

THE FUTURE OF MENTAL HEALTH IS MUTUAL AID



@embracing.ambiguity

A GUIDE TO
ANTI-CARCERAL, POLITICIZED
PEER SUPPORT FOR A
LIBERATED FUTURE.



WE

KEEP

US

SAFE,

HEARD &

CARED FOR.

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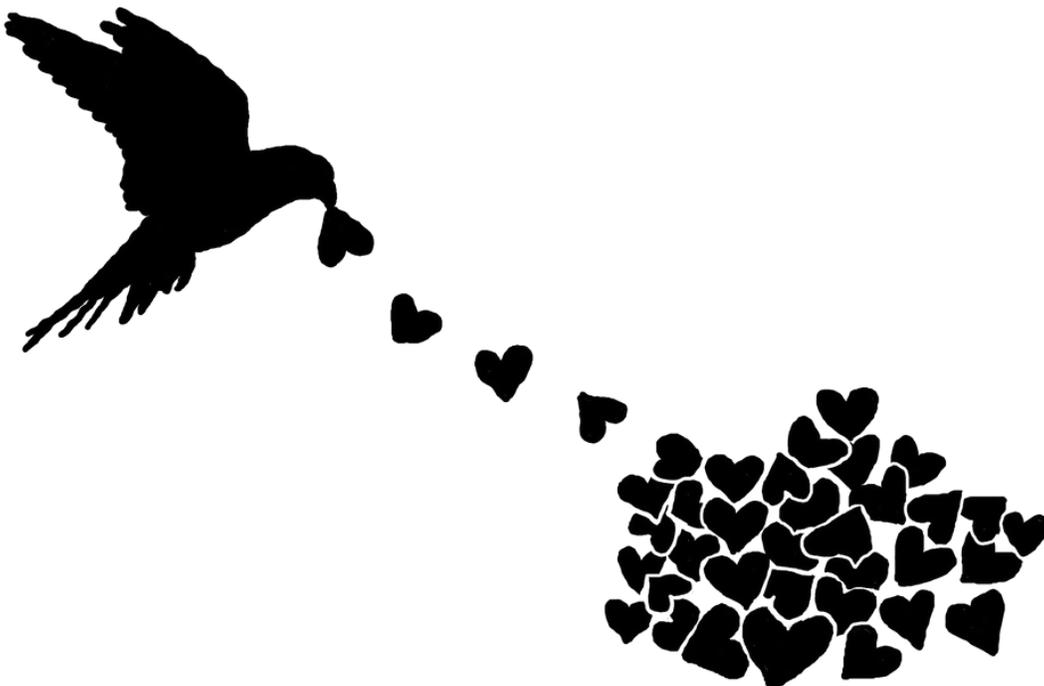
Mutual aid in action...

build a community group

build your own HLOC

build your own respite

Peer support can be anything



You don't need a certification

peer support certifications are BS.

As peer support becomes increasingly recognized as invaluable, corporations and state agencies (part of the Mental Health Industrial Complex) are beginning to implement requirements for “certifications”. These certifications will only serve to...

- qualify some forms of knowledge/practices while discrediting and devaluing others
- create unnecessary and harmful hierarchy in peer relationships
- co-opt peers to become part of systems they claim to fight against
- enable states and agencies to conduct surveillance and enforce peer specialists to comply with carceral tactics (by threatening loss of certification)

peer support is a practice.

You don't need to be an “expert” to provide peer support (and certainly not a certification!). Providing peer support involves developing a skillset, just like learning to play an instrument or a sport. Each time we engage in community care, we diversify our experiences and sharpen our skills.

Questions to Guide Care Conversations



these are a set of questions to
ask YOURSELF when providing
support to a comrade

Am I asserting the concept of a “consensus reality”?

We all experience the world differently, for example:

- a comrade hearing voices or seeing things that we cannot see.
- a comrade having an emotional “overreaction” to something we found to be benign.

When we tell our comrades that the voices “aren’t real” or they “have no reason to be that upset”, we are asserting the concept of a “consensus reality” (aka there is only one “most real” reality).

Instead of this, you can try...

- being curious! asking your friend about their version of reality, even if it’s different from yours.
- feel free to explain that your reality is different, but that doesn’t mean that their reality is any less real.

Am I providing the type of support this person wants?

Do you know what your comrade is looking for in peer support? Have you asked? For example, they could be looking for...

- advice
- resources
- someone to listen
- someone that can relate
- validation
- a hug
- someone to cry with

It's not "weird" to ask the question: "how can I best support you right now?". You can even list the above options/categories while posing your question, as to not overwhelm with such an open-ended question.

Are my actions/words rooted in a fearful/protective response?

Situation: your friend comes to you and says they're feeling suicidal.

Many of our first responses are often rooted in fear or protection.

For example:

calling police for a "wellness check", asking your friend to go to the hospital, making your friend promise to stay alive, etc.

Ultimately, not only are these responses very often unhelpful and traumatic, they don't center and support your friend.

Instead try: sitting in the suicidality with your friend & creating space for it, showing love by respecting your friend's autonomy

Mutual Aid for Mental Health

IN ACTION ↙

Section 1

build your own community
space/group

Section 2

build your own higher
level of care

Section 3

build your own respite



build your own community space/group

imagine having 20 minutes to freely speak anything on your mind, with the opportunity to receive support from comrades. and then each of your comrades also have that opportunity to receive support from you!

if this sounds good to you, check out...

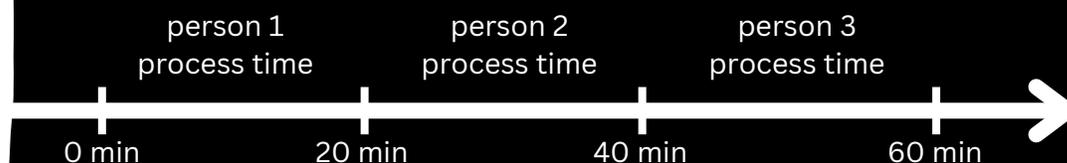
MAST ↙
(MUTUAL AID SOCIAL THERAPY)

see their
instagram for
more info!!

MAST is decentralized and autonomous. They provide the resources for you to start YOUR OWN group in your community and/or organizing network.

below is a (simplified) example of how a MAST session can be run.

get in groups of three...



build your own higher level of care (HLOC)

do you/a comrade want...

- more structure
- more time in therapeutic spaces
- more support



BUT...

- can't afford more therapy/treatment
- can't find a program that is a good fit
- don't want to enter a carceral system
- or can't access a traditional HLOC for any reason?



BUILD YOUR OWN HLOC!

One of the traditional HLOCs is called "IOP" or "Intensive Outpatient Program". It mainly consists of a bunch of groups that give your days structure and continuous support.

We can try to replicate this by attending a series of free or low-cost peer support groups!

Check out this calendar compilation of online peer support groups at the following link:

<https://sarahbroas.wordpress.com/peer-support-group-calendar/>

build your own respite

do you/a comrade need...

- around the clock support
- a change of environment
- physical company!

first: is there already a peer respite in your area?

check here!!!



<https://power2u.org/directory-of-peer-respites/>

(these are typically small, short-term residences staffed 24/7 by peers and are an alternative to hospitalization)

if not: ask for the support of your comrades!

1. Pick a home-base.

Do you need a change of environment? Do you want to sleep at a friend's house? Would you feel safer in your own?

2. Gather a group of comrades.

Who can show up for you? Who in your life do you feel safe with? Aim for a group of 3-7 people.

3. Make a supporter schedule.

Communicate your needs and assist your comrades in developing a support schedule for the next week. It could be helpful to split each day into "shifts".

NOTE: this can be a lot to organize, especially when we're already struggling! consider asking for help in organizing this!

Peer Support Can Be Anything

peer support could look like...

listening to and supporting a comrade.

peer support could ALSO look like...

helping clean a
comrade's apartment

being someone
to cry with

prepping some meals for a friend

the basics: money,
shelter, food

doing the dishes

childcare

doing the legwork of
finding resources,
sending emails,
making calls.

engaging in
activities together:
crafting. hiking.
joyful movement.



Share this zine with a friend, leave it in your local coffee shop, take it with you, use it in times of need! For more, visit @embracing.ambiguity on Instagram. Enjoy!