

Info About Peer Support

Peer support workers have training in Mental Health Peer Work as well as our own lived experience of mental health challenges. We work alongside you by safely sharing our experiences and discussing strategies that have helped us maintain our mental well-being.

Research^{1,2,3} shows that recovery is often strengthened when individuals connect with others who have a lived experience of mental health challenges. This connection is a holistic understanding based on mutual experience where people can 'be' with each other without the constraints of traditional expert/patient relationships.

Peer relationships are viewed as partnerships that invite and inspire both parties to learn and grow, rather than as one person needing to 'help' another. We don't start with the assumption of a problem, rather we move our attention to how we have learned to make sense of our experiences. We then talk together about how we can create new ways of seeing, thinking, and doing.

Peer support promotes a trauma-informed way of relating which means instead of asking 'What's wrong?' we ask, "What happened?". We support you in a way that focusses on what we want to move towards rather than what we need to stop or avoid doing.



¹ Macneil & Mead (2005); Mead (2003); Mead & Macneil (2004) cited in Suicide Prevention Australia (2009) Position Statement Supporting Suicide Attempt Survivors. Available from:

<https://www.suicidepreventionaustralia.org/content/supporting-suicide-attempt-survivors>

² Felton et. al (1995) cited in Suicide Prevention Australia (2009) Position Statement Supporting Suicide Attempt Survivors. Available from: <https://www.suicidepreventionaustralia.org/content/supporting-suicide-attempt-survivors>

³ Mead, S. & MacNeil, C. Peer Support What Makes It Unique. *Intentional Peer Support* [Articles | Intentional Peer Support](#)

How Peer Workers Support You

Our services at Shellharbour Medicare Mental Health Centre are tailored to your needs, offering flexible and empowering ways to access support. Here's how we can help:

- **Flexible Sessions:** We provide limited short-to-medium-term support. You can work with a peer worker individually or alongside a clinician.
- **Accessible Support:** Choose the setting that works best for you—visit us in our safe and comfortable centre or meet in our local community.
- **Shared Experiences:** We openly and safely share our personal mental health journeys to foster connection, validate your experiences, and combat stigma.
- **Focus on Self-Care:** We support you in incorporating self-care into your life, nurturing your mental, physical, and spiritual health.
- **Finding Meaning:** Together, we'll explore ways to bring meaning and purpose into your life, an important part of recovery.
- **Empowering Relationships:** We avoid giving advice or 'fixing' problems. Instead, we focus on your goals and work toward them with mutual respect and reciprocity.
- **Life Skills & Advocacy:** From daily living skills to connecting with community services and advocacy, we're here to support your journey.

