

# WHY PEER SUPPORT

The following information comes from a variety of professionals in the behavioral health field. Individuals that contributed include **Certified Peer Specialists, Youth Peer Specialists, supervisors**, and many other roles in order to gain tips and lessons learned from all perspectives regarding this topic. Although the specific roles may differ across the individuals contributing, the **emerging adult** population they serve unites them.

## Builds Hope

- **PSs** use **lived experience** to relate to the **emerging adult** and show them there is hope for the future. The **Peer Support's** lived experience is used to empathize, relate, and inspire hope. It is meant to normalize feelings, thoughts, or situations the **emerging adult** might be experiencing to make them feel less alone and alienated. **Peer Supports** make sure to share relevant personal experiences in a way to advocate with or for the **emerging adult** they are working with. See **Resources** for a **Strategic Sharing Guide**.
- The hiring of young people\* with behavioral health challenges allows agencies to **promote recovery** and allows the **emerging adults** they serve to have hope that one day that could be them.

## Builds Relationships

- **Peer Supports** build relationships through **rapport building**. This includes their ability to be relatable in age and experience, knowledge of culture, and talking with the **emerging adults** one-on-one about their interests, goals, and personal story. Through this healthy relationship between the **Peer Support** and **emerging adults**, the **PS** is helping the **emerging adult** gain skills to build and maintain new relationships in life.

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\*This is specific for **Youth Peer Specialists** - they are **PSs** who specifically serve adolescents and young adults. Best practice is for Youth Peer Specialists to be near-age of those they serve (18 - 30 years old).

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## Individualized Support

- Through relationship building, the **PS** gets to know the **emerging adult** on a **very personal** and **individualized level** which helps the **PS** to assess their unique set of strengths and use those to accomplish the **emerging adults'** goals.

## Breaks Barriers

- **PSs** help to break the barriers of feelings of **loneliness, shame, stigma,** and **low self-esteem** by reminding **emerging adults** that other people experience struggles similar to theirs by sharing their own story and offering their feelings through a genuine shared understanding.

## Promotes Resilience

- Individuals that receive **Peer Support** are more likely to acquire a **set of resiliency tools** which set them up for future successes in adulthood. These tools include:
  - Problem-solving
  - Relationship building
  - Self-care
  - Self-advocacy