Give me an example.” “How have you dealt with similar issues?”

#### Summarizing:

Purpose: To review progress; pull things together; lay groundwork for more discussion

Method: Restate the main idea/theme expressed. Name and not the feeling, and also ask about how to move forward towards the content

## SECTION II: COMMUNICATION

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Example: “So you are tired and uptight because you are being kept up late at night by loud music from next door and now it’s affecting your sleep and overall health. That made last night hard. What would you like to do about this, so that you can continue taking your meds when you need to, even if this continues on?”

### Siding With:

**Purpose:** When the person seems like they are resistant to the topic, e.g. diverting or disagreeing with content. When the conversation starts to feel like a bit of tug-of-war.

**Method:** Agree with them that this is hard to focus on or talk about

**Examples:** “This is not easy.”

“That’s so tough. I don’t even know what to say, but I’m glad you told me.”

“I have felt that way before.”

“I’ve had that experience before...or one like it.”

### Affirmation:

**Purpose:** To highlight when the person was successful, or partially successful in meeting their goals.

**Method:** Point out a victory and be genuine in your appreciation of it

Name the victory as an objective fact, rather than a personal viewpoint

**Examples:** “Wow! That’s really amazing that you were able to do that.”

Rather than “I really like it when people are able to do what you did.”

Be sure to do at least one per meeting, but do not overdo it. Affirmations are like salt, adding just enough of it to a dish brings out flavor. Adding too much of them, is like over-salting food. It can seem disingenuous.



## SECTION II: COMMUNICATION

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### WORKING WITH TRANS AND GENDER DIVERSE PARTICIPANTS

Participants may identify as trans or gender diverse, and it's important to be sensitive to their identities and to consider unique issues that they may face and want to discuss.

#### **Pronouns and Names**

People who identify as trans or gender diverse are not all the same, and there is no one 'right way' to be trans or gender diverse. Be careful not to make assumptions about a Participant's gender identity. Instead of assuming what their gender may be, ask the participant what pronouns they prefer. These could include gendered pronouns like she/her or he/him and also gender neutral pronouns such as they, ze, or hir. When introducing yourself, you could say "Hi I'm [Name] and I prefer [Pronouns]." This provides Participants with a comfortable space to identify their own preferred pronouns.

Participants may also wish to be addressed by a name other than the one they were admitted to hospital with. Check-in with a member of their care team before meeting a Participant to determine their preferred name.

#### **Meeting Considerations**

When meeting Participants at Casey House, the bathrooms are non-gendered and anyone may access any bathroom regardless of their gender identity of presentation. When meeting in the community, Participants may not feel comfortable using bathrooms at certain places. You may need to move locations to a place where the Participant feels comfortable using the bathroom.

#### **Asking Questions**

As we covered on pages 16 and 17, Peer Volunteers should ask questions about Participant goals in the program, and questions that build upon what Participants are talking about. You should not ask questions out of your own curiosity. Questions about a Participant's genitals, surgeries, and other gender-sensitive questions are often inappropriate.

#### **Helpful Resources**

There are many trans-specific resources that can be helpful. These include:

- Trans Lifeline – [www.translifeline.org](http://www.translifeline.org)
- Trans Health – [www.trans-health.com](http://www.trans-health.com)
- Trans Pulse Project – [www.transpulseproject.ca](http://www.transpulseproject.ca)
- Trans Inclusion Pocket Guide – <https://whai.ca/resource/whai-trans-inclusion-pocket-guide/>

### HOW TO STRUCTURE A PEER MEETING

#### Agenda Setting

Every Peer Meeting – whether in-person or by phone – should have a clear beginning, middle and end. Agenda- setting is helpful to structure the meeting. The purpose of agenda setting is to establish the purpose of the meeting, and involves both Participant and Peer Volunteer determining the topics, issues, and tasks needed to be covered in the meeting. Agenda setting should be woven into the conversational flow as much as possible, coming after an initial check-in and small talk at the start of the meeting. There are four (4) parts to agenda setting:

#### 1. Check-in with them: how have they been since the last meeting?

This allows the Participant to give updates on how they have been doing and things that may have come up. This makes sure that things left from the last meeting are addressed before getting into new content. At this point it is okay to share brief snippets of your week keeping in mind that the meeting is not about you.

#### Examples:

‘So John, what has your week been like?’

‘How have you been John? I have been looking forward to our meeting.’

‘It has been a hectic week for me. What was your week like?’

‘I feel like we haven’t spoken in ages, the week went so fast. How was your week?’

‘Last time we spoke I really enjoyed our chat about... How have you been this past week?’

#### 2. Summarize what the person has just told you

Summaries are helpful as they establish rapport, acknowledge that you are listening, help set the agenda of the conversation, and provide a segue between small talk and into the content of the meeting. Listen to what the Participant is saying and summarize or paraphrase their week using key words they have used to describe their week.

#### 3. Determine the topics or issues relevant to the person for discussion

Once you have summarized the Participant’s week, ask Agenda Setting questions on what they would like to talk about in today’s meeting. As a Peer Volunteer you want to guide the conversation rather than let it be open-ended or off-topic. If they mentioned content related to their goals in your check-in, refer back to and start with that. Ask if they would like to start there.

## SECTION III: COMMUNICATION TOOLS

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### Examples:

You could choose to guide the conversation by focusing on the things that happened:  
'So you mentioned a few things earlier. I was wondering if you wanted to talk more about..'  
Or

You could focus on feelings that the Participant shared with you:  
'You said that you were feeling stressed and tired a few times earlier. I see here on your Goal Sheet that this is related to your goals. Do you want to start with that?'

If they do not speak to anything in the check-in, or do not know what to talk about, this is where you as the Peer Volunteer state what you would like to talk about.

"Ok, it sounds like you had a decent week with some ups and downs. And there's a bit of loneliness. I'm wondering if we could talk a bit about that maybe, as you have written on your goal forms, that loneliness sometimes exacerbates your use patterns. But mostly, I'd like to talk about how your work on your goals is going, and if you have anything related to your goals you'd like to talk to in today's meeting."

#### **4. Establish time parameters: Focus on present time, one week past or future**

It is important to provide the space for them to be able to choose the agenda items. The purpose of doing this together in the check-in is to center on the here-and-now. The scope of content for your conversations should be as much in the present as possible. It makes sense for it to include the week between the last meeting, but try to steer the conversation within a 1-week parameter and redirect conversations that are too far back in the past or too far ahead than the future.

An example of a brief, here-and-now focused check-in might sound something like:

"I hear that there's been some feelings of anger in the past week. You said you had some realizations based on what we talked about in last week's meeting. We have about 30 minutes for today's meeting, and I wonder if this is something you'd like to discuss in this time?"

If they do not provide content related to their goals in the check in, this where you as the Peer Volunteer state what you would like to talk about. Do this by inviting their permission and approval to move forward.

"It sounds like there's been some anger last week related to your neighbors and that you are coping with that. You are thinking about what to do with yourself and your time, and have been spending a fair bit of time on the Internet. We could talk about that if you think it will be helpful, but I also wonder if we could talk a bit about your goals on your goal sheets? Would that be OK? We have about 30 minutes to talk today, and I want to make sure we get to this."

## SECTION III: COMMUNICATION TOOLS

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It is important to set forth near the top of the meeting the time parameters of the meeting, and to invite the input of the Participant in establishing the purpose of the meeting. This means responding verbally to the Participant so they are being heard. It is OK to hear them out on issues that are not directly related to their goals, so long as you also get to the purpose of the meeting. An example of how to do this may sound like: i.e. "So you're feeling a lot of anger about your neighbors and their noise-making, and in our meeting today you need some time to talk about it. We can do that. At the same time, would it be OK if we talk about how you have been managing to take your HIV meds this week, and maybe about how it's been for you in keeping to your goal of reduced use?"

At the check-in, we are just setting up the meeting, and not probing or expanding on expressed issues. Make a note of the content issues that come up during the check-in, and those that come from the Participant's Goal Sheets, and the conversation you had with them during the initial meal. Jot these down on a piece of paper and glance at it periodically to make sure you get to it all.

### **Check-Outs**

Checking out uses a similar format of providing a summary and covering content within a time-frame. The Peer Volunteer provides a concluding summary, tying together the various topics discussed in the meeting. If there is leftover content that you were not able to get to, that is discussed in the check-out and tabled for the next meeting. Be sure to invite the Participant to add anything into the check-out summary. A simple, "Is there anything else?" can suffice. Sometimes a Participant may raise a major issue that was not discussed in the meeting, raising a significant issue at the very end of the meeting (sometimes referred to as "dumping"). If this happens, acknowledge that this is another matter of importance, and that you would like to make sure you give it enough time to bring up during the next meeting, which will be in another week. Segue the conversation into planning for the next week while staying gently firm about the meeting being at a conclusion for this week. Invite them to discuss this new topic at the next meeting and let them know you will make sure to remind them about it in the next meeting.

### **Referral**

The Participants have been provided with extensive referral contacts from Casey House. It is important to remember that they have a lot of supports elsewhere and if needed, you can gently remind them that if they need more help they can access their Casey House supports.

### **Some Ideas for Check-Outs:**

- Have the Participant reflect on how they are with what was covered in meeting, and affirm their take on or comprehension of the meeting.  
i.e. "Right now, you feel energized by what we talked about and look forward to next week's chat."

## SECTION III: COMMUNICATION TOOLS

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- Invite the Participant to say what they got from this meeting, within the timeframe. i.e. "What was one thing you'll take away from the meeting to carry over into the week to follow?"
- Invite the Participant to share what they learned in the meeting. If they don't have anything, reflect back to them your observation and affirmation of something you think they learned:  
i.e. "It sounds to me like you learned a bit more about some strategies you can use, ones that were already on your mind, but that you feel more ready to start trying now."
- Ask the Participant what they would like to talk about in the next meeting
- i.e. "You brought up having sex sober at the end of our talk today, and how you want to keep yourself both physically and emotionally safe. Would you like to pick this up in our meeting next week?"

### **Other Examples of How a Peer Volunteer may Elicit a Check-Out:**

- 'This has been a great chat. How was it for you?'
- 'Today we talked about ... How are you now with that?'
- 'I liked that we got a chance to talk about this item [state item]. What was it like for you?'
- 'As we wrap up our meeting, I am wondering how it was for you?'
- 'John (summarize the topics discussed) maybe we can continue talking about these topics next week?'
- 'I loved talking to you about... Maybe next time we could talk more about it.'

### **Summary**

A check-out can be a time to summarize topics that have been covered, but without opening up the conversation to ongoing reflection or discussion on it for now. It ends with a bit of direction forward to the next time you speak. It can be a tool for the Peer Volunteer to signify the end of the meeting. It can provide the Peer Volunteer an opportunity to get some feedback on how the meeting was for the Participant and perhaps plan for the next meeting. A Check-out can also give you some important feedback of what could be done differently next time. Ending each meeting with a check-out is a good way to get the Participant and Peer Volunteer into a routine of addressing closure.

## SECTION III: COMMUNICATION TOOLS

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### CLOSURE

For many, the ending of a Peer Match is experienced as a loss and therefore represents some of life's most crucial and painful issues. Because each of us encounters endings throughout the course of our lives and because endings are so meaningful, it is absolutely essential to work with Participants on closure.

Working on closure provides opportunities for Participants to reflect on their experience in the ART of Conversation, determine what they got from the Program, and make plans on how to utilize learnings in an ongoing way.

Working on closure should not be left until the last meeting. At the very least, Peer Volunteers should begin encouraging Participants to actively talk about the meetings ending by the second last session.

Working on closure in a natural and gentle way as part of your conversations on most meetings is recommended. It can prepare both Peer Volunteer and Participant for the end of the Peer Match.

#### ***Regularly Remind the Participants that the Peer Match is time-limited.***

Even if you have signed up for a time-limited Peer Match, Participants may deny or ignore the fact that the meetings will end, and it is important that Peer Volunteers keep this in awareness. One way to achieve this is to keep Participants focused on what they have determined they want to work on.

You can address the time-limited nature of the Peer match at any point during your meetings or when you 'feel stuck':

"We have three more sessions left, and there are a few issues you had said you wanted to address which we haven't yet covered. Can we take some time tonight to review what we want to cover in our remaining sessions?"

"We have now met for five sessions and we keep discussing your feelings of isolation yet we have not worked towards building a support network, since we have five more sessions left maybe we can..."

"Since you had mentioned your social anxiety when we first met but haven't really touched on that I wonder if we can start looking at that since this our eighth session..."

## SECTION III: COMMUNICATION TOOLS

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### ***Encourage the Transfer of Learning from the Peer Match to the Participant's personal environment.***

The underlying goal of any Peer Match is to help a Participant become aware of, and better utilize, their personal and environmental resources. Peer Volunteers can assist in this task by providing opportunities to reflect on the experience throughout the course of the Peer match, and especially at closure.

At closure, some pertinent questions might include:

"What's different for you now than when we started?"

"What has changed that might help you deal differently with your issues?"

"What have you learned about yourself/the issues we've talked about?"

"What other resources are available to you that you did not know about before?"

This is an excellent opportunity to help members acknowledge and appreciate their personal growth and environmental resources.

### ***Have Faith that Participants will Continue to Grow once the Peer Match has Ended***

It may be difficult for Peer Volunteers to let go of their Peer Match because we worry that they are not 'ready' for the match to end. It is important to remember that Participants had resources before the ART of Conversation started, and will continue to have them once it ends. Even when we think someone has not had enough time to get something significant from the experience, it is important to remember that we often have no idea of what the true personal impact and meaning of an experience is for an individual. For some, it may not be until later that she/he significantly benefits from their experience in the ART of Conversation.

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## SECTION III: COMMUNICATION TOOLS

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### MOTIVATIONAL INTERVIEWING: DECISION-MAKING VS. ADVICE-GIVING

Marsha Malbari

**Advice:** Instructions given during a session which indicate that someone should do something.

#### **When to Give Advice**

The quick answer to that is NEVER! Advice (what should be done) is entirely inappropriate in the context of a personal decision (i.e. Should I leave my partner? Should I go to law school? Should I have sex with him?)

Beginning, inexperienced, and authority-oriented Peer Volunteers give advice much more freely than experienced Peer Volunteers.

#### **Why Giving Advice is not a good idea in the context of a Peer Relationship**

- As an ACT volunteer and due to the nature of the Peer relationship, your opinions may carry a lot of weight. You may be perceived as an expert or that ACT endorses your position on matters.
- Giving a Participant advice may take away their ability to make decisions.
- Living with HIV comes with many losses, particularly a loss of control over their health, both mental and physical, their future, their abilities etc.
- It may encourage the Participant to rely on the Peer Volunteer thus inhibiting growth.
- If a Participant has avoided responsibility in the past, there is no way for them to address this behavior and the cycle of blaming continues.
- Giving advice may eliminate alternatives the Participant may need to consider.
- Similarly giving advice may interfere with informed consent and may lead to consequences both the Participant and peer Volunteer may not have considered.
- A Participant may feel ashamed or may fear that the relationship will change if they do not accept your advice.
- An important aspect to consider is what will happen to the relationship if the advice does not work.

#### **If a Participant is struggling to make a decision, there are two possible things you can do:**

1. Help them connect to an ACT Case Manager or Counsellor. The Participant you are paired up with should be doing as much for themselves as possible. If you find yourself in a position where you are doing most of the work, you are taking away from the Participant's own resources and encouraging them to rely on you more. Remember, the goal for Peer Matches is to empower a Participant and help them reconnect with their inner resources to manage their lives better.



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## SECTION III: COMMUNICATION TOOLS

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2. Help them through the decision-making process but allowing the Participant to make the final decision and supporting them in it regardless of how you feel about it. Help them think through the consequences for their action/inaction as thoroughly as possible. Brainstorm all potential alternatives as you go along helping a Participant make a decision.

### **The Four Way Window: How to help Participants through the decision-making process**

- Start with window I: What are the pros or benefits to the Participant's current situation/condition?
- Do your best to make a long list of what the Participant gains from this situation.
- Then move on to window II: What are the cons or drawbacks for the Participant in their current situation?
- Then move on to window III: The cons or drawbacks to making a change or the alternative the Participant has identified.
- Finally move on to window IV: Which is to discuss the benefits of making the change with the Participant.

Take your time going through all four windows and listing out what the Participant identifies as pros and cons. Make sure to give each window equal importance which will be hard to do for the Peer Volunteer as you will most likely find yourself wanting the Participant to make changes. Lastly remember that your Peer Match has the resources within themselves to make decisions that are best for them.

I <b>PROS</b> to current situation	IV <b>PROS</b> to potential change
II <b>CONS</b> to current situation	III <b>CONS</b> to potential change

As an alternative to this tool, a Peer Volunteer can just help the Participant make a Pros & Cons list. A Pros & Cons list is often sufficient in discussing issues in the Peer Program.

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## SECTION III: COMMUNICATION TOOLS

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### SELF DISCLOSURE

Here is a good guideline: it is important that Peer Volunteers be genuine. Playing a role like the expert, the wise person, the sympathetic listener, etc. is phony. Being you, not hiding behind a role, is genuine.

When done artfully, Self-Disclosure can:

- Encourage the sharing of a Participant's personal feelings. Some topics are sensitive and if you disclose, they might be more comfortable opening up.
- Open conversation through the sharing of commonalities.
- Help us express concern for the other person.
- Help the Participant get feelings and ideas off their chest.
- Foster a deeper connection in a relatively short period of time.

#### When should I Self Disclose?

Ask yourself:

- *Will this lead into deeper conversation about the Participants' feelings and goals?*
- *Will this help to reduce HIV and/or substance use stigma?*
- *Will this help share a safer sex or harm reduction strategy?*
- *Is this going to help the conversation stay centered on them and their concerns?*

General Rule: **When answering direct questions, ask yourself: *How can I answer in a way that brings the conversation back to them?***

#### When should I not Self Disclose?

Too much Self Disclosure takes away from the Participant and make it about you. Sometimes we can be asked personal questions that invite us to offer inappropriate disclosures. To avoid this, ask yourself:

- *Will this take the conversation to a non-ART of Conversation related topic?*
- *Am I trying to draw attention to a personal feature or opinion of mine?*
- *Will sharing this be about expressing my own judgements, values, and biases?*
- *In sharing this, am I inviting further inquiry into my character?*

General Rule: **When in doubt, don't Self Disclose.**

Here is how to evaluate a Peer Volunteer's disclosure: It was a good self-disclosure if the next thing that happened was the Participant explored what they had been talking about more fully or at a deeper level.

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## SECTION III: COMMUNICATION TOOLS

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### STRUCTURED FEEDBACK

Chuck Marino

When engaging a Participant, it is important to express and share feedback. So what is effective feedback? Effective feedback is feedback that results in change. It really isn't very difficult to give feedback in the usual way:

- by criticizing
- by pointing out what's wrong
- by asking questions
- by telling someone a better way to do it
- etc.

It's pretty obvious that generally it doesn't feel good to be criticized in this way. Most of the time when someone is given this kind of feedback they are stifled rather than encouraged to speak up or to try something new.

**Effective feedback results in positive change.** For this to happen, the criticism must be heard and acted upon. To maximize the chances of this happening it is necessary for the critic to demonstrate:

- **respect** for the person being criticized;
- **understanding** of whatever is being criticized;
- the skills to **identify the positive parts**; and
- ability to indicate a **useful change**.

Structured feedback is a way of doing this. It is a very short, personal evaluation which contains your assessment of the positive and negative aspects of an idea, something someone has said or done, etc.

#### Structured Feedback

Briefly state at least two or three positive things about whatever it is you want to give feedback on. Two or three things you liked, learned, understood in a new way, want more of, found useful, interesting, etc.

Briefly state the single most important thing which you think should be changed. Say something like, "I wish that..." **NOT**, "I didn't like..." or "You didn't..." or "You should..." or "I really like that idea but..."

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### DEALING WITH CHALLENGING SITUATIONS IN THE ART OF CONVERSATION

As a Peer Volunteer, you will occasionally encounter challenging situations when working with Participant. Rather than “fixing it”, the Peer Volunteer makes it safe for the Participant to address challenges. Sometimes, the “problem” provides a way for the Participant to protect themselves or to avoid what feels like a more uncomfortable scene.

For example, superficial conversations might keep people from facing the pain of their situation. Always being angry and non-accepting of a Peer Volunteer can be a way to distance themselves from a Peer Volunteer. The Peer Volunteer can point out what they see happening and gently ask the Participant if they would like to discuss it.

Peer Volunteers should not assume to know the real reason something is going on. Do not get into analyzing. Instead, you, as the Peer Volunteer, can ask the Participant how they want to handle the situation.

The following are some challenges that might be encountered in the ART of Conversation:

#### **Participant arrives late**

It's important for the Peer Volunteer to enforce the ground rule of meeting on time. If a pattern develops where the Participant is consistently late, the Peer Volunteer can discuss finding an alternate time and/or place to meet to resolve the issue.

#### **"Dumping" just before the end of the session**

Participants may wait to share their heaviest problems until the end of the session for many reasons: perhaps they're anxious, they're hoping the meeting will last longer, they're trying to control the meeting, etc. Whatever the reason (and often the reason is not clear), make sure the meeting ends on time. Suggest that Participants bring up their concerns early in the meeting so they will be sure to get the time they need.



## SECTION III: COMMUNICATION TOOLS

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### **Denial**

Though this may feel like a problem to the Peer Volunteer, it may or may not be a problem for the Participant. When it seems like "something's in the air" or some key issue has not been spoken about (like sex, death, suicide, love, etc.), it may help if the Peer Volunteer mentions that it is OK to talk about an issue if it's important to the Participant.

### **Member in crisis**

Sometimes, the normal rhythm of a conversation is disrupted when a Participant becomes enraged, overwhelmed, panicked and/or hopeless because of sudden or unexpected changes in their life.

Peer Volunteers should stay calm, breathe deeply, speak slowly and encourage Participants to do the same. Allow the extreme emotions to be expressed and respond to them with calm acceptance. If it appears someone's life is in immediate danger, call for help. Encourage the Participant to contact their therapist, crisis hotline or 911 if the emergency calls for it.

As a witness to the situation, you as a Peer Volunteer will be affected by the crisis. Therefore, it's crucial to contact the Program Coordinator to talk about the situation.

## SECTION III: COMMUNICATION TOOLS

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### SELF CARE

Providing supportive service to others can be extremely rewarding. At times, it can also be difficult and personally challenging.

As a Peer Volunteer, you are in a position to hear and witness people's pain and triumphs — this is a position which, in various ways, will undoubtedly have a personal impact. If you are in any way personally connected to the issues addressed in the meetings, the impact may be even greater. To be able to effectively provide support and maintain your own well-being, it is essential that you develop practices for your own self-care.

No one can tell you what you need in order to take care of yourself, but here are a few basic principles which make sense to consider:

- look after your physical well-being as best you can; try to eat healthy, get plenty of rest, exercise, etc.;
- figure out what you need to feel good, and find ways to get those needs met;
- establish support systems for yourself and utilize them — partner, family, friends, therapist, whoever;
- acknowledge and accept both your strengths and your limitations as a Peer Volunteer and as a human being;
- set realistic goals for yourself.

Specifically, when you are volunteering:

- have a preparatory/check-in meeting with your supervisor before a meeting if needed;
- debrief with your supervisor after a meeting if needed — make sure to talk about how you felt about the volunteer experience, not just how it was for Participants (the structured feedback format can come in really handy here);
- utilize consultation opportunities and other related resources to work out problematic areas;
- be proactive - if you are having difficulties in the program, and/or if volunteering in the program is having a negative impact on you, don't wait for it to resolve itself. Utilize the supports at your disposal before you burn out;
- remind yourself that the well-being of the Participant is not solely your responsibility - you add a piece, but you do not have the power to control how people experience the program, or what they ultimately take with them from the experience.

## SECTION III: COMMUNICATION TOOLS

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### QUESTIONS FOR PEER VOLUNTEERS

(Adapted from The Skilled Facilitator (1994), by Reger M. Schwarz)

1. The major values, beliefs, and principles that guide my volunteering are...
2. The major values, beliefs, and principles that other volunteers hold and that I strongly disagree with are...
3. At the beginning of a Peer Meeting, I usually...
4. At the end of a Meeting, I usually...
5. When a Participant talks too much, I usually...
6. When a Participant is silent, I usually...
7. When a Participant gets upset, I usually...
8. When a Participant arrives late, I usually...
9. When a Participant wants to end the meeting early, I usually...
10. When Participants are excessively polite and do not confront their issues, I usually...
11. When there is conflict, I usually...
13. When a Participant takes a cheap shot at me or implies I am ineffective, I usually...
14. When a Participant attempts to force me to accept her/his opinion, I usually...
15. When a Participant is off track, I usually...
17. My favorite volunteer interventions are...
18. Interventions that a Participant usually needs but that I don't often make are...
20. The things that I find most satisfying about being a Peer Volunteer are...
21. The things that I find most frustrating about being a Peer Volunteer are...
22. The things that I find most uncomfortable in being a Peer Volunteer are...
23. On a continuum ranging from passive to very active, my intervention style is...
24. My typical intervention rhythm is (fast/slow)...

## SECTION III: COMMUNICATION TOOLS

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### EFFECTIVE VERSUS INEFFECTIVE PEER MATCHES

<b>EFFECTIVE MATCHES</b>	<b>INEFFECTIVE MATCHES</b>
Roles are clarified and exchanged between Participant and Peer to provide the best possible match.	Participant and Peer accept imposed roles.
Communication is two-way: it is the open and accurate expression of feelings by both Participant and Peer.	Communication is one-way and feelings are suppressed or ignored. The Volunteer dictates the parameters of the relationship.
Participation is equally shared by both Participant and Peer. Both 'task' and 'maintenance' roles are shared by both parties.	Leadership lies solely with the Peer, which is based on an authoritative model. Participation is unequal, and the Participant is disempowered.
Decision making solely rests in the hands of the Participant. Peer is encouraged to provoke thought, share alternatives but ensures that the final decision is made by the Participant.	Decisions made by the Participant are influenced by the Peer. Participant's decision-making abilities are minimized. Peer may resort to judgment, advice-giving and inappropriate self-disclosure.
Power is shared by Participant and Peer. 'Contracts' are created by the coordinator in conjunction with the Participant and Peer to ensure that individual goals/needs are met.	Power is concentrated in authority positions. Position Descriptions dictate the relationship between Participant and Peer irrespective of individual goals and needs.
Both Participants and Peers are encouraged to 'confront' (bring to the forefront) challenging situations and conflicts that may arise in a respectful way with each other using structured feedback.	Challenging situations and conflicts are ignored, denied, avoided or suppressed by Participant and Peer causing underlying tensions and resentment.
Interpersonal behavior is emphasized. A strong Participant and Peer relationship is advanced through inclusion, acceptance, support and trust.	Individual needs are emphasized. Interpersonal behaviour is ignored. Participant or Peer could be controlled by force.
Participant and Peer evaluate the effectiveness of the match on an ongoing basis and decide how to improve its functioning.	The highest authority evaluates the effectiveness and decides how goal-accomplishment may be improved.



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## SECTION IV: PROGRAM DETAILS

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### RESPONSIBILITIES OF PEER VOLUNTEERS

- All volunteers are representatives of the organization and, as such, agree to adhere to the policies and procedures outlined in the Volunteer Code of Conduct.

- Confidentiality

Your responsibility to Service Users/Program Participants includes:

- Safeguarding the confidentiality of Service Users' identities, names and contact information
- Returning ALL documents related to the program to the Program Coordinator

Tips on keeping information confidential:

- Use only first names when taking notes, including all reports.
- Keep all documents related to the program on organization premises.
- Do not acknowledge Service Users when you see them outside the Peer setting, unless they acknowledge you first. When making conversation, do not make any mention of Casey House, ACT, or the ART of Conversation.
- When leaving phone messages for Service Users, be discreet. Do not say what organization you're calling from.
- Use the assigned mailbox to receive messages/calls from Service Users. Safeguard the password to this mailbox. (**if necessary**)

- Safety

Confidentiality of client information does not extend to communication between volunteers and the Program Coordinator, especially when issues of safety are involved.

Specifically, you **MUST** report to the Program Coordinator as soon as possible any situation involving intent to cause harm to self or others, including disclosure of intent to commit suicide, harm another person or admission of or intent to harm a child.

- Session Reporting

Peer Volunteers are required to fill out monthly session reports regarding Peer Meetings and submit them to the Program Coordinator before the end of the month.

## SECTION IV: PROGRAM DETAILS

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These reports are important as they keep the Program Coordinator informed of what is happening in the program, identify emerging trends and issues affecting our communities, and assist us in evaluating the ART of Conversation.

- Training

All volunteers in the ART of Conversation are required to attend program-specific meetings/trainings. In addition, Peer Volunteers are strongly encouraged to take part in other training opportunities within the organization.

- Commitment

As a Peer Volunteer, you are accountable to the Program Coordinator and the Participant to be present, on time and prepared to facilitate all scheduled meetings with the Participant. If you are ill, or unexpectedly cannot be present for a meeting with the Participant, you must provide advanced notice to the Participant and to the Program Coordinator.

- Support and Supervision

Participation in the supervision process, outlined below, is a requirement of all volunteers in the ART of Conversation:

- Peer Volunteers meet with the Program Coordinator on a regular basis while they are actively involved in the program. The Program Coordinator is also available outside of regularly scheduled supervision meetings for consultation and problem solving regarding any issues that may arise during the course of their work.
- Volunteers of short-term Peer Matches will have supervision meetings with the Program Coordinator at the middle (halfway) and end (after last session) of the Peer Match.
- Volunteers of on-going Peer Matches will informally check in with the Program Coordinator on a regular basis and will have supervision meetings approximately bi-annually.

- Boundaries

- Gifts
- Relationships with Participants

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## SECTION IV: PROGRAM DETAILS

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### HIGHLIGHTS OF THE ART of Conversation

#### **Becoming a Peer Volunteer:**

Who is the Peer in the ART of Conversation? Both people are. A volunteer acts as a peer for a client. A client is a peer with whom the volunteer works. Ed, the Volunteer, might say: "Joe's my buddy and I'm helping him out." Joe, the Participant, might say: "Ed's my buddy and he's helping me out."

#### **How does the ART of Conversation begin?**

The Participant registers and completes an intake interview. The intake provides us with basic information such as name, address, phone number, birth date, etc. During the intake process, we get an assessment of the Participant's current situation. Does the Participant live alone or with a roommate or partner? Are they in a relationship? Does the Participant work? How does the Participant feel physically?

Knowledge of the current emotional state of the Participant is also important. Emotions like fear, anger, anxiety, frustration or suicidal thoughts are usually expressed here. Stress is something that has become associated with the HIV and AIDS epidemic. How a person deals with stress is important. We ask how a Participant deals with stress during stressful periods. Drug-using behaviors are included in this part.

We see complicated issues surface in our work with Participants. Among these issues are: multiple losses, self-esteem issues, addiction problems, and mental illness. Therefore, the Participant's history is important to know to get a better sense of who they are and what kind of supports they are looking for. We rely on Participants to be honest and forthcoming in this process.

Once the Participant is referred to or registers for the ART of Conversation, the Program Coordinator conducts another intake specific to the Program. This involves asking the Participant for their "wish list." This is an opportunity for the Participant to detail exactly what they would like from a Peer Volunteer. Sometimes, the Participant will say that they have no preferences. In other instances, the Participant will be very clear about specific personality traits and characteristics they would like a Peer Volunteer to possess. Some of these characteristics might be age, gender, sexual orientation, smoking habits, possessing a car, interests in music, spirituality, etc. At this point, we will also get a description of the personality traits and characteristics of the Participant. The more information we gather on the Participant, the better picture we have of who this person is in the world.

Once we have information from the Peer Volunteer and the Participant, we search for the best possible match for both. We frequently look for 'common ground' between the two, such as age, spirituality, hobbies, interests, employment, etc. This is why we ask for personal details from both Participants and Peer Volunteers. Once a Peer Volunteer has

## SECTION IV: PROGRAM DETAILS

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been matched with a Participant, a meeting is set up between the two and the Program Coordinator and the ART of Conversation begins.

### **Peer Matches**

Peer matches develop from the need for social support and practical assistance among people living with HIV. It is human nature to need support, especially when integrating HIV into our daily lives. Social support and practical assistance are necessary, and the way in which you can give support will affect a Participant. It is important to acknowledge the diversity involved in giving support and the importance of staying open to the different ways to be a Peer Volunteer.

There are as many different types of relationships as there are Participants and Peer Volunteers. The role of a Peer Volunteer is multi-dimensional. Peer Volunteers act as: a companion; a non-judgmental and objective third party; a sounding board; a supporter; a boundary-setter; an active listener; and as an organizational representative. The Peer Volunteer can be a link to the multitude of services that the Participant might need from various organizations. A Peer Volunteer is not: an advice-giver; a mediator; someone to solve a Participant's problems; a financial resource; a sex partner; a counselor; or someone to use alcohol or drugs with.

We recommend that the Peer Volunteer and the Participant talk on a regular basis. For most Peer matches, these meetings are held weekly for about an hour. Wonderful Peer matches can develop quite quickly. However, others can be more difficult for various reasons. In some cases, Participants may take a while to establish trust with their Peer Volunteer.

There are times when a Peer Volunteer is not sure if the support they are providing is appropriate. This can sometimes create personal difficulties and give rise to feelings of not "being enough" or not "doing it right." All in all, it's hard to say what support will be needed on any given meeting with the Participant. The nature of the interaction will determine the type of support that is needed.

### **How do I know if I'm doing OK?**

### **Follow-ups and Termination**

Soon after the beginning of the Peer Match, the Participant is called and asked how things are going with the Peer Volunteer. We ask about the ways in which the Participant is being supported, what kind of issues they feel free enough to discuss, if the Peer Volunteer could be more supportive in other ways, how often they meet and overall, what they think of the Peer Volunteer. At this point, if there are any problems in the Peer Match from the Participant's perspective, these problems will be examined by the Program Coordinator and other relevant staff.

## SECTION IV: PROGRAM DETAILS

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Termination can occur for various reasons. It can happen as a result of a follow-up where it becomes apparent that the relationship is not working for the Participant or for the Peer Volunteer. In some cases, the Participant will move out of the area or they may just decide they no longer want to access the Program.

### **Roles and Responsibilities of Participants**

The ART of Conversation strives to fulfill the following goals: to ensure adherence to medications; to help people living with HIV improve their quality of life by providing support and companionship; assist people living with HIV in maintaining autonomy and independence; support people living with HIV in resolving the practical and emotional issues that frequently arise as a result of living with HIV; to assist people living with HIV in problem-solving efforts and in implementing decisions; to help identify and make contact with other support services and resources.

A Peer Volunteer is a trained volunteer who has chosen to work with people living with HIV who require practical support and/or companionship to maintain a higher quality of life. All Peer Volunteers have successfully completed Core Skills Training and ART of Conversation Training. A Peer Volunteer can offer assistance in many areas, such as identifying resources that may be available to you and discussing options and solutions to problems. As a Participant, you have the right to:

- Have the agency's ART of Conversation services provided without discrimination, regardless of race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, age, health status, physical or mental ability
- Expect the Peer Volunteer to keep appointments and commitments made and to cancel with adequate notice when necessary
- Expect that the Peer Volunteer will never ask you for money or expect or request you to lend them money or pay their way
- Expect that the Peer Volunteer will not make any sexual advances or expect or request sex or a romantic relationship in any way
- Expect that the Peer Volunteer will make contact with you regularly, barring unexpected circumstances, and that the Peer Volunteer will offer you a committed and regular number of hours per week of their time
- Expect that the Peer Volunteer will be well trained
- Expect that the Peer Volunteer will keep all information about you confidential and within the confines of the Program
- Request a meeting with the Program Coordinator to discuss problems, concerns, or positive feedback regarding the Peer Match
- Be notified immediately by the Peer Volunteer should they request a leave of absence or if they resign from the Program

We ask that you, as one of the two people who are part of the Peer Match, understand that we have found that certain guidelines are necessary in this type of relationship to ensure that it is as supportive and responsive to your needs as possible. We request that you:

## SECTION IV: PROGRAM DETAILS

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- You neither discourage nor encourage substance use
- Treat the Peer Volunteer fairly and honestly and communicate with the Peer Volunteer about how you are feeling about the Peer Match and what your expectations of a Peer Volunteer are
- Inform the Program Coordinator if you are unhappy with the ART of Conversation
- Not make sexual advances or expect or request sex or a romantic relationship with the Peer Volunteer
- Not expect or request that the Peer Volunteer pay your way, lend or give you money or otherwise be responsible for you financially
- Keep appointments and commitments to the Peer Volunteer to the best of your ability and cancel in advance when you can
- Allow the Peer Volunteer a reasonable amount of time to make a response of the questions you ask
- Not ask the Peer Volunteer to do chores and tasks for you as long as you are capable of doing them for yourself
- Provide notification of change of address and phone number to the Peer Volunteer so they can maintain contact with you
- Communicate with the Peer Volunteer on a regular basis and try to address issues with the Peer Volunteer first
- If circumstances change and you no longer wish to continue with the relationship, that you contact the Program Coordinator

### **Helpful Hints for Peer Volunteers**

- Never smoke in a Participant's presence
- Do not make jokes of a sexual nature
- Do not provide food for the Participant until you have carefully checked their dietary restrictions
- Realize that there is nothing wrong with silence and that it tends to build trust
- Be honest. False cheerfulness may be resented and false assurance will hinder the person's capacity to deal with the reality of their situation
- Be sympathetic without being sentimental
- Remember that it is the Participant's life. They must make their own decisions and choices
- Accept emotional responses. Sharing feelings can often be good for the Peer Match
- Non-verbal communication is meaningful. A touch, smile or frown may show more concern than the spoken word
- Do not become involved beyond your capabilities physically or emotionally or in terms of providing support in which you are not qualified (such as counselling)
- Do not expect the Peer Match to be perfect or positive at all times
- Do not feel that you must know all the answers or have a solution for every problem. It is OK to need to reach out to other individuals and resources for information and support

## SECTION IV: PROGRAM DETAILS

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- Do not judge people on their reactions but rather react to the needs that they express
- There are many resources and sources of information and assistance available for any given situation. Sometimes these resources are very concrete, such as home health care agencies, support groups or substance use treatment programs. Often resources are not so clearly defined, such as making use of relaxation techniques, visual imagery, touching when you can't speak, etc. You must know or learn what resources are available to you and often have to discover new ones for a given situation. All of this implies a willingness to keep informed of available services.
- Understand that the Participant may have resources of their own and these should be "uncovered" and used whenever possible
- When working with a crisis situation, the more resources you know or can locate, the more effective you will be in working towards crisis resolution
- Make use of your strengths: allow your personality to be part of your work with the Peer Volunteer
- Do not impose your own religious, moral, cultural, ideological, or political beliefs on the Participant. The Participant may express things to you that you don't like, agree with or identify with. People are entitled to be different and to feel in ways that may make you feel uncomfortable
- It is easy when doing this kind of work to project your own feelings onto the Participant. Don't assume that the Participant feels about a situation the way you do or would. Learn how to distinguish between the Participant's feelings and your own. You are there to do what needs to be done for them. They are not required to fulfill your needs. They do not have to say "thank you" or offer you friendship or compassion. Understand what needs you have and take active steps to get them met elsewhere.



## SECTION V: APPENDICES

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### VOLUNTEER CODE OF CONDUCT

#### 1. CONFIDENTIALITY

We will honor the confidentiality of Service Users, clients, volunteers, staff, sponsors and donors and adhere to the established precepts of confidentiality of organizational Policies & Procedures and government legislation. We agree to consider information pertaining to medical conditions, family relations, phone numbers and addresses, sexual orientation and other facts of a highly personal nature as confidential and therefore we understand that we are not to disclose this information to any person who is not authorized by the organization to have access to such information without the specific permission of the individual concerned.

#### 2. NON-DISCRIMINATION/EQUITY

In keeping with organizational philosophies and policies, we will neither practice nor tolerate discrimination or harassment against any staff member, volunteer or service-user on the ground of race, creed, color, place of origin, ethnic origin, ancestry, citizenship, political or religious affiliation, gender, sexual orientation, age, marital status, family relationship, HIV status, economic status, identity, disability or record of offences. We will treat each other, staff and Service Users with dignity, care and respect. We will be sensitive to and educate ourselves about individual and group differences. We will honor all clients' rights to self-determination and agree to support people in making their own personal choices.

#### 3. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

We agree to discuss any potential conflict with our supervisors and commit to being truthful in all matters to do with our volunteer relationship.

#### 4. RELATIONSHIPS – BOUNDARIES

We encourage friendly relations between volunteers and those they serve. However, it is important to remain aware of appropriate boundaries. As with paid staff, we discourage relationships of a romantic or sexual nature between supervisors and those they supervise or volunteers and those they serve. We agree to maintain respectful and professional relationship boundaries during the course of our volunteer work and agree to speak with our supervisors should any relationship develop which makes it difficult for us to remain objective and fulfill our volunteer obligations.

#### 5. LIMITS

We agree to maintain the limits we have set for ourselves with respect to the emotional and physical resources we are willing to provide. We understand that our own training and education may limit our ability to service clients and we recognize the need to ask for assistance or refer when appropriate. If we feel we are being asked to do something outside of our job description, or are having difficulty saying no to a staff member,



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volunteer or client, we will ask for support and coaching from our supervisors and/or peers.

### 6. ACCOUNTABILITY

We agree to participate in supervision that is acceptable, reasonable, regular and visible according to the guidelines of the individual programs we are assigned to. Supervision guarantees accountability for the performance of assigned responsibilities, provides an opportunity for feedback and guidance, and assistance and support in my role as a volunteer.

### 7. TRAINING AND CONTINUING DEVELOPMENT

We understand that in accepting a volunteer position, we are agreeing to undertake and complete the necessary training before, during and in the course of our volunteer assignment as outlined by the volunteer coordinator and as indicated in our program agreements. We value our own continuing development and understand that it is essential as a volunteer. We will do this by keeping updated on new information, attend monthly meetings and relevant in-services, and by taking advantage of opportunities such as seminars and workshops offered both within and outside the organization.

### 8. ALCOHOL/DRUG USE

We understand that being under the influence of alcohol or drugs may interfere with our ability to deliver service. We therefore agree: not to perform our volunteer duties while under the influence of drugs or alcohol; not to provide a client with illegal substances or encourage their use; not to participate with a client in alcohol consumption to the point where our effectiveness is impaired.

### 9. SCENTS

Many people living with HIV/AIDS and also those who suffer from environmental allergies, are extremely sensitive to strong scents. In order to make the space as comfortable as possible for all people who are affected by this, staff and volunteers agree to moderate their use of colognes and perfume while working in the office or performing duties on behalf of the organization in the community.

### 10. NON-COMPLIANCE

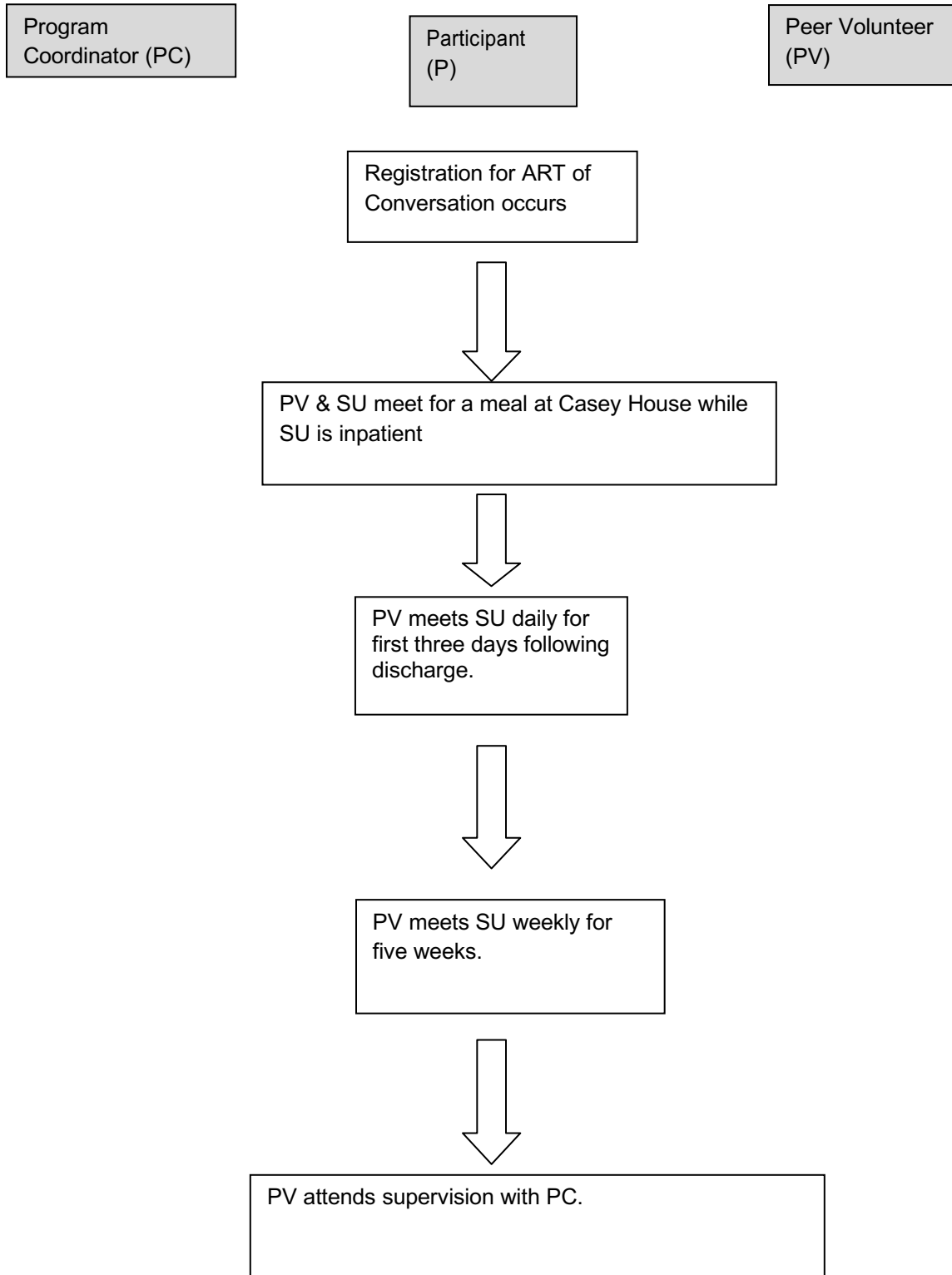
We understand that failure to adhere to any and all parts of this code may result in suspension from our volunteer duties and/or termination of our volunteer relationship with the organization.

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## SECTION V: APPENDICES

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### TIMELINE OF A 6-WEEK PEER MATCH



## SECTION V: APPENDICES

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### ART OF CONVERSATION CONTACT LOG

Peer Volunteer completes this log after each meeting.

Meeting Date & Time:

Successful Contact (yes/no):

Meeting Type (Phone or In-Person)

Meeting Length (minutes):

1. What kind of support did you provide on this meeting? Have there been particular topics/issues raised? If so, what are they?
  - a. Please estimate how much of the meeting was dedicated to which topics?  
**(Examples:** 20% on medical appointments, 20% on medications, 30% on finances, 20% on substance use, 10% socializing about the weather, current events, shared interests, etc.)
2. Comment on this meeting's process – what worked well, what difficulties arose, (conflict, connections, issues, etc.)
3. Are there any resources you or the participant requires?
4. Are you encountering any situations which could be addressed through further training opportunities (skills and/or information-based)?

***Reflecting on what was shared by the participant in this meeting, help us understand how you feel they have been doing in the following areas of their life, where marks to the left represent low levels and marks to the right indicate high levels.***

#### ***Individually***

(Personal well-being)

|.....|

#### ***Interpersonally***

(Family, close relationships)

|.....|

#### ***Socially***

(Activity engagement, friendships)

|.....|

***Overall*** (General sense of well-being)

|.....|

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## SECTION V: APPENDICES

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### PEER VOLUNTEER SUPERVISION FORM

Volunteer Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Supervision: \_\_\_\_\_

Current Volunteer Status: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Areas of Strength

#### Areas of Potential Growth

#### Part One: Volunteer Feedback (To be completed by the volunteer)

<p>What I am doing well as a Peer Volunteer:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1.</li><li>2.</li><li>3.</li></ol>	<p>What concerns/wishes I have for myself as a Peer Volunteer:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1.</li><li>2.</li><li>3.</li></ol>
<p>What works well for me about the Peer Program:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1.</li><li>2.</li></ol>	<p>What concerns/wishes I have about the Peer Program:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1.</li><li>2.</li></ol>

#### Part Two: Supervisor Feedback (To be completed by the Program Coordinator)

<p>What I see you doing well as a Peer Volunteer:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1.</li></ol>	<p>My wishes for you as a Peer Volunteer are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1.</li><li>2.</li></ol>
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2.  3.	3.
Training and Professional Development Opportunities Completed:  1.  2.	Training and Professional Development Opportunities Recommended:  1.  2.

**Part Three: Comments (to be completed during supervision)**

Volunteer Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Program Coordinator Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date & Time of Next Supervision: \_\_\_\_\_



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- Agitation
- Panic attacks

### ASK

#### **Directly ask:**

- Are you thinking about killing yourself? or,
- Do you ever think about killing yourself? or,
- Do you ever get suicidal thoughts

**\* Usually the individual will clarify how serious these thoughts are right after you ask this question. Most times the conversation will end there.**

#### **Other questions to ask (if relevant):**

- If they have attempted suicide before
- Are they using substances including Alcohol
- Do they have seemingly unsolvable problems
- Do they have a suicide plan
- Do they have the means to complete the suicide

### HELP

- If you have assessed the risk of suicide as low to moderate then talking about it and encouraging the Service User to speak with a counsellor or someone they trust is the best strategy
- Regardless of risk assessment, debrief with the Program Coordinator
- If you have assessed the risk to be high or imminent then escort the Service User to the nearest Emergency Room at a hospital or call 911

#### **An example of high/ imminent risk of suicide:**

When your service user has a clear and detailed plan about how they are going to kill themselves after the two of you have met tonight and have the means to complete the suicide.

#### **No Suicide Contracts**

**No Suicide Contracts** are known by many different names including, **No Harm Contract**, **Safety Contract**, **Contract For Safety**, etc. They may be either written or verbal with the common feature being that the client promises not to hurt or kill themselves. Other components include a specific duration of time i.e. short-term, and an agreement to take certain actions such as calling a crisis line or contacting someone they know and trust prior to hurting themselves. After the agreement has been completed, both parties sign and date the contract, if it is written.

#### **3 Components to a (verbal or written) contract:**

- The individual will not hurt or kill themselves
- Contract is time-limited i.e. short-term
- Specific action of what they should do in case they cannot control their suicidal impulses

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### ROLE PLAY SIMULATION SCENARIOS

In pairs, choose 1 person to be the Peer Volunteer, and 1 person to be the Participant.

**Goal of the Exercise:** Practice a Peer Meeting, incorporating skills taught in the training thus far. Focus on content, on having a productive conversation, on fostering norms, and other skills taught in tonight's training.

**Assessors:** Chart the Peer Volunteer's use of Structuring the Meeting components, rating them from 1-5 on how well you observed they did. Have a discussion around what worked well, and what might work better.

Chart the Peer Volunteer's use of Statements that May Help a Participant Talk, using a simpler hash stroke system.

#### Group Discussion Questions:

1. What were the things that the Peer Volunteer did well?
2. What were some areas to watch out for?
3. What do you imagine are things you need to watch out for?

#### Scenario #1: Social Activities

##### Person 1: The Peer Volunteer

You are calling to talk to the participant about their goals as outlined by their Community Transition Planning Worksheet from Casey House, with a focus on: **social activities**.

Refer to their worksheet. You are calling to talk about their change goals and help them problem-solve any barriers to it.

##### Person 2: The Participant

Improvise a conversation where you are a little bit avoidant of talking about the purpose of the meeting. Be unfocused in the conversation and meander. You are not impossible, just avoidant.

You have the winter blues. The weather has been affecting your mood and you feel a lack of desire to get motivated to take care of your health goals. You've been isolated yourself and you are wanting to have more of a social talk with the volunteer. During the meeting, express some difficult emotion, and meander a bit, steering the conversation off topic more than once. Talk a bit about the crappy weather and how you don't really want to do anything. Avoid directly answering the peer's questions the first time, or even second time around, segueing off into tangents. You will answer very direct questions however, and you are open to their being directive if necessary.

Goal: Provide an opportunity for the Peer Volunteer to redirect you, but provide enough of a challenge. You are not resistant to talking about your goals, but you are more interested in more general topics.



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### Scenario #2: Medication Adherence

#### Person 1: The Peer Volunteer

You are meeting to talk to the participant about their goals as outlined by their Community Transition Planning Worksheet from Casey House, with a focus on: **taking my meds at the prescribed times and not to miss a dose.**

Refer to their worksheet.

You are meeting to talk about their change goals and help them problem-solve any barriers.

#### Person 2: The Participant

Improvise a conversation where you really want to get into difficulties. Be realistic in conversational tone: you are not hopeless or unable to be shaken out of it, you are just a little bit focused on the glass being half empty.

You have experienced some challenges around meeting your goal, and you feel it is important that the Volunteer really understand why you feel this way and other instances when you experienced similar challenges. You want to provide histories of problems and get into elaborations of them. You sort of want to dump on the volunteer, but you do not believe it is all hopeless and are not out to “prove them wrong” or argue with them.

Goal: Provide an opportunity for the ART volunteer to redirect you into exploring coping, rather than struggles, but provide enough of a challenge. You are not resistant to talking about your goals, but you are more interested in really explaining to your volunteer how hard things used to be, and how hard things now. You are a little bit used to having dumping conversations, and are simply not used to coping conversations.

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### Scenario #3: Substance use

#### Person 1: The Peer Volunteer

You are meeting with the participant about their goals as outlined by their Community Transition Planning Worksheet from Casey House, with a focus on: **substance use**.

Refer to their worksheet.

You are meeting to talk about their change goals and help them problem-solve any barriers.

There are questions on Page 18 of the training manual to help you out.

#### Person 2: The Participant

Improvise a conversation where you glorify substance use. You use crack and instinctively get into vivid and illustrative descriptions of what happens when your friend comes by to use with you, the smell, the ritual of smoking, the ritual of your day. You describe the sensations that accompany using, including excitement, stress-relief, confidence and enjoying it.

Your goal is to provide the volunteer a chance to interject to redirect you from glorifying use to talking in a more distant, “headlines” style of conversation, and to check in with you around coping with cravings.

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### Scenario #4: the Quiet Person

#### Goal of the Exercise:

Practice “Statements that Help Participants Talk,” using skills taught in tonight’s module, and previous modules.

#### Person 1: The Peer Volunteer

You are meeting with the participant about their goals as outlined by their Community Transition Planning Worksheet from Casey House, with a focus on: **taking their meds.**

Refer to their worksheet handout.

You are meeting to talk about their change goals and help them problem-solve any barriers to it. During the meeting, practice how to Statements that May Help A Participant Talk – Page 27

#### Person 2: The Participant

Improvise a conversation where you are shy, quiet, and not giving a lot of content for the Peer to work with. Your goal, as outlined on your Casey House Community Transition Plan Sheet indicates that you sometimes forget to take your meds and want help remembering to take them. Since leaving Casey House, you have not had a lot of trouble with this goal. You’ve been meeting it and have a lot for the volunteer to offer you.

You have been more not resistant to talking about your goals. You have been meeting them, and need skills such as *Affirmation*, *Encourages* and *Door Openers*. Provide a scenario where the volunteer is not need to problem-solve for you, or give advice.

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### PEER VOLUNTEER TOOL BOX

#### Active listening

- Rephrasing
- Checking out/asking
- Paraphrasing
- Summarizing
- Clarifying
- Open- & closed-ended questions
- Body language/facial expressions
- Helps people feel heard and understood

#### Empathy

- Put yourself in the other person's situation
- Helps people feel understood and recognized
- Decreases stigma and isolation

#### Working with emotion & reflecting feelings

- Acknowledging and allowing emotions, while exploring coping
- Respecting personal boundaries
- Listening for feeling words
- Naming the feelings and clarifying, then putting it to the Participant

#### Process Comments/Putting it back to the Service User

- Focusing on the "how" in the situation
- Puts the power back to the Participant

#### Norms

- Redirects/focuses conversation
- Reinforces a structure
- Can often help with challenging situations
- Helps to create safety

#### Check Ins

- Can help to set agenda topics for the meeting
- Indicator of emotion in the meeting
- Brings everyone into the "here and now"

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### Structured Feedback

- Sets a tone for how to talk to each other
- Encourages a strength-based approach by pointing out helpful traits
- Helps people to "own" their words

### Closure

- Using regular reminders
- Connecting the experience to the personal environment
- Supporting/encouraging emotion around loss/closure
- Offers an opportunity to explore "unfinished business"