Peer Support Training Manual

Edited by
Amanda Kracen

Written and compiled by
Staff Members of the Student Counselling Service

(including Amanda Kracen, Annemarie Naughton,
Jenny O'Reilly, Vicky Panoutsakopoulou, Natalie Rooney)

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Available on-line at: http://www.tcd.ie/Student_Counselling/

Student Counselling Service
Trinity College Dublin
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This manual is the result of our experience in establishing a peer support programme during the last three years. It is a practical resource to be drawn from, and not an exact blueprint for peer support training. We hope you will find this manual accessible and useful. The materials will most likely need to be added to, subtracted from and adapted depending on the organisational culture, the exact audience, and their training needs. As you use this training manual, we suggest that you add your own materials so that it becomes a library of ideas.

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What is peer support?

A peer group is defined as a collective unit in which the members share some common characteristics (Council of Europe, 1997). It usually refers to age groups in general, but more specifically to adolescent groups in which members are bound closely together by youth culture. As young adults share a distinctive history and a particular social context, they are often the first point of contact in times of distress and therefore play a valuable role in support. Often when a crisis arises, peers are willing to give their time and to offer themselves in the role of listener when professional help is not perceived to be available, accessible, or advantageous.

Peers are individuals who share related values, experiences and lifestyles and who are approximately the same age. Peer support is defined as a variety of interpersonal helping behaviours assumed by non-professionals who undertake a helping role with others. It includes one-to-one helping relationships, group leadership, discussion leadership, advisement, tutoring, and all activities of an interpersonal helping or assisting nature.

The term 'peer supporter' refers to a person who assumes the role of a helping person with contemporaries. The most obvious role of peer supporters in college is meeting fellow students individually to listen, advise, refer and provide general support. Peer supporters can also be effective in group settings. Their training enables them to be used as group leaders, assistants in support groups, or as communication skills trainers in the lecture theatre. They can also help to train new groups of peer supporters.

Why is peer support beneficial for a college community?

The literature on peer support clearly demonstrates the importance of peer relationships for students when coping with college life. For example, research undertaken in Trinity College indicates that 78% of students would seek support from a close friend if feeling worried or under stress, as opposed to 46% talking with a parent, 5% meeting with their academic tutor, and 4% consulting a student counsellor (Moukaddem, 1995). According to a study conducted in the Dublin Institute of Technology, it is evident that effective peer relationships can act as a buffer to the stresses of daily academic life (Lindsay, 1998). Studies have demonstrated that students at-risk of dropping out of college seek help and advice from their fellow students (Prediger, Roth & Noeth, 1974; McKavanagh, Connor, & West, 1996). Research also suggests that the use of peer support programmes increase students' persistence with study (Clulow & Brennan, 1996) and graduation potential (McInnes, James & McNaught, 1995; Tang, 1993). In the extreme situation of suicide, suicidal young adults are more likely to talk about their problems with a peer than a parent, teacher, or counsellor (Abbey, Madsen, & Rolland, 1989). The importance of peer relationships in social adjustment and coping has inspired student services in third level institutions to

provide training programmes in basic counselling skills in order to utilise peer support to its full effect. Such initiatives are effective, cost-efficient methods to encourage retention and support students' development.

Peer support programmes in higher education can be developed to different degrees of complexity, from a basic befriending scheme in which students are helped with settling into college, through to a more complex peer counselling initiative in which students are assisted with various psychological difficulties. Peer-led, staff-facilitated initiatives are predicated on the basic premise that when young people deliver messages to their peers these messages are often perceived as being more credible than those delivered by adult authority figures. The success of such collaboration is ensured by the commitment and participation of the students coupled with the provision of training and on-going support from student services personnel. Supervision by professional student services staff is essential for providing a responsible peer support programme. Additionally, the peer support programme should complement the professional student counselling service, rather than seek to replace it.

Peer support programmes aim to support students in their academic and social adjustment to college life. These programmes afford young people the opportunity to develop their personal and social skills, adopt responsibility and contribute to an environment that is caring and supportive. Thus, the results are not only beneficial to the participants in the programmes but also to the university community at large.

In most instances, all parties – the institution, student volunteers, and student mentees – benefit from such collaboration. Institutions are able to offer a cost-effective support option to students to complement the professional services available. Student supporters are more plentiful, assist peers within a natural environment, and have greater contact with their fellow students. For student volunteers, peer support contributes to their social, emotional and cognitive development as they have an opportunity to develop skills, adopt responsibility, meet new people and contribute to the welfare of a community. Students experiencing difficulties often reap numerous benefits, including talking with a fellow student in a casual setting, seeking support for transitional difficulties, and receiving referrals to professional services if the problems are beyond the capabilities of a peer. For all students involved with peer support programmes, research demonstrates increased satisfaction with institutional integration, retention and degree completion. With such rewards, the development and implementation of peer support programmes in the higher education sector is a worthwhile investment.

Developing Trinity College Dublin's programme

The peer support programme was developed at TCD to provide resources directly to students through the channel of help that they most frequently access – their fellow classmates. Additionally, the programme is in line with TCD's new

Broad Curriculum, which aims to provide a more complete education for students.

"At Trinity College we consider that it is important to encourage the development of a wide range of transferable skills and to encourage students to make the best use of the many formal and informal learning opportunities that exist in the College. Thus students will learn from each other, from involvement in clubs and societies and from attending lectures in disciplines other than their own. In this way we hope to promote the development of each student's full potential and to support them in acquiring the skills which will fit them to make a valuable contribution to society and to be active, thoughtful learners in their life after graduation" (Trinity College, 2003).

The peer support training encourages the skill development of many of the virtues espoused in the Broad Curriculum: communication skills, creativity, reflectiveness, ethical responsibility, etc. Through the training, it is hoped that participants will learn and practice skills that will benefit them throughout their lifespan. Additionally, such proficiency will prove useful in future careers, for employers are seeking out graduates with a range of personal attributes and abilities, in addition to the possession of academic degrees.

Inspired by the success of peer support programmes at other third level institutions, in February 2001, TCD's Student Counselling Service began researching a programme to suit the needs and culture of the college. Named the Peer Support Programme, the model developed at TCD is based on inclusiveness. Unlike other peer support programmes that offer training to prepare selected individuals to act as peer mentors, the TCD model works in reverse. Recognising the importance of basic counselling skills and the benefits for both the individual and the community, training is available to any student who is interested and can commit to the course dates. The emphasis is on introducing life-long skills to benefit human relationships, especially within the university environment. Students are made aware that volunteer opportunities are available at the conclusion of the course. Once the training is completed, students have the opportunity to apply and interview to become a volunteer with the Peer Support Network if they would like to put their skills to use.

Peer Support Network: Using the trained students

In October 2002, Trinity's Student Counselling Service launched the Peer Support Network (PSN). Students are 'matched' with a student volunteer to go for a cup of coffee and a casual, but confidential chat. The programme is designed to support students who are experiencing personal difficulties, such as loneliness, academic pressure, family issues, relationship problems, etc. It is an informal way for students to meet other students, resolve problems and settle into college.

Known as Peer Supporters, the student volunteers are the key to this programme. They are an enthusiastic, friendly and diverse bunch of students,

which includes international, graduate, mature and access students as well as undergraduates. In 2002/03, 23 women and 9 men volunteered and were enrolled in 18 different courses of study (everything from music, medicine, and sociology to BESS, botany and psychology). All Peer Supporters must have successfully completed the 30-hour training course in basic counselling skills, as well as undergoing an interview with the PSN coordinator. Additionally, they are required to attend bi-monthly group supervision with a counsellor to ensure that they maintain boundaries and offer appropriate assistance to their peers. They are not compensated for their volunteer work, but they are reimbursed up to €5 per meeting for the costs of tea or coffee (receipts must be provided).

In its first year of existence, the PSN experienced great success in providing individual assistance to students at-risk of leaving college, especially to male students who often do not seek help from college services. The staff of the Student Counselling Service identified the PSN as the most useful recent development in working to retain students and assisting them with college integration. Additionally, in a time when funding is limited, the PSN provides a complementary service that helps alleviate strains on other student services.

During the academic year of 2002/03, numerous students met with Peer Supporters. Some students requested just one meeting, while others met weekly with a volunteer throughout the academic year. All students found it very useful to talk with a peer about college and life in general. Encouraged by the overwhelmingly positive experiences of both the supported students and the Peer Supporters, it is hoped that the PSN will continue to flourish in Trinity. Resources are being sought to continue this valuable initiative. The Student Counselling Service plans to market the programme in college, increase referrals rates and train additional volunteers. Ideally, all Trinity students should be aware that the Peer Support Network offers assistance in an informal, free and confidential manner.

Appendix two contains materials used in Trinity College when establishing a Peer Support Network.

Developing the training agenda and experience

In preparing the training agenda for the Peer Support Programme, a review of international basic counselling skills training manuals revealed that most are written for other audiences. Therefore, it was decided to draft a peer support training manual that is relevant specifically to Irish third level students. The manual covers ten topics and provides corresponding activities, including:

1. Introductions and group boundaries
2. Peer relationships
3. Values, beliefs, and attitudes
4. Valuing diversity
5. Communications skills
6. Roles and boundaries

7. Referrals
8. Self Care
9. Opening and closing the helping relationship
10. Integrating experiences

Although the manual is the basis for the training, facilitators are encouraged to bring their own material to enrich the sessions. They are asked to leave copies or notes of their materials to create a library of ideas to supplement the manual.

The style and duration of the course was guided by the literature review, which indicated that although training in the core counselling skills (active listening, reflecting back feelings, expressing empathy, etc.) is essential, it is imperative that such programmes consider the specific needs of the target population. According to Carr and Saunders (1980), training should be experiential in that the presentation of theories of counselling is used as the backdrop for trainees to share their own experiences and to relate to the ideas under discussion. In this way, the peer helpers create their own understanding of the counselling concepts. Essentially, the learning mode involved in the peer support training serves as a model for the programme itself. Through this model of training, participants are presented with the theoretical framework and then have an opportunity to:

1. consider and describe their experiences
2. discuss their feelings and reactions
3. determine the meaning the experience has for them
4. decide on actions to build on such meanings.

The Carr and Saunders training model enables young people to learn from their own experiences. It does not impose any particular value or lesson, but with the guidance of the group facilitator, allows participants to explore theoretical concepts against the backdrop of their personal framework of experience. The facilitator's key role is to provide prompts and questions at various points of the discussion. This learning model both supports young peoples' learning and challenges them to deeper reflection, understanding, search for personal and communal meaning, and action planning. In order to cultivate this organic learning process, Carr and Saunders (1980) recommend that training in basic counselling skills should be a minimum of 30 hours. The training can be conducted through many activities including roleplay, group work, discussion and pen-and-paper exercises.

Scheduling training programmes

We have experimented with numerous training configurations, and have found that the favoured schedule, for both students and facilitators, is spread over a period of 6 weeks. It is composed of:

6 evening workshops (5 pm – 8 pm, one night per week): 18 hours
2 Saturday workshops (10 am – 5 pm): 12 hours

<u>Total</u>: 30 hours

This schedule has numerous benefits. The course is spread out to give participants some time between sessions for reflection and an opportunity to practice their skills. The Saturday workshops vary the pace of the training and provide students with a chance to fully immerse in the material for a day. Feedback also suggests that students enjoy the Saturdays because they get to know their peers and group cohesion increases.

In addition to these meetings, it will probably be necessary to schedule a three-hour "make-up" workshop for students who miss a session. We are very strict about the minimum hours required for volunteering. Our rule of thumb is that students should only miss workshops due to serious academic or personal circumstances. To volunteer as a Peer Supporter, students must complete the full training of 30-hours; therefore they may need to attend the make-up meeting.

If the six-week schedule does not suit, there are numerous variations of training possibilities, including:
- A 3-week course: Two nights per week and both Saturdays
- A 10-week course: Ten evening workshops of 3-hours each
- A weekend residential course: Two intensive weekends
- A 1-week course: Daily workshops from 10 am – 5 pm

Considerations and recommendations for offering a training course

To ensure that the course is successful and efficient, it is useful to consider how the following issues will be handled. We have included some related suggestions, based on our experiences.

- *Line management, facilitation and responsibility for the training*
   o When selecting facilitators, it is worthwhile considering if they have previous experience with young adults and if they <u>enjoy</u> working with this age group.

   o Ideally, two people should co-facilitate the group. This arrangement has numerous benefits for the facilitators, as well as for the participants.

- *Funding for salaries, materials, refreshments, etc.*
   o The preparation of a detailed budget is a useful exercise when planning for such a programme.

- *Time scale for the programme, including preparation, training sessions, follow-up, evaluation and review*

- Before advertising the training programme, a schedule of the workshops should be finalised. Similarly, it is useful for facilitators to plan for time to prepare and evaluate each workshop. We have found that weekly meetings are required (one to two hours each).

- *Resources needed*
    - These include: a suitable space (comfortable, accessible by disabled, ensures confidentiality), access to additional space as required for small group work, heating, lighting, security, toilets, coffee facilities, overhead projector, flipcharts, refreshments, etc.

- *Advertising, recruiting and selecting participants*
    - When designing advertising materials, use wording that is enticing and straightforward. Provide students with an application form that has details on the reverse (details such as course content, dates, etc.). See the Appendix for an example. Students should be able to make an informed decision as to what they are applying for and the commitment expected from them.

    - Advertise and recruit participants in college through numerous methods – posters, direct emails, class announcements, student newspapers and radio, etc.

    - Ask staff and academics to nominate students who they think might be good volunteers.

    - Suggest to students that the training will be beneficial for both personal and professional development (the course is an attractive accomplishment that should be listed on a CV).

    - Select a diverse group of students for each course (e.g. a range of age, sex and course of study, etc.), as the training tends to be more dynamic and interesting.

    - Consider selecting more first and second year students, because they will have more time in college to use their skills. Thus they are seen to be a better "investment" for developing an empathic college community. Similarly, recruiting students who live in college residence halls is very useful. It is hoped that they will use their skills to assist peers in rooms.

    - Be cautious of recruiting students who would be better off engaging in personal therapy. Although many of our students have used the course to make new friends and improve skills, the training is not a substitute for therapy.

- *Delivering the workshops*

- o An ideal group size for one facilitator is a group of 12 to 20 students. Two facilitators working together can handle up to 30 participants.

- o The training should be enjoyable, upbeat and lively.

- o Facilitators should strive for discussion and activity in the sessions, rather than didactic presentations.

- o Many of the training activities require small group work in pairs and triads. Often participants gravitate towards working with the same people. Facilitators might consider occasionally allocating participants into groups (through numbering off, etc.) so that they work and learn with new people.

- o The training is quite tight with regard to time – there is a lot to learn in a short amount of time. When doing group activities, facilitators should 'call time' and tell participants when to swap roles, change activities, etc.

- o Facilitators must "read" the group dynamics, because training should be tailored for every group (e.g. some enjoy role plays, while others prefer group discussions). Two co-facilitators often are better able to read a group because they have a bit more time to observe the group dynamics. Facilitators should be encouraged to adapt the training and try new ways of doing things if they feel it is appropriate. Additionally facilitators can ask for feedback from the students – what do they enjoy, how do they feel they are learning best, etc.

- *Providing refreshments*
    - o If finances and facilities are available, we have found that offering light refreshments is very appreciated. Students, after a day of classes, are often hungry and tired. Not only does a snack revive them, but it also provides participants with a chance to chat either before the workshop or during the break period.

    - o For the evening workshops, we provide a sandwich and a cup of tea/coffee. On the two Saturday sessions, we provide lunch – either slices of pizza or a voucher for the college canteen.

- *Recognising student participation*
    - o As a component of the final session, we host a Recognition Ceremony to celebrate the achievement of completing 30-hours of training. Therefore, we have a small ceremony, present participants with certificates attesting to their training, and then invite participants to a dessert reception. We organise a variety of desserts and provide tea and coffee (we have sought alternatives to providing alcohol). Participants really enjoy this social occasion and feel that their training is positively recognised by the college.

- *Evaluating the training programme*
  It is essential to include a process of review and evaluation in any training programme. In order to ensure that future programmes are as successful or more successful, feedback is required. We suggest that both facilitators and students are involved in evaluating the training. We provide opportunities for feedback after each workshop, as well as in the final session.

  o After each workshop, participants are asked to complete a standard evaluation form (see Appendix one).

  o In the closing workshop, participants are asked to provide positive feedback about each other, as well as offer suggestions for the facilitators.

  o At the end of each training programme, facilitators are asked to document their reflections regarding the experience. This is best done as early as possible, so that the training is still fresh in their memories.

A checklist for commencing a workshop

1. Arrive early.

2. Set up seating in a useful formation (often in a large circle).

3. Prepare resources to be used and check that equipment is working: Overheads, handouts, pens, flipchart, overhead projector, blue tack, own notes, etc.

4. Set out a registration sheet for signing in.

5. Check that heating, ventilation and lighting is adequate.

6. Arrange security, keys, alarms, signs, and a clock for timekeeping.

7. Organise water and refreshments as required.

How to use the workshop outlines

Hopefully, this training manual will be straightforward to use. It is written for individuals who have familiarity with counselling skills, thus some knowledge of terminology is assumed.

The manual is laid out in 10 separate workshops each of which follows the same format:

- Time required to complete the workshop

- Themes covered during the workshop
- Introduction to the activities for the session.

The workshop is then broken down into steps, which include:
- Aim of the particular step
- Materials
- Input (instructional or theoretical contribution by the facilitators)
- Activity (participants' learning and practice of skills).

Each workshop includes 'HANDOUT' pages, which are examples of the supplementary materials we use for the workshops. These may need to be altered or modified for use by other institutions.

People enrolled on the course are consistently referred to as 'participants'. The term 'peer supporter' refers to individuals who actively assist those around them, in an informal or formal manner.

WORKSHOP ONE

Time required: 3 hours, including a 15 minute break

Themes covered: Welcome and introduction to course
Personal relationships
The concept of peer support
Personal goals

Introduction: The first workshop is very important for creating the ground rules, boundaries, expectations and the vital first impressions, which will help or hinder the development and progress of your particular group of students.

At the start of the training programme, it is important that participants feel comfortable with each other in order to obtain maximum benefit from the training. The use of an ice-breaker activity at the beginning of the training course is ideal for introductions, as it gets the participants talking with each other and beginning to learn how to put others at ease. Following the ice-breaker, the trainer can discuss briefly the participants' expectations and note them down on a flip chart for future reference. In addition, it is useful to outline to the participants the structure of the programme and their roles in it. At the outset of the training course, it is vital that the group, facilitated by the trainer, set and agree group boundaries that will be adhered to throughout the training period.

As the success of peer helping relies on healthy peer-peer relationships, it is important that participants become aware of the different relationships in their own lives. Exploring the nature of these relationships, will enable them to identify the types of different relationships that they experience in their lives. Also, they should start thinking about what makes a person a good "helper". The circle exercise will encourage participants to consider these issues.

Once the participants have explored the various roles they ascribe to the people in their family and friendship circle, the facilitator can elaborate more fully on the nature of peer helping and on how the participants can play their roles as peer supporters in the university setting.

Before closing the session, students are asked to set personal goals for themselves. In this way, it is hoped that they will take an active role in their own learning process.

Step 1: Welcome and introductions

Materials: Nametags, markers

Input *(10 mins):* You should extend a warm welcome, introduce yourself and ask participants to make nametags. Say a few words about your involvement in the peer support training, as this provides a context and models appropriate self-disclosure for the students.

Step 2: Icebreaker exercise

Aim: To learn each other's names, encourage group cohesion and have fun

Materials: None

Activity *(30 mins):* Choose one of the two icebreaker activities.

A. A tall tale game

Participants sit in a circle and each person takes a turn to introduce him/herself. They are asked to share three facts – two must be true and one must be false (e.g. I enjoy jazz music, I have six sisters, and I have lived on a private Italian island). The group then must guess which statement is false.

B. Trust game

Participants divide into pairs and ask each other the following questions:
- One of their life goals
- One of their fears
- The funniest thing that happened to them in the last month

After a few minutes, the group re-convenes and partners introduce each other to the main group using the information obtained in the exercise.

Step 3: Overview of the programme

Aim: To give participants a complete understanding of the training programme so that they can invest in the goals of the course

Materials: Overview of the peer support training (handout)

Input *(15 mins):* You should explain the context and rationale for the training course, as well as detailing the topics to be explored. Participants are given the handout. We also mention that we close the course with a Recognition Ceremony (Workshop 10) and provide students with a certificate verifying their completed training.

OVERVIEW OF THE PEER SUPPORT TRAINING

Workshop Dates Location: Arts Building, room 5025
Tuesdays (5-8pm): Oct 29, Nov 5, Nov 12, Nov 19, Nov 26, Jan 14
Saturdays (10-5pm): Nov 2, Nov 23

Tuesday, January 14 will be the last workshop. It will consist of a review session and the recognition ceremony. It is a mandatory workshop to complete the 30 hours of training.

Note About Attendance: A programme requirement is that you must undergo 30 hours of training to receive a certificate. We highly encourage you to attend all workshops.

Topics Covered
- Introductions and group boundaries
- Peer relationships
- Values, beliefs, and attitudes
- Valuing diversity
- Communications skills – active listening, questioning and summarising
- Roles and boundaries
- Referrals
- Self care for the helper
- Integrating experiences

Aims of Peer Support Training
- Assist in the personal development of students through training in basic counselling skills
- Support incoming first year students to adjust academically and socially into university life
- Encourage student retention
- Heighten awareness of College's student support services
- Promote a philosophy of equality and integration in College

Further Opportunities: After successfully completing the 30-hour peer helper training, you will be eligible to apply to be a Peer Supporter. A Peer Supporter is a volunteer who is available to meet with a student who may be suffering from transitional issues. A Peer Supporter might go for a coffee, discuss concerns, make introductions to other students or societies, provide general advice and suggest referrals. To ensure there is adequate support for the Peer Supporter, supervision meetings are required bi-monthly with a member of the Student Counselling Service.

Peer Support Coordinator
Anne Marie Naughton, T: 608-1407, E: student-counselling@tcd.ie

Step 4: Group boundaries and expectations

Aim: To have students collaborate and develop a unique set of group boundaries

Materials: Flipchart, marker

Activity (15 mins): Ask participants to brainstorm rules, which you record on a flipchart. Some possibilities include:
- Arrive on time.
- Refrain from making judgements on what others have to contribute. Each person is entitled to be heard and respected.
- Honour confidentiality. Only talk about own story/experience outside of the group.

Input (5 mins): You should also verbalise your expectations of the group. We include:
- Students should make the most of the training and participate fully.
- Participants must attend all sessions. This is necessary because the training builds on itself, group dynamics are affected if people are missing, and the 30 hours of training are necessary to volunteer with the Peer Support Network.
- If participants will be late or unable to attend a workshop (due to unavoidable academic or personal reasons), they are requested to inform one of the facilitators. Contact details are given.
- A 3-hour make-up session may be offered at the end of the course if required.

Step 5: Circle exercise

Aim: To illustrate the varied roles we ascribe to the people in our family and friendship circle; to raise participants' awareness of the nature and expectations of the relationships they have in their lives.

Materials: Circle exercise (handout), pens

Activity (30 mins): This activity focuses on the relationships that we all have in our lives. We put people in different places in our individual circle of family and friends, according to how we perceive our relationship with them. It also illustrates that we have certain criteria as to who fits what role, and that these roles may shift with time and circumstances. In doing this exercise, it can be quite surprising to find just who we place where! Clearly we go to people for different things. They should start considering who and why they turn to certain people in their lives.

To do the exercise, each participant receives the circle handout. They are given 10 minutes to fill in the circle – deciding where he or she will place the people in

their lives (they can include people such as family, friends, teachers, lecturers, employers, role models, etc.). The centre is the place for the person or people that they confide in or feel closest to on any level. The outer rings are for people that are more distant to them. Encourage students to write first names on their handout, as they will not be sharing the content.

Bring the group together for a discussion on how they found this exercise and what they learned about themselves and their relationships. They may need help processing the experience. You might ask questions, such as:

- What does the circle tell them about relationships in their lives?
- Was the exercise difficult?
- What criteria did they use to allocate people to rings of the circle?
- Were there any surprises for them in their decisions?

CIRCLE EXERCISE
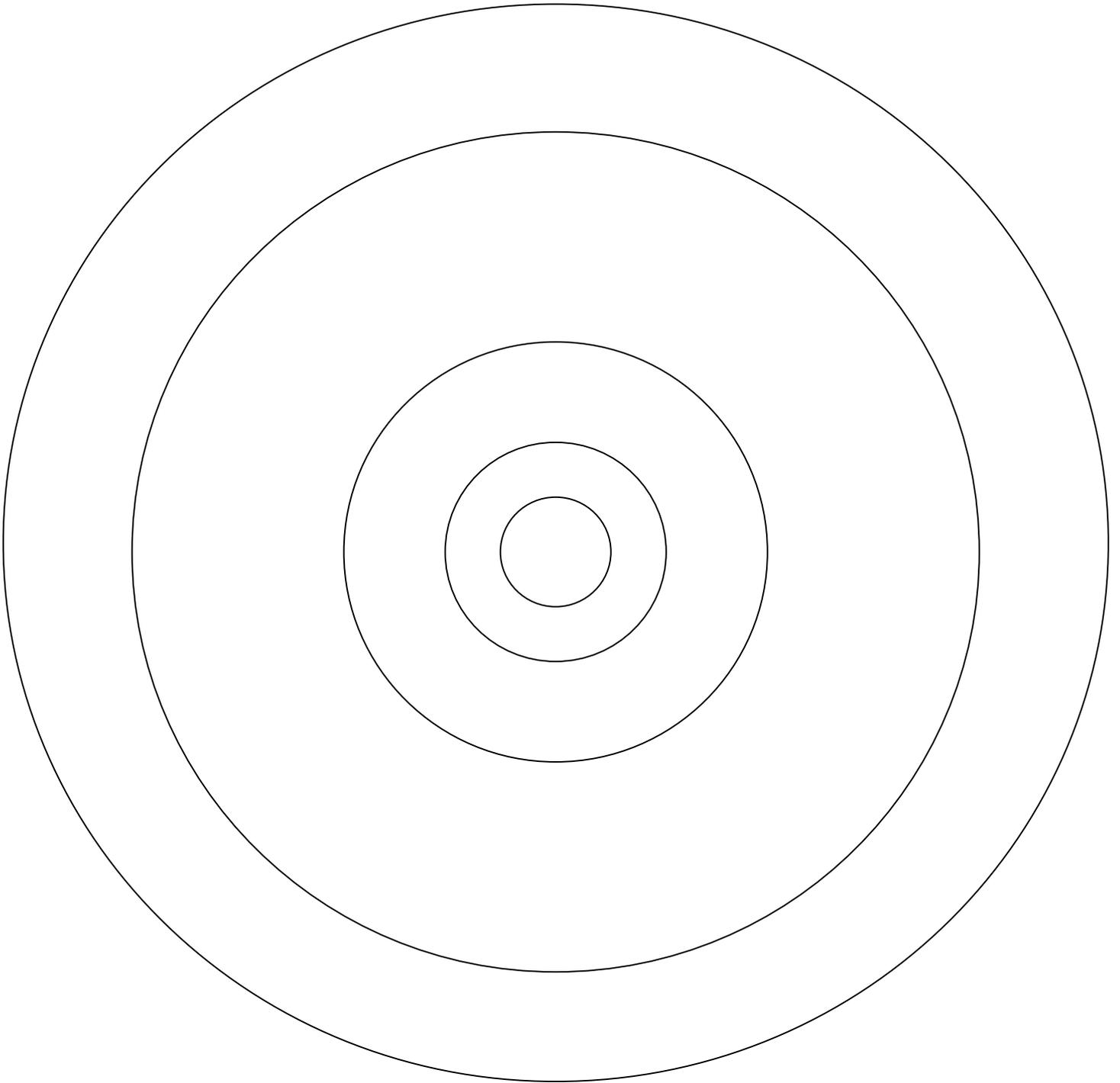
TAKE A BREAK (15 minutes)

Step 6: Introduction to the concept of peer support

Aim: To give participants an understanding of peer support and its importance in a college community

Materials: What is Peer Support? (handout)

Input *(20 mins):* You should explain the concept of peer support and distribute the handout, What is Peer Support (it might also be helpful to review the earlier section entitled 'What is peer support' p.4). Following this input, it is useful to encourage a discussion about the importance of peer support and how the participants might see it working within their classes, residence halls, societies, etc. Ask them if they can give examples of how they have been informally providing or receiving support from their peers.
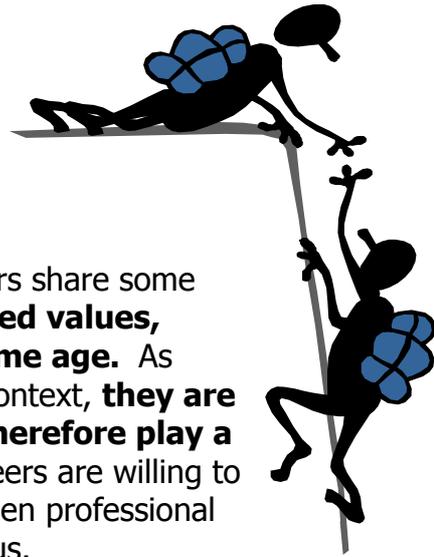
WHAT IS PEER SUPPORT?

A peer group is defined as a collective unit in which the members share some common characteristics. **The individuals usually share related values, experiences and lifestyles and are approximately the same age.** As young adults share a distinctive history and a particular social context, **they are often the first point of contact in times of distress and therefore play a valuable role in support.** Frequently, when a crisis arises, peers are willing to give their time and to offer themselves in the role of listener when professional help is not perceived to be available, accessible, or advantageous.

Peer support is defined as a variety of interpersonal helping behaviours assumed by non-professionals who undertake a helping role with others. It includes one-to-one helping relationships, group leadership, discussion leadership, advisement, tutoring, and all activities of an interpersonal helping or assisting nature.

The term 'peer supporter' refers to a person who assumes the role of a helping person with contemporaries. **The most obvious role of peer supporters in college is meeting fellow students individually to listen, advise, refer and provide general support.** Some of the types of assistance given by peer supporters on an individual basis include:
- Talking with students about their personal and academic problems
- Exploring solutions for some problems
- Finding and giving information
- Referring peers to other sources of help in the community.

Peer supporters can also be effective in group settings. Their training enables them to be used as group leaders, assistants in support groups, or as communication skills trainers in the lecture theatre. They can also help to train new groups of peer supporters.

As you can see, there are many possible ways that this training can be put to use in a college community!

Adapted from Tindall (1995).

Step 7: Set personal goals

Aim: To encourage critical thinking and personal reflection regarding participants' involvement on the course.

Materials: Blank sheets of paper, envelopes, pens

Activity (20 mins): Ask students to think about what they want to achieve during the course, and explain that these goals should be written down on the blank sheet and will remain private. Once finished, participants seal them in the envelope and write their full name across the front of the envelope. You collect the envelopes and hold them for the final workshop, at which time they are returned to the individuals.

Step 8: Closure

Aim: To evaluate and close the session, answering any remaining questions.

Materials: Evaluation forms (see page Appendix one), pens

Input (20 mins): You should open the floor for the group to ask questions or discuss any unresolved issues. Before leaving, participants should complete the standard evaluation form that will be used at the end of each day.

WORKSHOP TWO

Time required: 3 hours, including a 15 minute break

Themes covered: Values, beliefs, and attitudes
                        Diversity

Introduction: This workshop focuses on self-awareness, because we benefit from better understandings of ourselves. In doing so we gain a greater awareness of our own actions, but also of our interactions with other people. In this session, the participants are encouraged to explore their own values, beliefs, attitudes and prejudices.

Becoming aware of our own thoughts and feelings is the first step in the process of becoming an effective peer supporter. The aim is for participants to become more self-aware before teaching them new skills. If we are aware of our own personal beliefs and feelings, we are better able to ensure that we do not impose them on others. Therefore, the activities for this theme are designed to encourage participants to think about themselves in a reflective manner. Hopefully they will be asking themselves: What would prevent them from remaining impartial while helping a peer? How are their personal values, beliefs and attitudes implicated? Additionally, it is necessary for participants to understand the differences between values, beliefs and attitudes versus prejudices.

It is also necessary to tease out what prejudices exist in our society, college community, and ourselves. Unfortunately, personal prejudices can and do colour our individual ways of being. Much of the time we are unaware of the ways in which we might influence a relationship, situation, or event by our own bias. Often we are not even conscious of holding a particular view. As Irish third level institutions become more diverse, it is helpful for students to think about the different experiences students may have in college, especially international, mature, disabled or access students. While minority members of college have similar needs to those of other students, many of them may face additional hurdles. Thus, it is important to discuss the richness and implications of a diverse college population.

Step 1: Welcome, introductions, review of previous workshop, a reminder about group boundaries and confidentiality, and a general overview of the themes to be addressed in this session

Aim: To answer questions or concerns from the previous workshop and to provide continuity between the sessions

Materials: None

Input *(15 mins):* As this is the second workshop, you may need to review participants' names. Afterwards, begin by going over the main themes from the previous session and ask for questions. How has the material "settled" with students? Participants should be reminded of the group boundaries and guidelines about confidentiality. Then introduce the topics to be covered in the current workshop, highlighting how the new learning builds on topics previously addressed.

Step 2: What do I value?
Adapted from Brown (1998).

Aim: To have participants review their personal values, beliefs and attitudes, and to consider possible impacts on them when helping others

Materials: What would you…(handout), flipchart, marker, blank paper, pens

Input (15 mins): Introduce the concepts of personal values, beliefs and attitudes. Explain to participants that this activity is to encourage them to become more self-aware. Reassure them that it is not about changing them but to help them identify their own beliefs and value system. In becoming more aware, they will be able to see the importance of considering issues and situations from another's point of view.

We all have our own unique combination of values, beliefs and attitudes which influence how we see and make sense of our experience and situations. As a peer supporter, it is important to suspend our own world view as we try to be objective and non-judgemental and so gain some understanding of the others position.

You will probably need to give examples of what you mean by values, beliefs and attitudes. The following is a suggestion. However, you may have your own ideas. This example is deliberately provocative in order to generate some debate. You will probably need to remind participants that some issues can make it difficult to be impartial.

Example: Operation Iraqi Freedom

Values: I, Sinead Smyth, value freedom, democracy, and the right to life.

Beliefs: I believe that:
- Saddam Hussein is a corrupt dictator.
- the Iraqi people were being oppressed.
- the Iraqi situation was a threat to international security.
- the coalition forces took appropriate action by invading Iraq.

Attitudes: My personal attitude is pro-war; I support the coalition forces' involvement in Iraq.

Adapted from Brown (1998).

Activity *(35 mins):* Distribute the handout, What would you…. Ask participants to spend 10 minutes on their own making notes on their responses to the situations – what would they think, feel and do (these might be different). Also ask them to identify their values, beliefs and attitudes regarding each situation. Remind participants that nobody will be judging or criticising them, so encourage them to be honest.

When the participants have completed the responses, ask them to divide into small groups, and discuss for 25 minutes the issues the situations triggered for them and their responses. Remind them that they are not to judge or criticize fellow participants. While they are talking about the situations, you should check in with each group to gauge progress.

WHAT WOULD YOU...?

In each situation, what would you think, feel and do (these might each be different)? Also, identify your values, beliefs and attitudes regarding each situation.

Situation A:
A classmate seems preoccupied and distant lately. As class rep. you are concerned at her lack of involvement and withdrawal from group activities. You asked her is there anything you can help with, that you are available to listen confidentially. At first she was hesitant to talk to you, but after a lot of reassurance from you about confidentiality, she tells you that she is pregnant. She's still living at home and she can't imagine telling her parents, as she believes they would not be able to cope with the situation. She doesn't know what to do.

Situation B:
You are getting to know an Asian student on your course. While chatting, she begins to tell you how much she likes college life in Ireland. However, she is desperately unhappy with her living arrangements. Although she has the finances to move in with friends, her parents live in China and expect her to continue living with her uncle in Ireland. You get the sense that there are many cultural differences in this decision, yet you also hear that your classmate feels like she has no options but to be miserable. She asks you for your opinion about what to do.

Situation C:
A number of students have expressed their concerns to you about a fellow post-graduate student who is married with children. She appears to be highly stressed and unhappy and has begun to withdraw from their group. It has been rumoured that she is having an affair with one of the lecturers in the department. As the class representative, you believe you should inquire how she is and offer your help. You reassure her of confidentiality and then she tells you that she feels pulled between her husband and the other man. She is upset and confused and doesn't know what to do.

Situation D:
You volunteered to assist a first year student with settling into College. Halfway through the first term, he admits to you that he plagiarised an assignment he submitted the last week. He is very troubled and agitated about the situation and asks you for advice.

Activity *(25 mins):* Bring the participants back together for a group discussion. Taking one situation at a time, ask each small group for the main issues that these situations triggered for them and how they would respond. Explore and note the points on the flipchart. Facilitate a discussion on how our own values, beliefs and attitudes might make it difficult to be impartial when helping another person. Emphasise that having values, beliefs and attitudes is a good aspect of our personalities; it is imposing them on others that is being discouraged.

Input *(5 mins):* Conclude the exercise by saying that this activity sought to illustrate how we all have our own viewpoint, which often differs from that of another person. We should appreciate that there are many viewpoints and recognise that all are valid. However, being a good helper requires putting aside our opinions. If we are not able to do this, ethically we should kindly refer the person to someone who can. See below for an example. Therefore, when helping a peer, we need to check in with ourselves to ensure that we are listening to his or her problem without imposing our values, beliefs, and attitudes.

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A pregnant student

A young woman has recently discovered that she is pregnant and is contemplating her options (raising the child, abortion, adoption, etc.). She unknowingly seeks help in making her decision from a staunch pro-life activist. If the activist can genuinely put his values and beliefs to one side to help the woman reach a decision, then there is not a problem. If he cannot, then he is not impartial and is likely to try and influence the woman's decision, which is manipulative. In such a situation, the activist should be honest about his own values and beliefs and refer the woman to someone who can offer more objective help.

</div>

TAKE A BREAK (15 minutes)

<u>Step 3:</u> Valuing diversity

Aim: To create an awareness of the nature and existence of personal, institutional and societal prejudice

Materials: Flipchart, marker

Input *(5 mins):* Explain that the upcoming activity is designed to lead participants into a difficult and possibly uncomfortable realm – that of examining prejudices in themselves, institutions and society. It is important to stress to participants that many, if not, all people have prejudices and biases. However, we are all more informed when we are <u>aware</u> of them. Understanding the existence of prejudice is the first step in lessening its impact on our lives and those who we support.

Activity *(15 mins):* Have a discussion about the changing composition of Irish society, and indeed the increasingly more diverse college community. Brainstorm and record on the flipchart the attributes/factors for which people are commonly discriminated against. These may include: skin colour, religion, gender, accent, economic status, sexuality, disabilities, age, etc. At the end of the brainstorm, give participants a few moments to process this list and encourage them privately to consider about whom they hold prejudices.

Activity *(40 mins):* Now that participants have thought about the issue, the Lifeboat activity will force them into the position of having to make decisions on very little information. In such situations, we tend to employ and rely on our personal prejudices.

The setting for this exercise is a sinking ship. Time is running out. In small groups of three or four, participants are instructed to choose four people (no more) who will occupy a valuable place in the lifeboat. They have 15 minutes to make their decision as a group.

Have the following written on the flip chart and displayed to the group:

- Yourself
- An HIV+ young mother and her baby
- An African student whose parents are diplomats
- A student in a wheelchair
- A bisexual student who's thinking of dropping out of college
- A retired professor
- A first-year student who has discovered that she is pregnant
- A good-looking, hard-working, popular final-year student
- A post-graduate medical student researching a cure for cancer

Use the remaining 25 minutes of the workshop to discuss their decisions. It may be most help to go around to each small group, asking each group to share their four 'saved' passengers and provide a rationale for their decision. Acknowledge that once we have insight into our own personal prejudices, we can find ways to put them aside to become more genuine in our role as peer supporters.

Step 4: Closure

Aim: To evaluate and close the session, answering any remaining questions.

Materials: Evaluation forms (see Appendix one), pens

Input *(10 mins):* You should open the floor for the group to ask questions or discuss any unresolved issues. Before leaving, participants should complete the standard evaluation form that will be used at the end of each day.

WORKSHOP THREE

Time required: 3 hours, including a 15 minute break

Themes covered: The ideal helper
                        The 3 core conditions of peer support
                        Active listening

Introduction: This workshop is the first of three sessions designed to improve the communication skills of participants. It begins by asking participants to reflect on someone from whom they have sought help. Identifying people to whom we choose to go to for support and advice, elucidates the qualities these people possess. By drawing on their own experience, participants can identify useful and not so useful aspects of a helping relationship.

Before helping peers, participants need to understand the three core conditions of effective peer support – acceptance, genuineness, and empathy (Rogers, 1961, 1977). These conditions create a climate in which a person can feel able to discuss and explore personal issues and problems. Such a climate also encourages a sense of equality and co-operation among peers. Feedback from other peer support programmes suggests that the 'peer' and the 'support' ingredients were the most beneficial aspects of the programme, as students felt comfortable approaching their peers with their difficulties since they perceived them as equals.

Finally, the ability to listen is probably the most valuable skill in communication (Moursund, 1990). People often just need somebody to <u>listen and hear them</u>. Sometimes people only listen to part of what is being said to them and so misunderstand what the speaker is trying to communicate. Such listeners often make incorrect assumptions about what has been said and the speaker ends up feeling unheard.
Good listening skills are necessary in order to communicate that you want to help. Active listening involves the ability to take in the whole message, accepting what is said without judging, and understanding not only the words spoken, but also the feelings that underlie the words (Moursund, 1990). Everyone can listen, but active listening is a life-long skill to be cultivated.

<u>Step 1:</u> Welcome, introductions, review of previous workshop and a general overview of the themes to be addressed in this session

Aim: To answer questions or concerns from the previous workshop and to provide continuity between the sessions

Materials: None

Input (15 mins): Begin by going over the main themes from the previous session and asking for questions. How has the material "settled" with students?

Then introduce the topics to be covered in the current workshop, highlighting how the new learning builds on topics previously addressed.

Step 2: The ideal helper
Adapted from Brown (1998).

Aim: To identify the behaviours and personal qualities that are useful for an effective helper; to introduce the core conditions of peer support – acceptance, genuineness, and empathy

Materials: Core Conditions for Using Helping Skills (handout), flipchart, marker

Activity (25 mins): In this activity, you are asking participants to reflect on a past problem and to think about the person that they turned to for help. What qualities and behaviours did that person possess? By identifying such attributes in others, participants gain an understanding of useful behaviours that they can employ when interacting with peers.

Prepare a flipchart page with three questions on it:
1. What was it about the person that made you choose them?
2. What specific aspects of their personality or behaviour did you find helpful?
3. What did they say or do which may have helped you to relax and encourage you to confide in them?

Ask participants to think for 10 minutes of a recent secret or problem that they shared with another person (reassure them that they will not be discussing the secret or identifying the person who helped!). Have them individually reflect on these three questions.

Afterwards, bring the group back together for a 15-minute discussion. Ask participants to share their thoughts and write up the responses. There may be some overlap between the responses to the questions.

Typical answers may include:

Question 1: What was it about the person that made you choose them?
They were:
- Open
- Honest
- Friendly
- Sincere
- Kind
- Warm
- Patient
- Approachable
- Interested
- A good listener

Question 2: What specific aspects of their personality or behaviour did you find helpful?

- Open to me and my views
- Listened to what I had to say
- Gave me their undivided attention
- Interested in me and what I had to say
- Treated me seriously
- Respected me
- I knew I could trust them (confidential manner)

Question 3: What did they say or do which may have helped you to relax and encourage you to confide in them?

- Reassured me that it is not unusual to find some decisions difficult
- Asked me questions that helped me clarify the issues
- Listened to me in a focused manner
- Didn't tell me what to do
- Didn't interrupt me
- Gave me lots of reassurance
- Let me make my own decisions

Ensure that all participants have had a chance to contribute to the lists and that there is nothing outstanding. Conclude the exercise by suggesting that participants observe their behaviour with others over the next week. Encourage them to note any useful attributes and behaviours as they learn and practice new skills.

Activity *(15 mins):* Explain the three core conditions of using helping skills that are necessary for supporting peers, and distribute the handout, Core Conditions for Using Helping Skills. Ask participants to provide relevant examples to illustrate the meaning of the concepts that you have just explained.

1. Acceptance
When helping others, you need to demonstrate that you accept and respect them for who and what they are. They need to feel safe to share and explore problems without the threat of embarrassment or ridicule.

2. Genuineness
To effectively help others, you need to be genuine as a person and as a peer supporter. Being "real" builds a foundation of trust for the helping relationship.

3. Empathy

A simple definition of empathy is the ability to put yourself in another person's shoes. People often confuse empathy with sympathy, thus specific consideration should be given to clarifying each concept.

A Jazzy Simile for Empathy

"You simply cannot hear jazz. It is much more than hearing the horns, woodwinds and so on. To really listen to jazz, you must lie down on the couch and close your eyes. You feel the beat. You imagine what might be going on inside those players. You get wrapped up in the music…". (Stone & Keefauver, 1990)

Empathy is like jazz. Jazz requires listening to the experience, rather than just hearing the instruments. Similarly, an empathic person listens completely and really gets into another person's problems. The listener appreciates the variations and tones that are unique to that person.

**Adapted from Spozio. Retrieved from
http://www.amputeecoalition.org/communicator/vol3no1pg1.html**

CORE CONDITIONS FOR USING HELPING SKILLS
Adapted from Brown (1998).

ACCEPTANCE
Communicate an atmosphere of respect and safety by:
- Accepting them for who and what they are
- Respecting the individual's beliefs
- Valuing them and their views
- Being non-judgmental
- Actively listening
- Being attentive
- Keeping confidentiality

GENUINENESS
Communicate your true interest in a person and build trust by being:
- Authentic
- Straightforward
- Truthful
- Sincere
- Open and clear

EMPATHY
Communicate that you are trying to understand a person's unique situation by:
- Caring to understand what is really "going on" for a person
- Asking relevant questions about a person's circumstances
- Thinking, acting and feeling in the person's interest
- Refraining from making assumptions or judgements

What is empathy?
According to Kennedy and Charles (2001, p. 5), empathy is "the ability to understand what another is feeling without necessarily feeling the emotion ourselves".

Brown (1998) defines it as, "Empathy means temporarily living in other's world whilst keeping a foot in your own, seeing the issues through the other's eyes, feeling their emotions whilst controlling your own, remaining impartial without judging or sympathising.

Empathy isn't about sympathy or feeling sorry for the person, or getting emotionally involved or making assumptions. It is about seeing things from another's point of view, trying hard to interpret the other person's meaning and to see the world as they see it.

Being truly empathetic requires a great deal of skill and experience; however, we can all strive to be empathetic in our relationships with others".

TAKE A BREAK (15 minutes)

<u>Step 3:</u> Active listening
Adapted from Brown (1998).

Aim: To explore the consequences of interacting with someone who is not listening; to identify the barriers to effective listening; to practise active listening skills.

Materials: Flipchart, marker, tape/blue tack, Listening to Others (handout)

Activity (15 mins): Once again participants need to learn that listening is probably the most important skill required when helping another person. Although we may think that we are all good listeners, this series of activities will help to give us an awareness of what is required for active listening.

Begin by doing a group brainstorm and discussion. Ask participants the following two questions and record their responses on a flipchart.
- How do you feel when you have something to say, but are not being listened to?
- How do you know if someone is not listening to you, e.g. what are the signs?

For the first question, they will probably come up with answers like:
- Frustrated, angry, sad, stymied, irritated, etc.

The second question might generate responses such as:
- Lack of eye contact
- Looking elsewhere – out the window, etc.
- Facial expression appears bored/switched off
- Fidgeting or otherwise preoccupied
- General lack of interest
- Changing the subject of conversation
- Making jokes
- Checking a watch or clock
- Offering solutions without listening to the problem

Activity (25 mins): To recognise the importance of body language in communication, it is useful for participants to experience the frustration of the back-to-back exercise.

Ask participants to find a partner, and sit down with their backs to each other. Each person takes a turn to talk for 5 minutes about a sad event in his or her life.

After they are finished, bring the group back together for a 15-minute discussion to process the exercise. You might want to ask them to identify what was missing from the conversation. Some possibilities include:
- Lack of eye contact
- Could not observe facial expressions
- No gestures that indicate understanding or encouragement

Non-verbal communication is extremely important for successful listening. It is estimated that facial expressions and body language account for 80% of the communication that occurs in a conversation.

Then ask the group how they knew that their partners were listening to them although lacking visual cues. What assured them? Write their responses on the flipchart. Typical answers may include:
- Asked questions
- Made appropriate noises – laughed, sighed, etc.
- Made encouraging remarks, like "wow" or "oh no", etc.
- Stayed silent at appropriate times

Hopefully participants' comments will capture some of the essential behaviours that should be encouraged in active listening.

Activity (15 mins): After experiencing and talking about barriers to effective communication, spend 15 minutes developing a complete list of positive behaviours that enhance communication. As points are discussed, note them on the flipchart.
Typical answers may include:
- Ask questions
- Summarise what was said
- Make appropriate noises – laughed, sighed, etc.
- Make encouraging remarks, like go on, wow or oh no, etc.
- Stay silent at appropriate times
- Look at the person and use appropriate eye contact (avoid staring)
- Use encouraging facial expressions - smiling, concern, interest, compassion, etc.
- Nod accordingly
- Adopt an open, receptive posture (avoid folded arms and crossed legs)

Add the following points if the group has not offered them up.
- Be relaxed. Be aware of nervous energy that manifests as tapping feet, fiddling with strands of hair, etc.
- Aim for equal status – always remember that it could be you with the problem
- Pay attention to how you are sitting, maintaining an open posture
- Avoid being distracted or daydreaming.
- Be aware of your responses, ensuring that you are not turning the conversation back to yourself.
- Listen and concentrate, rather than think about how to respond.

- Be careful not to assume and guess at details to "fill in" parts of the conversation.

When finished with the list, post the flipchart page on the wall (using tape or blue tack). It will be useful to have the page visible for the next activity.

Activity *(35 mins):* Now the participants will have the opportunity to put active listening skills into practice!

Ask them to work with the same partner from the previous exercise. This time they sit facing each other to discuss the most exciting day of their lives. Each partner takes a turn to talk for 5 minutes, while the other partner actively listens. The listener should use as many of the positive skills as have been identified (as posted on the flipchart page on the wall). When 5 minutes are up, the listener summarises the conversation back to the talker. After this has been done, they swap roles and do the same exercise.

After 20 minutes of conversations and summaries, you should bring the participants back to the large group. For 15 minutes, ask how they found the activity. Was it easy or difficult? How accurate were the summaries? As the listener, are they tired from being so self-aware? Although they were only listening for 5 minutes, how will they find it to actively listen to a normal conversation that might last an hour? What do they need to practise more?

Input *(10 mins):* Talk through the handout, Listening to Others. You can conclude this section with final comments about the importance of listening and the powerful effect that 'being listened to' can have on an individual.

LISTENING TO OTHERS

1. STOP TALKING – you can't listen while you are talking.

2. DON'T GIVE UP TOO SOON – don't interrupt the other person; give them time to say what they have to say.

3. CONCENTRATE ON WHAT THEY ARE SAYING – actively focus your attention on their words, ideas, and feelings related to the subject.

4. LOOK AT THE OTHER PERSON – their face, mouth, eyes, hands, it will all help them to communicate with you. They also help you to concentrate, too. Make them feel that you are listening.

5. SMILE AND GRUNT APPROPRIATELY – but don't overdo it!

6. LEAVE YOUR EMOTIONS BEHIND – (if you can) – try to push your worries, your fears, your problems, outside the meeting room. They may prevent you from listening well.

7. GET RID OF DISTRACTIONS – put down any papers, pencils, etc. you have in your hands; they may distract your attention.

8. SHARE RESPONSIBILITY FOR COMMUNICATION – only part of the responsibility rests with the speaker; you as – the listener have an important part. Try to understand and, if you don't, ask for clarification.

9. REACT TO IDEAS, NOT TO PERSON – don't let your reactions to the person influence your interpretation of what they say. Their ideas may be good even if you don't like them as a person.

10. LISTEN TO HOW SOMETHING IS SAID – we frequently concentrate so hard on <u>what</u> is said that we miss the importance of the emotional reactions and attitudes related to what is said. A person's attitudes and emotional reactions may be more important than what he says in so many words.

11. LISTEN FOR THEIR PERSONALITY – one of the best ways of finding out information about a person is to listen to them talk; as they talk, you can begin to find out what they like and dislike, what their motivations are, what their value system is, what they think about everything and anything, what makes them tick.

12. ALLOW PEOPLE TIME AND SPACE TO THINK – the temptation is to fill silence with questions or comments, which may not be helpful. Try to be comfortable with silence and allow time for people to think about what they are going to say. If you have a time constraint (e.g. can only meet for 30 minutes due to a lecture), be clear about when you have to leave and let the person know in advance.

13. AVOID JUMPING TO ASSUMPTIONS – they can get you into trouble in trying to understand other people. Don't assume that they:
- Use words in the same way that you do
- Feel the same way that you'd feel
- Are distorting the truth because what they say doesn't agree with what you think
- Are lying because they have interpreted the facts differently from you
- Are unethical because they are trying to win you over to their point of view
- Are angry because they are enthusiastic in presenting their views.

Assumptions like these may turn out to be true, but more often they just get in the way of your understanding and reaching agreement or compromise.

14. DO NOT MAKE HASTY JUDGEMENTS – wait until all the facts are in before making any decisions.

15. RESIST FEELING THAT YOU MUST SOLVE THE PROBLEM – you are there to listen. If you are focused on finding answers, you are not listening completely.

Adapted from Poss (unknown year).

Step 4: Closure

Aim: To evaluate and close the session, answering any remaining questions.

Materials: Evaluation forms (see Appendix one), pens

Input (10 mins): You should open the floor for the group to ask questions or discuss any unresolved issues. Before leaving, participants should complete the standard evaluation form that will be used at the end of each day.

WORKSHOP FOUR

Time required: 3 hours, including a 15 minute break

Themes covered: Active listening practice
Effective listening: verbal and nonverbal messages
Communication skills: reflecting, paraphrasing, and
summarising

Introduction: As mentioned previously, listening is crucial to any peer support interaction. Thus, this workshop begins with a roleplay to practise these skills. Additionally, as will be the case for upcoming exercises, members in small groups are asked to provide and receive constructive feedback. The value of peer learning should be emphasised, for it is just as important as peer support. Essentially, in a group, everyone can learn from each other.

The rest of the workshop is dedicated to introducing further communication skills – responding to verbal and nonverbal messages, as well as learning to reflect, paraphrase, and summarise. It should be mentioned to participants that these skills are not just applicable to peer support, but rather they are probably already using most of them without realising it. Mastering these skills will have numerous benefits that will be useful in a variety of settings (workplace, personal relationships, politics, etc.) and probably throughout their lifetimes.

Step 1: Welcome, review of previous workshop and a general overview of the themes to be addressed in this session

Aim: To answer questions or concerns from the previous workshop and to provide continuity between the sessions

Materials: None

Input (15 mins): Begin by going over the main themes from the previous session and asking for questions. How has the material "settled" with students? Then introduce the topics to be covered in the current workshop, highlighting how the new learning builds on topics previously addressed.

Step 2: Active listening exercise

Aim: To practise the active listening skills discussed in the previous workshop

Materials: Active Listening Exercise (handout), pens

Activity (30 mins): Remind participants that listening is the most helpful trait of a peer supporter. Therefore, much practise is required. Briefly review the characteristics of a good listener (from the previous workshop). If possible, put

up or refer back to the flipchart pages where the positive active listening attributes were listed.

Divide participants into groups of three, and distribute an Active Listening Exercise handout to each participant. Explain to the participants that they should roleplay the exercise (having 1 'student', 1 peer, 1 observer). The observer records the peer's listening behaviours on the observation sheet. After 10 minutes of roleplaying, the group stops, and 5 minutes is dedicated to feedback among the group. **See the following page for feedback guidelines.** Remind participants that feedback should be constructive and not personal. They are practicing listening skills to learn from each other; therefore they need to be supportive.

After feedback has been given, repeat the sequence so that the participants switch roles in the small groups. The observer takes part in the roleplay and someone else becomes the observer. It is recommended that participants actually switch chairs. Spend 10 minutes repeating the roleplay, and another 5 minutes giving feedback. **Due to time limitations, participants will only swap twice so they do not have the opportunity to play all three roles.

Facilitators should float among the groups to observe progress and offer advice while the groups are roleplaying. They should also 'call time' when it is time for participants to swap roles.

GUIDELINES FOR FEEDBACK

The sequence of feedback is as follows:
1. Peer supporter
2. "Student"
3. Observer

Feedback is given in the following way.

1. The peer supporter shares his/her overall impressions of the experience, including:
     - Thoughts
     - Feelings
     - Aspects which went well/were helpful
     - Aspects which were difficult/less helpful

2. The 'student' feeds back the same (thoughts, feelings, aspects which went well/were helpful, aspects which were difficult/less helpful)

3. The observer feeds back using Observer Guidelines.

Note to facilitators

- All feedback should be given in a respectful manner.

- Feedback is confidential unless deemed otherwise by the person receiving it.

- In any given situation, participants are engaging to the best of their ability *at that time.* The more constructive feedback they receive, the more they can develop their repertoire of skills for future use.

ACTIVE LISTENING EXERCISE

You're a second-year student. You've been going out with the boy (or girl) of your dreams for the last six months and you're madly in love. (Pause a moment and picture this person). You want to see him as often as you can - all the time if possible. You love everything about him; he is what you have always wanted. This evening however, your world collapsed. He said that he is scared by the intensity of feelings and wants to break it off. Although he likes you a lot, he doesn't return your feelings to the same degree. You are devastated. You love and adore him. How can he not feel the same way? You were getting on so well. Life is bleak and dark all of a sudden.

Maybe a peer can help?

<u>OBSERVER GUIDELINES</u>

This checklist contains a considerable number of peer support behaviours. Each time you observe such a behaviour, place a tick in the boxes opposite.

Peer supporter behaviour

1. Making eye contact										
2. Adopting an open posture										
3. Asking questions										
4. Nodding										
5. Encouraging phrases/noises										
6. Communicating empathy										
7. Listening and being silent										
8. Non-judging attitude/acceptance										

Skill areas (use numbers): _____

Areas needing attention (use numbers): _____

Empathy perceived: None   1   2   3   4   5   Very high

Describe peer's tone of voice: _____

What worked best? _____

What did you learn from the activity? _____
_____

Adapted from Moylan (1998).

Step 3: Effective listening: verbal and nonverbal messages

Aim: To effectively listen to the messages conveyed in conversations

Materials: Flipchart, marker, Identifying Verbal Messages (handout)

Input *(10 mins):* Now that the participants are aware of <u>active</u> listening, they need to start listening to the messages conveyed by the person with whom they are speaking. There are two important aspects of any conversation (Egan, 1994a):
- Verbal messages
- Nonverbal messages

Devote 10 minutes to explaining verbal messages. It is important to accurately hear and understand a person's core verbal messages and caringly communicate that understanding to the person. There are three parts to verbal messages (Egan, 1994a). People may be describing (you may want to write these on the flipchart):
- Experiences – what has happened to them
- Behaviour/action – what they choose to do or not do
- Feelings – what are the emotions that arise

A problem situation can become much clearer once it is spelled out in terms of these three aspects. Therefore, while the student is speaking try not to formulate responses. Instead, listen and identify the three parts of a verbal message. If somebody is only speaking about experiences, a peer might want to ask about the person's behaviour and feelings. Exploring all three areas of a verbal message may shed light on the situation.

Also, when listening, it is useful to stay in touch with what is being communicated. Therefore, try to keep the following questions in mind (you may want to write these on the flipchart):
- What are the core themes here?
- What is the person's point of view?
- What is most important to the person?
- What does the person want me to understand?

As discussed, listening is a very active process. To be an effective listener, it is necessary to check in with one's self - ensuring that meaning is clarified. Truly understanding a person's situation and communicating this back to the person will lead to increased empathy in the conversation.

Activity *(25 mins):* Before doing further roleplays, tell the group that this activity will give them an opportunity to practise identifying verbal messages. Ask them to spend 10 minutes completing the handout, Identifying Verbal Messages, in pairs. Then bring the group back together for a 15-minute

discussion about the task. Ask participants to volunteer their answers and discuss.

IDENTIFYING VERBAL MESSAGES

Below are two hypothetical student situations. Read the scenario, and then practice identifying verbal messages. You might not have enough information to answer some of the questions. If so, jot this down, as these are areas that you would want to explore if you really were having a conversation with Anne or Diarmuid.

A.   Anne, third year history student

I'm desperately unhappy on my course. Although I have friends outside of college, I do not have any friends in my classes. I was friendly with a few girls, but I had a falling out with them at the end of last year. I did not realise how tough it would be to sit by myself, not have anyone to email about notes and exams, etc. I feel very isolated and lonely. I used to enjoy history, but now I dread the classes and the situation is ruining my love of the subject. I also hate college.

What experiences does Anne describe?

What behaviour/action did Anne take?

What does Anne say about her feelings?

What are Anne's core themes here?

What is Anne's point of view?

What is most important to Anne?

How could you respond to Anne to communicate that you understand her?

What areas/issues do you require more information about and would you want to explore with Anne?

B.   Diarmuid, postgraduate engineering student

My flatmate is so obnoxious! He is doing everything possible to annoy me –
from leaving dirty dishes in the sink for me to wash to playing loud music until
4am. I can't stand it much longer and am going to insist that he move out! I
found the apartment in the first place, and he has been taking advantage of me
from day one.

What experiences does Diarmuid describe?

What behaviour/action did Diarmuid take?

What does Diarmuid say about his feelings?

What are Diarmuid's core themes here?

What is Diarmuid's point of view?

What is most important to Diarmuid?

How could you respond to Diarmuid to communicate that you understand him?

What areas/issues do you require more information about and would you want
to explore with Diarmuid?

TAKE A BREAK (15 minutes)

Input (10 mins): After taking a break, bring the group together for another input by the facilitators. Spend this time explaining nonverbal communication – sensing and reading unspoken cues and behaviours.

Egan (1994a) summarises nonverbal indicators that are important in accurately listening to a person's message. These include (you may want to list these on the flipchart):

- **Body behaviour**, such as posture, body movements, gestures

- **Facial expressions**, such as smiles, frowns, raised eyebrows, twisted lips, grimaces

- **Voice-related behaviour**, such as tone of voice, pitch, voice level, intensity

- **Observable autonomic physiological responses**, such as quickened breathing, the development of a temporary rash, blushing, paleness, pupil dilation

- **Physical characteristics**, such as fitness, height, weight, complexion

- **General appearance**, such as grooming and dress

It is important to recognise these messages without making too little or too much of them. Nonverbal behaviour can modify (e.g. deny, strengthen, confuse) what is being said and it is mainly through practice and experience that one learns to read its meaning in any given situation.

Similarly, just as we need to be aware of our peers' body language, it is also important to be self-aware. In a helping relationship, we might modify the verbal messages that we are delivering through nonverbal signs. Ask if participants can provide any examples of how communication might be modified through our nonverbal behaviours and cues.

Activity (15 mins): Ask participants to get into pairs (ideally with someone they have never worked with before) and to talk about something that annoys them (it does not have to be heavy or personal, possibly the Dublin bus system, a college regulation, etc.). Each partner chooses the topic for 5 minutes each. During the interaction, encourage participants to be keenly aware of the verbal and nonverbal communication that is occurring.

Spend 5 minutes discussing the activity. Do participants see the differences between verbal and nonverbal communication?

Step 4: Communication skills

Aim: To understand and practise the use of reflecting, paraphrasing and summarising

Materials: Reflecting & Paraphrasing (handout), Paraphrasing Exercise (handout), Summarising (handout), pens

Activity *(30 mins):* Explain to participants that there are a variety of specific skills, such as reflecting, paraphrasing and summarising, which can be used to enhance a conversation. Spend 15 minutes going through the handout, Reflecting & Paraphrasing, and discussing the techniques.

After the discussion, ask participants to individually complete the Paraphrasing exercise sheet in 5 minutes. Bring the group together for 10 minutes to discuss their answers. Ask them to share what they came up with because the possibilities are endless.

REFLECTING & PARAPHRASING

Reflecting is a very important tool used to mirror the meaning and feelings of what someone has said (Gilliland & James, 1993, Moursund, 1990). Usually it just involves repeating the last few words of what was heard. This communicates an understanding of a speaker's point of view.

Example
A peer is very anxious about doing an oral presentation in front of everyone in the class. She says to you, "I won't be able to do it. I'll just get up there and freeze!"

Possible reflection
"…and freeze?"

Paraphrasing is the skill of restating what someone else has just said (Gilliland & James, 1993, Moursund, 1990). The listener repeats the message in their own words, perhaps using a concrete illustration, example or metaphor to convey more vividly what they understand has been said. Paraphrasing combines thoughts, feelings, and/or actions to provide a clearer picture for both people involved in a conversation. Paraphrasing also allows a speaker to re-hear a statement and thus verify that the listener did, in fact, listen to them. These comments therefore provide ongoing feedback during a conversation, a constant re-tuning of the communication channel. Finally, paraphrasing does more than simply mirror back what another person has said – it invites the person to explore further or to understand better whatever is being discussed.

Example
A student describes a heated argument between himself and his father over the father's refusal to lend him money. As he talks of his anger, his eyes fill with tears.

Possible paraphrase
"You are cross with your father for not giving you the loan, and at the same time you are feeling upset."

This paraphrase takes into account the content (father would not lend money), the verbalised feelings (anger), and the nonverbal behaviour (tears).

In order for paraphrasing to be most effective, it must be accurate. Nevertheless, you should attempt to paraphrase what another person is saying, even if you are not sure you are right. It is important to invite the other person to confirm or reject a paraphrase, as it will give you the opportunity to correct any errors of perception on your part.

<u>Some possible introductory phrases for paraphrasing</u>**:**
- So, what you are saying is…
- I hear you saying that…
- If I understand correctly, you…
- You are telling me that…
- It sounds like you…

<u>NOT:</u>
- You're not making yourself clear.
- You've not expressed that very well.

<u>Examples of paraphrasing</u>

- I really can't apply for that placement. It's not that I cannot do it, I just can't stand the thought of the interview.

  Paraphrasing response: You feel that you are capable of doing the placement, but you can't apply because you do not feel able to do the interview.

- I'm so confused. I just don't know whether to transfer to that other course or carry on as I am.

  Paraphrasing response: I hear you say that you are unsure if you want to change course.

<u>Guidelines</u>
- Be tentative and offer your impression of what someone else has said.
- Avoid telling, informing or defining the other person.
- Be respectful: don't judge, dismiss or use sarcasm.
- Use your own words. Repeating verbatim (parroting) is not paraphrasing.
- Try to tune into the other person's language. It is better to use exact words when characterising an event or situation, e.g. "injured" not "maimed."
- Listen to the depth of feeling expressed in the person's voice and reflect accordingly in your response.
- Do not add to what the person has said, and avoid interpretations and evaluations.
- Be genuine and don't pretend you understand if you do not.
- Be brief and direct.

PARAPHRASING EXERCISE

Paraphrase the following statements so that your responses show your understanding of the speaker's meaning.

I hate it when I let my fear get the best of me when presenting to an audience. It happens all the time. I go blank and forget my words!

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I don't know why I did it. These other guys and I beat the daylights out of him. We'd been drinking and smoking – but not too much. I guess, I just did it.

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(In a totally relaxed manner) I get furious with her when she suggests that I am not a good friend.

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What seems to be bothering me is a problem with my sexuality. I don't date women. I don't even think I want to. I may…well, I may be gay…Uh, I don't know (student then falls silent and looks at the floor).

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....
....
....

Adapted from Egan (1994a).

Activity *(20 mins):* Spend 10 minutes going through the handout, Summarising, and discussing the technique.

Afterwards, check that participants are clear on the role of summarising in peer helping skills. To try out summarising, spend 10 minutes practicing summarising as a large group. Ask for a volunteer to speak for 1 minute on a topic of their choice. Invite another participant to listen, without taking notes, to what is being said and be ready to summarise it back to the speaker. Ask for feedback from the group as to the accuracy of the summary, and also inquire about how the listener found the exercise. Do this exercise at least twice.

SUMMARISING

Summarising pulls together the main points of a discussion and organises them so that they can be reviewed, confirmed or corrected (Moursund, 1990).

Summaries can serve a variety of purposes, including to:
- Prioritise and focus scattered thoughts and feelings
- Close the discussion of a particular theme
- Begin a further discussion
- Check understanding of the progress of the conversation
- Prompt exploration of an idea more completely
- Focus a conversation that seems to be going nowhere
- Begin to consider ways forward

Guidelines
- Put together the key ideas and feelings into broad statements of the student's basic meanings.
- Attend to the student's various themes and emotional overtones.
- Be brief and direct.
- Do not add to what the person has said, and avoid interpretations and evaluations.

Example
In the following response, the listener summarises what a peer has said and adds a question to help the peer move forward (Moursund, 1990).

May I just check that I have understood this correctly? You've told me of a few choices open to you. You could try to deal with procrastination yourself, make an appointment to meet with your tutor, or enrol in a study skills group. None of the options feel like a perfect solution. What do you see as the advantages and disadvantages of each of these possibilities?

Step 5: Closure

Aim: To evaluate and close the session, answering any remaining questions.

Materials: Evaluation forms (see Appendix one), pens

Input *(10 mins):* You should open the floor for the group to ask questions or discuss any unresolved issues. Before leaving, participants should complete the standard evaluation form that will be used at the end of each day.

WORKSHOP FIVE

Time required: 3 hours, including a 15 minute break

Themes covered: Asking questions
Closed and open questions

Introduction: This workshop aims to equip participants with the valuable skills of questioning. Asking questions is an integral part of establishing empathy with a peer. For the peer supporter, questions are necessary to accurately see a person's world through his or her eyes. Additionally, questions serve a useful purpose for peers as well. In answering questions, people often clarify their personal situation to themselves as well. Talking with a peer supporter allows them to explore an issue or a problem and leaves them with a better understanding of their position, new insights and the action required.

There are two types of questions that are used for different purposes. Each is invaluable to the peer supporter when used to establish and maintain contact. Closed questions are answered by a 'yes', 'no' or other specific response. They facilitate clarification. Open questions are answered by a unique response. They encourage elaboration, exploration and verbalisation of key issues.

Step 1: Welcome, review of previous workshop and a general overview of the themes to be addressed in this session

Aim: To answer questions or concerns from the previous workshop and to provide continuity between the sessions

Materials: None

Input (15 mins): Begin by going over the main themes from the previous session and asking for questions. How has the material "settled" with students? Then introduce the topics to be covered in the current workshop, highlighting how the new learning builds on topics previously addressed.

Step 2: Closed and open questions

Aim: To help participants understand and practice the skill of questioning

Materials: Flipchart, marker, The Skill of Asking Questions (handout), Closed and Open Questions (handout), Closed and Open Questions: Notice the Difference! (handout), Open Questions (handout), Observer Feedback Sheet (handout)

Activity (30 mins): Begin by spending 10 minutes brainstorming about the use of questions in conversations. Ask participants about the pros and cons of using

questions, the types of questions that exist, and how questions elicit different types of information.

Facilitators may also want to provide a 5-minute input into this discussion about a fundamental point for participants – peer supporters are not responsible for providing solutions to problems, nor should this be the focus of peer conversations. Instead, the role (whether formal or informal) is to be there as a listener and to help explore problems, thereby allowing a person to realise alternative actions or solutions. Often people think they must help a friend or peer solve a problem; however most of the time, we can best assist by dissecting and understanding the issues at hand (questions are key to this process!). People tend to come to their own conclusions and resolve the problems themselves. Therefore, encourage participants, in real life and in upcoming roleplays, not to be focused on solving problems.

Distribute the handouts, The Skill of Asking Questions and Closed and Open Questions. Use the handouts as a guide for a 15-minute group discussion regarding the different types of questions. Add your own input or examples regarding questions.

THE SKILL OF ASKING QUESTIONS

Questions are an important part of a helping conversation. However, they need to be used appropriately to benefit a discussion (Egan, 1994a).

General guidelines for questions
- Ask questions that serve a purpose.

- Ask questions that have substance to them - to help the person get somewhere, to gather information that is useful for the person, to challenge the person to think about something.

- Take questioning very slowly. Many people need to develop trust with a person in order to feel comfortable with revealing personal information.

- Do not ask too many questions, so that a person feels "grilled".

Some pitfalls of questioning
- Leading questions
This type of question assumes that the questioner knows the answer, and puts it in the other person's mouth.

    That's hard for you, isn't it?   When will you tell your parents?

- Why questions
'Why' questions can put people on the defensive as they can imply that the person should know the answers. Such questions can sound critical, as though you are questioning their judgement.

    Why isn't this working for you?   Why do you not understand this?

- Intimate questions
Some questions are not appropriate to ask because they may not be relevant or may be too personal. This can be a very fine line, but you should try to ask questions that are valuable for progressing a specific conversation. Always be respectful and treat other people as you would want to be treated. Avoid being voyeuristic by not asking inappropriate questions. Helping a peer does not involve getting "juicy details".

    Are you gay?   And then what did you do in bed?

- Poorly timed questions
Such questions interrupt the flow of a person relating their story. In addition to being inconsiderate, these questions can abruptly end a conversation.

    How long has this been going on for? (asked in the midst of someone divulging that he smokes too much marijuana)

    Well, what will you do? (asked while someone is still relating the details of her personal crisis)

CLOSED AND OPEN QUESTIONS

There are two types of questions – closed and open questions.

Closed questions
Closed questions often begin with verbs like *do, did, does, can, will,* etc. and can be answered with a 'yes' or 'no' response (Gilliand & James, 1993). If a specific piece of information is needed, then a closed question may be used. Closed questions are also helpful to check facts and to ask for clarification. However, closed questions lead to very little discussion as they elicit a one-word response. An example is: 'Do you like your course in College?'. They often elicit a one-word answer, only get short answers and pin people down.

If used appropriately, closed questions can be useful for:

- Clarifying
      Do you want to go to university?

- Checking information
      It seems to me that ... is this right?

- Establishing facts
      Do you want to study for another 3 years?
      Do you want to go to that university?

- Getting someone to focus on a particular issue
      You mentioned alcohol; is that a particular problem for you?

Open questions

To get fuller, more meaningful responses questions need to be asked that are not dead-ends (Gilliand & James, 1993). Open questions encourage people to explore their story. The goal is to gain more detail and understanding so that the problem becomes clearer. When used, open questions help a person to elaborate on specific relevant experiences, behaviours, and feelings.

Suggestions for forming open questions

- To begin discussion use *What* and *How:*

How was that for you?	What did you feel/do/like?
How can I help you?	What is on your mind?

- To request description

Tell me about…	Explain to me…
In what way does…?	

- **To give a person an opportunity to expand on what is being said**

When you say he upsets you, what exactly do you say/do?
Could you say some more about that?

- **To focus on feelings**

Could you describe your feelings?
How do you feel about that?

- To focus on plans

What will you do…?	How will you make it happen?
How will that help you to…?	What are your choices?
What could you do that might change things?	
What might be the difficulties in doing…?	

Activity *(25 mins):* It is useful for participants to experience the different impacts of both closed and open questions in a conversation. Distribute the handout, Closed and Open Questions: Notice the Difference!, to all participants. Ask participants to form pairs and spend 15 minutes working through the handout. One participant plays the role of the student, and the other acts as a peer supporter. They will work through the scenario two times – first, with the peer supporter asking only closed questions and second, with the peer supporter asking the open questions.

Bring participants back to the larger group for a 10-minute discussion about the activity. Ask them about:
- their overall perceptions of the exchange
- the specific effects of the use of closed and open questions
- how the "students" felt being asked closed and open questions
- what they have learned from this experience.

CLOSED AND OPEN QUESTIONS: NOTICE THE DIFFERENCE!

You're a first-year student. You're having great difficulty settling into college and into Dublin generally. You feel lost and alone. It's as if nobody knows or cares that you exist; it's like being invisible. Dublin is fast and noisy, and it seems that everybody else has a busy, fun life. You're really miserable. The only <u>good</u> thing about it all is your course.

You worked hard at school to get the necessary points and you love all your subjects. It's a pity everything else is so awful. All the others in your class seem to be enjoying this great social life that you've been hearing about. You've been in college for months now, and it's getting worse.

You've thought about giving up the course and going back home to your family and friends, but your parents have begged you to try and at least finish the year. This is costing them a fortune and you feel you can't let them down. They're so proud of you! You really feel the situation has reached breaking point, so you contact a peer supporter to get their opinion on it.

<u>Closed questions:</u>
Do you share with other students?
Do you like them?
Who is your tutor?
Do you enjoy your course?
How many people are in your class?
Has it been difficult to make friends?
Do you have friends at home?
Have you known them long?
Do you go home at the weekends?
I suppose you're really looking forward to Christmas/Easter?

<u>Open questions:</u>
What do you wish you could change about your situation?
What do you think would help you to settle into college?
Tell me about your course.
What are the people on your course like? How can you tell that they're <u>all</u> having a marvellous time?
Tell me about your accommodation.
You say you really miss your friends from home. Tell me about your closest friend.
Take me through a typical evening here in Dublin; what do you usually do?
What are your plans for Christmas/Easter?

Adapted from Moylan (1998).

Activity *(25 mins):* Developing open questions takes practise. The handout, Open Questions, is an opportunity to brainstorm open questions with a partner. Ask participants to find a new partner with whom to work. Distribute the handout and give pairs 10 minutes to compose open questions for the two situations. Afterwards, bring the group back together. Spend 15 minutes going around the room, asking pairs to share some of their open questions. Write these up on the flipchart so that participants can see the many variations of questions that are possible.

TAKE A BREAK (15 minutes)

OPEN QUESTIONS

Discuss both situations and list the open questions you would ask so that the individual has more information on which to base his or her decisions.

Situation 1

You are in your final year at college. A friend has approached you for advice. She has been offered a position with a leading engineering company in Dublin, but she has also been offered a place on a postgraduate programme. She sees the attraction in both options and cannot decide which is the best one for her.

Your examples:

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Situation 2

You are a peer supporter to a first year student. He has asked to speak with you about relationship difficulties. He explains to you that he has been going out with his girlfriend for just over two years now, but recently feels that the relationship has turned sour. Having just gone through a family bereavement, he feels his girlfriend was not helpful during this difficult period and therefore, is starting to question the value of the relationship. He asks you for your advice about whether he should end the relationship or try to work it out.

Your examples:

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Activity *(60 mins):* It is now time for participants to apply their new understanding of questioning to a real conversation. Ask participants to work in groups of three – a person with a decision, a helpful peer and an observer (roles will rotate so that they have a chance in each role). Each person thinks of a real decision that he or she needs to make (it doesn't have to be personal or heavy). One of the partners, the 'helpful peer', helps them to talk about all aspects involved in the decision by asking closed and open questions. Throughout the exercise, the peer practices good listening and communication skills – attending, observing, responding with empathy, summarising, etc. The observer watches the interaction and records impressions on the handout, Observer Feedback Sheet.

After 10 minutes of a discussion, the group spends 5 minutes giving feedback to each other (refer back to Guidelines for Feedback). The groups swap roles, two more times, and do the same.

Facilitators should float among the groups to observe progress and offer advice while the groups are roleplaying. They should also 'call time' when it is time for participants to swap roles.

After the 45 minutes of roleplaying in triads, the large group reconvenes. Facilitate a 15-minute discussion about how participants found the activity, especially their ability to appropriately use closed and open questions.

OBSERVER FEEDBACK SHEET

This checklist contains a considerable number of peer supporter behaviours. It is suggested that you decide in advance which specific behaviour you intend to focus on. Each time you observe such a behaviour, place a tick in the boxes opposite.

Peer supporter behaviour

1.	Eye contact									
2.	Nodding									
3.	Encouraging phrases									
4.	Repeating key words/phrases									
5.	Paraphrasing feelings									
6.	Paraphrasing thoughts									
7.	Paraphrasing behaviours									
8.	Summarising feelings									
9.	Summarising thoughts									
10.	Summarising behaviours									
11.	Reflecting feelings									
12.	Reflecting thoughts									
13.	Reflecting behaviours									
14.	Using open questions									
15.	Using closed questions									
16.	Self-disclosure									
17.	Empathy									
18.	Non-judging attitude									

Skill areas (use numbers): _____

Areas needing attention (use numbers): _____

Empathy perceived: None   1   2   3   4   5   Very high

Describe peer's tone of voice: _____

What worked best? _____

What did you learn from the activity? _____
_____

Adapted from Moylan (1998).

Step 5: Closure

Aim: To evaluate and close the session, answering any remaining questions.

Materials: Evaluation forms (see Appendix one), pens

Input (10 mins): You should open the floor for the group to ask questions or discuss any unresolved issues. Before leaving, participants should complete the standard evaluation form that will be used at the end of each day.

WORKSHOP SIX

Time required: 3 hours, including a 15 minute break

Themes covered: Silence
'I' statements
Integrating skills

Introduction: This workshop introduces two new tools for participants, as well as provides time for them to practise integrating all the skills learned to-date.

"True silence is the rest of the mind; it is to the spirit what sleep is to the body, nourishment and refreshment."   William Penn

Silence in a conversation can be a rich experience. The absence of noise serves many purposes that include – time to think and reflect, space to sit with another person to feel an emotion or solidarity, etc. Silence is the ground from which new thought and action arises. Unfortunately, most people fear silence in a conversation. Thus, it is necessary to explore, discuss and encounter silence. This tends to be a very interesting, revealing experience for most participants.

Owning our opinions by using 'I' statements is useful advice for all of us. It is particularly wise to discuss this issue with young people, because it has been our impression that young people often, in an attempt to help, over-identify with another person and assume that both their problems are similar, when in fact they are not. 'I' statements seek to maintain distinct boundaries between people in a conversation and help clarify personal experience and opinions (Gilliand & James, 1993).

Finally, participants now have been exposed to many skills used to improve communication: 3 core conditions (acceptance, genuineness, and empathy), active listening, verbal and non-verbal messages, reflecting, paraphrasing, and summarising, closed and open questions, silence, and 'I' statements. As they have been presented separately over three workshops, the roleplay exercise provides participants with a chance to bring together these skills.

<u>Step 1:</u> Welcome, review of previous workshop and a general overview of the themes to be addressed in this session

Aim: To answer questions or concerns from the previous workshop and to provide continuity between the sessions

Materials: None

Input *(15 mins):* Begin by going over the main themes from the previous session and asking for questions. How has the material "settled" with students?

Then introduce the topics to be covered in the current workshop, highlighting how the new learning builds on topics previously addressed.

Step 2: Silence
Adapted from Burnard (1996).

Aim: To become more comfortable with silence in conversations

Materials: None

Input (10 mins): Discuss silence with participants. Silence is often avoided – the temptation is to talk to fill a void or lapse in a conversation. However, silence serves many purposes; most importantly it gives a person time to think and reflect. Sitting with a person in silence often conveys deep, empathic understanding.

Through practice, we must learn to recognise the difference between "stuck" silence and "reflective" silence. If you are unsure about the silence, it is OK to ask the person to clarify. Otherwise, respect the silence and stay with it

Silence can be difficult, because we are not used to it. A tip is to stay with the silence for as long as you are comfortable, and then slowly count to 20.

Activity (20 mins): Participants form pairs and sit facing one another in complete silence for 5 minutes. They are to imagine that their partner has just told them something "heavy" – e.g. he or she was abused as a child. During the 5 minutes, they can experiment with maintaining eye contact and making no eye contact at all. Participants should be aware of how they are feeling about what is happening during this silent period. In particular, they should notice:
- What feels comfortable/what feels uncomfortable about the silence?
- What behaviours appear to make silence more uncomfortable?
- At what point do they feel compelled to look away from their partner?

After the exercise, the participants remain in their pairs and discuss the activity for 5 minutes. What are their reactions? In the past, how have they dealt with silence in a conversation?

Bring the larger group together, and initiate a 10-minute discussion about the activity. Ask for the participants' opinions about both the negative and positive aspects of silence. How comfortable do they feel they will be with silence when trying to help a peer?

Step 3: 'I' statements

Aim: To understand how to use 'I' statements to avoid projecting feelings, thoughts and behaviours on others

Materials: None

Input (15 mins): One important aspect of listening is for a person to 'own' personal statements about feelings, thoughts and behaviours. Such statements need to be clarified to avoid making assumptions and projecting personal responses on another person. Therefore, discuss 'I' statements with participants. After providing them with a few examples, ask them to suggest possible ways that they might use 'I' statements when chatting with a peer. Encourage participants to be aware of them when doing the next roleplay exercises.

Owning statements is often most effective when combined with reflecting, paraphrasing and summarising.

Example
"You wanted to talk to him about it, but you were nervous as to how he would respond? As **I** listen to you, **I** find myself getting very angry with him and feeling tense. Is this how you felt?"

Avoid:
- You felt angry and tense! (assuming the other person's response and putting words into their mouth)
- That happened to me once and I… (focusing on yourself and assuming that the situations are similar)

Example
"**I** hear what you are saying about having to share a room with your cousin. **I** would feel claustrophobic with such an arrangement; how do your find it?"

TAKE A BREAK (15 minutes)

Step 4: Integrating skills

Aim: To have participants practice the listening and communications skills in a more in-depth manner

Materials: Flipchart, marker, 3 Roleplays to Integrate Skills (handout), Observer Feedback Sheet (handout)

Activity (90 mins): Participants have now learned all of the listening and communications skills that are presented in this course. You may want to have prepared a flipchart with a list of the skills to remind them of the topics that they have covered:
- 3 core conditions: acceptance, genuineness, and empathy
- Active listening
- Verbal and non-verbal messages
- Reflecting, paraphrasing, and summarising
- Closed and open questions
- Silence

- 'I' statements

Participants require more practice at integrating all of these skills when called upon by their peers. Ask participants to work in groups of three. Distribute copies of both handouts, 3 Roleplays to Integrate Skills and the Observer Feedback Sheet, to each person. Two people will roleplay – one is the fictional person portrayed in the roleplay and the other is the peer supporter. The third person will be the observer (roles will rotate so that they have a chance in each). Groups will spend 20 minutes doing each of the three roleplays, so participants should really get into their roles and attempt to practise all of the listening and communication skills. The observer watches the interaction and records impressions on the handout, Observer Guideline Sheet.

After 20 minutes exploring the first roleplay scenario, the group spends 5 minutes giving feedback to each other (refer back to Guidelines for Feedback). The groups swap roles, two more times, and do the same.

Facilitators should float among the groups to observe progress and offer advice while the groups are roleplaying. They should also 'call time' when it is time for participants to swap roles.

After the 75 minutes of roleplaying in triads, the large group reconvenes. Facilitate a 15-minute discussion about how participants found the activity. What skills do they find the easiest, and are they struggling with anything?

3 ROLEPLAYS TO INTEGRATE SKILLS

A DRINKING PROBLEM

A fellow student, Sean, asks to speak with you. He wants to know your opinion about a band that is playing in Dublin soon. While Sean is asking the question, he seems quite nervous and shifty. You are quite surprised that he has asked you about this, as you don't know him very well, nor do you know anything about the band. However, once you start responding to him, Sean interrupts by saying, "I really need to talk to someone. I think I'm drinking too much and it is ruining my life. My girlfriend dumped me because I'm always pissed, my parents are mad at me but they do not know what is going on, and I'm coming close to failing my course. Life is just miserable."

Using all your skills, how do you respond?

A VISTING STUDENT

You've noticed a girl on your course who seems very down. A visiting student from Asia, Amy Cho seems friendly and kind, but shy and withdrawn. A few times in class, you get the feeling that she wanted to talk with you. One day while waiting for other classmates and the lecturer to arrive, you ask her how she is finding college and Ireland. She seems relieved to talk with you, and tells you that Ireland is different to what she expected. She is having difficulties getting to know people – mainly due to cultural differences. Amy is quiet, reserved, and does not drink or go to the pub. Also, during her first week in the country, she experienced a racist remark while taking the bus. Now she is wary of talking with people. Clearly she is feeling lonely.

Using all your skills, how do you respond?

A GAY FRIEND

A close friend, Deirdre, has recently 'come out' as a lesbian in college. Although you were surprised and a bit uncomfortable at the beginning, your friendship is important to you. Also, you have noticed that Deirdre seems much happier in college – a weight has been lifted from her shoulders. While meeting for lunch, she tells you that she feels like she needs to tell her parents about her sexuality. Hailing from a rural, religious family, Deirdre is unsure about how to talk with her parents. She is also very apprehensive about her parents' response towards her.

Using all your skills, how do you respond?

OBSERVER FEEDBACK SHEET

This checklist contains a considerable number of peer supporter behaviours. It is suggested that you decide in advance which specific behaviour you intend to focus on. Each time you observe such a behaviour, place a tick in the boxes opposite.

Peer supporter behaviour

1.	Eye contact									
2.	Nodding									
3.	Encouraging phrases									
4.	Repeating key words/phrases									
5.	Paraphrasing feelings									
6.	Paraphrasing thoughts									
7.	Paraphrasing behaviours									
8.	Summarising feelings									
9.	Summarising thoughts									
10.	Summarising behaviours									
11.	Reflecting feelings									
12.	Reflecting thoughts									
13.	Reflecting behaviours									
14.	Use of silence									
15.	'I' statements									
16.	Using open questions									
17.	Using closed questions									
18.	Self-disclosure									
19.	Empathy									
20.	Non-judging attitude									

Skill areas (use numbers): _____

Areas needing attention (use numbers): _____

Empathy perceived: None   1   2   3   4   5   Very high

Describe peer's tone of voice: _____

What worked best?_____

What did you learn from the activity?_____
_____

Adapted from Moylan (1998).

Step 5: Closure

Aim: To evaluate and close the session, answering any remaining questions.

Materials: Evaluation forms (see Appendix one), pens

Input *(10 mins):* You should open the floor for the group to ask questions or discuss any unresolved issues. Before leaving, participants should complete the standard evaluation form that will be used at the end of each day.

WORKSHOP SEVEN

Time required: 3 hours, including a 15 minute break

Themes covered: Roles and boundaries
                             Sticky situations
                             Confidentiality

Introduction: This workshop begins by exploring how participants might use their newly acquired skills. The exact role of a peer supporter will depend on the programme structure in an institution. In some universities, the role will be very informal – students are trained and empowered with life-long skills. In other colleges, the role will be more formal – students undergo training to volunteer as an identified peer helper or to assist with specific programmes in the institution. Each programme will have different roles, responsibilities, and boundaries for students. Therefore, these issues need to be determined and communicated with participants so that they are clear as to what is expected from them.

Boundaries are an important issue for all peer support programmes. Participants need to understand that our interactions and levels of responsibility differ according to the nature of relationships. For example, we relate very differently to people in our workplace than around our close friends or family members. Setting boundaries involves defining our personal space, knowing our levels of comfort, and clarifying what we can offer to others. Certain situations can arise that may be 'sticky' or unclear. Such situations might test a person's appropriate boundaries. The workshop offers participants the opportunity to prepare themselves by talking through possible 'sticky' situations.

Confidentiality is a key component to helping others. For students to seek help from a peer supporter, they must know that the information and feelings that they divulge will go no further. Confidentiality is especially important within colleges, which are often small communities in which news and gossip travel fast. With that said, participants need to be aware that there are times when a peer supporter may need to seek advice or guidance from a college staff member; often this can be done without breaking confidence. However, in extreme circumstances, breaking confidence and seeking help from professionals may be the best help another person can provide to a distressed student. This workshop provides an opportunity for peer supporters to tease out the reasons for, details of, and limits to confidentiality.

<u>Step 1:</u> Welcome, review of previous workshop and a general overview of the themes to be addressed in this session

Aim: To answer questions or concerns from the previous workshop and to provide continuity between the sessions

Materials: None

Input *(15 mins):* Begin by going over the main themes from the previous session and asking for questions. How has the material "settled" with students? Then introduce the topics to be covered in the current workshop, highlighting how the new learning builds on topics previously addressed.

Step 2: Roles and boundaries (55 minutes total)

Aim: To clarify the role of the peer supporter and to introduce the concept of personal boundaries

Materials: Flipchart, marker, The Helping Relationship (handout)

Input *(5 mins):* Spend a few minutes explaining the exact role of how participants can use their new skills within the institution. This will depend on the structures and opportunities available in the college (e.g. In Trinity College, participants are encouraged to use their new skills when interacting with others in the college community. We also discuss how these skills might be advantageous in the other areas in participants' lives – families, relationships, clubs and societies, volunteer work, etc. Additionally, for participants who complete the training course, they may interview to volunteer with the Peer Support Network (PSN). PSN involves being "matched" one-to-one with a student who has requested peer support.)

Activity *(15 mins):* Initiate a group discussion to consider the nature of the peer support role(s) in the institution. Ask participants (or write and display the questions on the flipchart):
- What skills do you have to offer?
- How do you see using your skills?
- How are these roles different from friendships and professional relationships?

Activity *(35 mins):* After the issue of roles has been addressed, it is appropriate to introduce the topic of boundaries as related to the specific peer supporter role. As students and non-professional helpers, there are many boundaries that participants need to observe for the benefit of themselves, others and the institution. Essentially, they should not "bite off more than they can chew".

Ask participants to get into small groups of three or four people. Tell them that they have 10 minutes to discuss two questions and jot down their ideas. The questions are:
- What are boundaries?
- What personal boundaries should a peer supporter set?

Once they have talked through these questions, bring the group back together for a 20-minute group discussion. Ask each small group to share the ideas that they developed and write these down on the flipchart. Hopefully they will have identified

that boundaries are the distance and emotional detachment that need to be maintained to ensure an effective perspective on a situation. Although it may sound cold, it is just the opposite. If we lose our ability to be objective, we tend to become too involved in a person or situation. Maintaining personal boundaries is indicative of a well-trained, experienced peer supporter.

Some possible personal boundaries include:
- Know the limits of the peer support relationship. Be clear about your role.
- Establish boundaries around the time of meetings with peers (e.g. restrict meetings to an hour or two, at a time that suits you).
- Be responsible about choosing places to meet peers (e.g. choose a public place during daylight hours, do not go to a pub or someone's apartment, etc.).
- Encourage peers to be responsible for their problems, decisions and actions.
- Accept that others may not be ready to face problems or make changes.
- Do not take on too much or try to 'save' peers by solving their problems.
- Involve others (friends, tutor, counsellor, GP, etc.), with the permission of the individual, so that you do not become burdened by a situation.
- Be aware of personal limitations and knowledge, and know when to seek help (referrals will be discussed in Workshop 8). Seeking help is a sign of strength, rather than a sign of weakness.
- Leave peers' problems with them, rather than 'taking the problems home' with you.
- Seek personal support if impacted or stressed by helping a peer.

Finally conclude the discussion by distributing the handout, The Helping Relationship. Take 5 minutes to go through it and answer any remaining questions.

THE HELPING RELATIONSHIP

Be aware of your values and processes

Be clear about your knowledge and experience base

Be explicit about confidentiality and its boundaries

Remember that the relationship and conversations are about the other person

Ensure that your self-disclosure is appropriate

Get help and ask for advice if you are feeling unsure or overwhelmed

Refer your peer to professional help/college staff, if needed

Know the limitations of the helping relationship

Feel comfortable negotiating your involvement or saying "no" when appropriate

Take care of yourself when you are supporting a peer

TAKE A BREAK (15 minutes)

Step 3: Sticky situations
Adapted from Clark & Lerch (1998).

Aim: To consider difficult scenarios that may arise when helping a peer

Materials: Sticky Situations (handout)

Activity *(30 mins):* This exercise involves participants considering 'sticky situations' and thinking about how to handle situations in such a way that maintain the boundaries of the helping relationship. Their reactions may differ depending on if they are providing formal or informal support to peers.

Ask participants to split into pairs, distribute the handout, Sticky Situations, and have them discuss for 15 minutes how they would <u>feel</u> and <u>think</u>, and what they would <u>do</u> in these situations. Afterward, bring the group back together for a 15-minute discussion of their reactions. Their responses, your input and the discussion will very much depend on their role as peer supporters and the structure of the programme in the college (informal or formal programmes). However, in general, here are some suggestions for participants on handling these situations:

- Although it is important to build up a rapport with peers, if you enter into a formal helping relationship, it is vital that you set boundaries. At the beginning of the helping relationship, explain in explicit terms the nature of the relationship. For instance at TCD, all students seeking to be 'matched' with a peer support volunteer are made aware that the volunteers are available to be a 'listening ear', not their best friends. Hanging out with one another everyday, sending late night text messages, etc. go beyond the boundaries.

- Before you enter a formal helping relationship, make a pact with yourself that dating a peer that you support is not in your or their best interest. If there is an attraction and you are unsure how to handle it, be honest about it and talk the situation through with other peer supporters or a programme leader.

There are possible consequences of disregarding boundaries or becoming emotionally/romantically involved with those who are being supported, including:

- You overstep the boundaries of the peer support relationship and create dangerous liaisons (e.g. power imbalances, dependency) that will inevitably jeopardise the helping process and possibly exacerbate existing issues.

- An overly-intimate helping relationship may inhibit the effective use of referral to the appropriate student services.

- As a peer supporter, you may become over-involved and overwhelmed, leading to negative consequences for yourself.

STICKY SITUATIONS

This exercise involves you considering 'sticky situations' and thinking about how you would handle the particular situations in such a way that maintains the boundaries of the helping relationship. Identify your reactions to these situations in terms of how you would <u>feel</u> and <u>think</u>, and what you would <u>do</u>. Your reactions may differ depending on if you are providing formal or informal support to peers.

Scenario 1

One of the students that you have recently helped in your peer supporter capacity has taken a liking for you. S/he walks to class with you and emails you often. One day s/he confesses romantic feelings and asks you out on a date. How would you <u>feel</u> and <u>think</u>, and what would you <u>do</u>?

Scenario 2

A few weeks after college commenced, a first year student came to you with a small personal problem. You helped him explore it and he resolved the problem with good results. Since then, he seems to have become over-dependent on you. He constantly stops by your room to hang out, brings you sweets, and talks as if he is your new best friend. How would you <u>feel</u> and <u>think</u>, and what would you <u>do</u>?

Scenario 3

You have been assigned to be a peer supporter to 20 first year students. You find yourself attracted to one of the students and you suspect that the feelings are shared. How would you <u>feel</u> and <u>think</u>, and what would you <u>do</u>?

Step 4: Confidentiality

Aim: To define confidentiality and provide guidelines for it in the context of the peer support programme

Materials: Flipchart, marker, Handling Confidentiality in the Helping Relationship (handout), Handling Disclosures (handout), Issues of Confidentiality (handout),

Activity *(25 mins):* Confidentiality is a major issue for peer support; it is one of the foundations for effective peer support. For 10 minutes, discuss the following three questions (you should write these on a flipchart):
1. What is confidentiality?
2. Within the context of peer support, to whom do we owe confidentiality?
3. Is confidentiality absolute or can it be overridden?

Confidentiality is the commitment to keep all details of a conversation or meeting private. It is crucial not to disclose any identifying details (name, age, course, hometown, etc.), and usually there is not even a need to discuss that the conversation took place. In peer support, confidentiality is owed to the student who is seeking support, especially as peer supporters may be trusted with highly personal information. However, in extreme circumstances, confidentiality may need to be breached.

Distribute the handout, Handling Confidentiality in the Helping Relationship, to discuss when and how to break confidentiality. Talk through the handout for 15 minutes as a group. Ask participants for their reactions and concerns. Ensure that participants know that if they encounter a person with a problem that requires specialist help, they will need to make a referral. The next workshop will deal with referrals.

Input *(5 mins):* It is very useful to spend 5 minutes giving very general suggestions for how to handle disclosures. Distribute the handout, Handling Disclosures, and talk through it.

HANDLING CONFIDENTIALITY
IN THE HELPING RELATIONSHIP

It is important to know when confidences should be kept and when they should be broken. The general rule is to maintain confidentiality in *all but exceptional cases – when a student may cause immediate harm to him or herself or others.* Early on in "one to one" discussions with students, it is your responsibility to clarify the limits to your confidentiality. It is important that students are aware of these limits BEFORE they make disclosures.

If a student discloses information that s/he wishes to remain confidential and you feel that it should be passed on, assess the situation by asking yourself the following questions:

- Why are you considering breaking confidentiality?
- How serious is the situation?
- What immediate and significant risks does the student face?
- Are his or her actions placing anyone else at immediate and significant risk?
- What implications – both positive and negative – could breaking confidentiality have?
- What significant harm (to the student, other people and yourself) could result from NOT breaking their confidence?

The rule of thumb is that if you cannot come up with a clear, significant and specific harm to the student or others, then do not break confidentiality. However, if you do have a good reason to break a confidence, try to limit the negative consequences of this by:
- Explaining to the student your reason for breaking confidentiality

- Being clear about:
    - Why you are breaking the confidence
    - Who you will tell
    - What you will tell them
    - What they are likely to do with the information
    - What consequences this will have for the student involved and for your relationship

In making a difficult decision to break confidentiality, you should discuss the situation with a qualified adult – a counsellor, doctor, residential hall supervisor, tutor, etc. Without using names or distinguishing details (thereby maintaining confidentiality) they can help you decide the best course of action to take.

Additionally, if you are feeling overwhelmed by the information that was disclosed to you, you should seek support for yourself. You can talk to a supervisor, college staff member or other trusted adult about your feelings without breaking confidentiality or relaying situation-specific details.

HANDLING DISCLOSURES

Here are some general suggestions for dealing with people when they reveal problems to you.

- Listen carefully. Your support and encouragement are important.

- Know your limits and boundaries. There are some situations you cannot (and should not) handle on your own. When in doubt, refer peers to more qualified source.

- Seek consultation. Let the student know that you would like to talk to a more knowledgeable source before giving any direct advice. Talk to that person, and then get back to the student as soon as possible. Reassure the peer that you will maintain confidentiality unless you feel they are a threat to themselves or another individual.

- Continue to follow up with the student, if appropriate. Make sure they know that you are available for them and you will support them as they work through their issues. However, there are times when it is appropriate to tell a peer that you cannot continue to be available to them and that they should consult with someone else (e.g. a peer who has a problem with alcohol and therefore becomes verbal abusive, rings you in the middle of the night, etc.).

Adapted from Clark & Lerch (1998).

Activity *(25 mins):* Participants now have an opportunity to apply their new knowledge of confidentiality to two hypothetical scenarios. Ask participants to get into groups of four and pass out the Issues of Confidentiality handout. They have 10 minutes to chat through the situations and how they would handle each.

After the small group chats, have everyone reconvene. Instigate a 15-minute discussion, calling on participants to volunteer their ideas. As breaking confidentiality is most likely a new concept for them, they may or may not have realised the differences between the two scenarios. Based on the given information and the suggested guidelines, peer supporters should break confidentiality with the heroin user as his habit presents an immediate threat to his life. If they were planning on breaking confidentiality, they should assess the situation according to the guidelines in the handout.

On the other hand, while an eating disorder is a serious health issue, it does not pose an immediate threat to her life (unless of course a person is seriously anorexic and requires hospitalisation). Therefore, it would be better to respect her right to disguise her issue as her friend's problem and work with the woman to find information about specialist help.

Check to see if participants have questions about issues of confidentiality before moving on.

ISSUES OF CONFIDENTIALITY

A HEROIN HABIT

One of the students that you are helping occasionally comes to speak with you about not settling into College after taking a year out. This morning he revealed to you that he has resumed a heroin habit that he had kicked while on the year out. However, with the overwhelming academic and family stresses, drugs are an easy option to escape from life for a while. He is depressed about using again and admits that last weekend, he nearly over-dosed. You recently learned in class that former drug users who start to re-use have a lower tolerance for drugs. This often leads to fatal overdoses. How do you handle the situation?

A PROBLEM WITH FOOD
Adapted from Clark & Lerch (1998).

One of the students you are mentoring tells you that she thinks her "friend" has a problem with food. She says her "friend" always makes excuses as to why she cannot go to meals, exercises at least twice a day, will not keep food in her room, and never snacks when she goes out socially. If she does snack, she disappears into the bathroom shortly afterwards. In talking to the student, you get the feeling that she is talking about herself. She asks you where her "friend" can go to talk about her problems. How do you handle the situation?

Step 5: Closure

Aim: To evaluate and close the session, answering any remaining questions.

Materials: Evaluation forms (see Appendix one), pens

Input (10 mins): You should open the floor for the group to ask questions or discuss any unresolved issues. Before leaving, participants should complete the standard evaluation form that will be used at the end of each day.

WORKSHOP EIGHT

Time required: 3 hours, including a 15 minute break

Themes covered: What, when and where to make a referral
How to refer
Responding to distressed/suicidal peers

Introduction: This workshop focuses on imparting referral skills to participants. Peer supporters may occasionally come across situations when it is inappropriate for them to get involved, when the problem is too close to their own experience, when they feel out of their depth, or when the issues require professional involvement and support. Often the best support a non-professional person can provide is genuine concern, a listening ear and a referral to specialist help. Participants need to understand the variety of situations that require the involvement of other people, as well as feel able to help a peer access specialist help.

Having the knowledge and skill to make a referral is a great asset. If a peer supporter refers an individual on to professional help, they may feel that they have failed in their helping role. However, this is not the case at all! It is crucial to explain to participants that part of being an effective supporter is the ability to identify a problem and find the appropriate support. It is always better to refer, than to take on problems or issues that are 'over your head'. The key message is if in doubt, refer.

An integral part of training in referral skills requires a discussion about dealing with extreme situations. Although peer support is not intended to manage or detect distressed and/or suicidal people, college students may come across peers about whom they are concerned. Suicidal behaviour occurs among this age group, and distressed individuals often communicate their intent to others. If peers are encouraged to respond in a concerned, calm and sensitive manner, they may increase the likelihood that sources of help will be identified for upset students. Therefore, it is suggested that colleges provide a protocol for peer supporters to use in extreme cases, such as responding to distressed and suicidal students. An example is provided, but will need to be revised to suit individual colleges.

If peer supporters become distressed and uncomfortable with other people's problems, it is essential that they seek immediate support for themselves. Professionals can support and advise them on making the best decisions. All peer supporters need to be encouraged to never go it alone. The related issue of self-care is addressed in more depth in the next workshop.

<u>Step 1:</u> Welcome, review of previous workshop and a general overview of the themes to be addressed in this session

Aim: To answer questions or concerns from the previous workshop and to provide continuity between the sessions

Materials: None

Input (15 mins): Begin by going over the main themes from the previous session and ask for questions. How has the material "settled" with students? Then introduce the topics to be covered in the current workshop, highlighting how the new learning builds on topics previously addressed.

Step 2: What, when and where to refer
Adapted from Brown (1998).

Aim: To ensure that participants understand what a referral is, the range of issues and situations that call for referral, and where they can refer people onto

Materials: Flipchart, markers, bluetack or tape, Referrals: What, Where & When (handout)

Activity (60 mins): Divide the participants into groups of four and give each group a piece of flipchart paper and a marker. Ask them to consider the following questions (written and displayed on a flipchart paper) and write their responses on their sheet of paper. They have 20 minutes to do this, at which time the big group will reconvene and they should post their sheets on the walls around the room.
- What is a referral?
- When should we make referrals (what types of situations)?
- Where and to whom can we refer our peers?

Once the 20 minutes is up, bring participants together and ask groups to hang the sheets around the room. Allow 30 minutes for the groups to have a spokesperson *briefly* talk through their ideas and discussion after each of the group presentations. It is likely that the first presentation will take the longest, as subsequent groups are likely to duplicate some of the ideas. At the conclusion of the discussion, distribute the handout and spend 10 minutes talking through, Referrals: What, Where & When (*will need to be adapted to include details of the student services in the college*).

Suggested points for the discussion
Using counselling skills is about being genuine, honest and non-judgemental. If participants cannot do this, for whatever reason, then they are not the best peer supporter and they should refer the person to someone better suited.

A referral is not needed merely if someone cries. Agree that this can be uncomfortable, but it is not a reason to refer people. The best thing is to let the person continue and sit quietly with them. If they express embarrassment, reassure them that it is alright to cry.

REFERRALS: WHAT, WHEN & WHERE

WHAT
Making a referral is helping an individual access other sources of support

WHEN
- The problem requires specialist help (see below)
- You are unable to be genuine, honest and impartial
- You are worried that the person might come to harm or get into deeper problems
- You are concerned about your own circumstances (e.g. you have exams, had a recent bereavement, etc.)

IF IN DOUBT, YOU SHOULD REFER

Problems that always call for specialist help
- Depression and/or suicidal thoughts
- Extreme stress, anxiety or panic
- Unresolved grief
- Alcoholism/drug abuse
- Serious medical problems
- Eating disorders
- Legal problems
- Family difficulties

WHERE

Places to Refer a Student in College (will depend on the problem)
Individual tutor
Students' Union 677 6545
Senior Tutor's Office 608 1095/2551
Student Counselling Service 608 1407
Student Health Service 608 1556/1591
College Chaplains 608 1260/1901
Niteline (9.00pm—2.30am in term, Thursday—Sunday) 1800 793793
Other: International Students Office, Trinity Hall Warden, etc.

Places to Get Help Outside of College/After-Hours
Local G.P., psychiatrist, counsellor, community or support group
DUBDOC (weekdays 6—10pm, weekends/bank holidays 10am—6pm) 454 5604
Samaritans (24 hours) 1850 609090
AWARE's Depression Line (10am—10pm) 676 6166
Emergency services (fire brigade, Gardaí, ambulance) 999
Accident & Emergency: St. James's Hospital 453 7941

TAKE A BREAK (15 minutes total)

Step 3: How to refer

Aim: To have participants practise and feel comfortable making a referral

Materials: Flipchart, marker, How to Make a Referral (handout), Tips for Referring Reluctant Peers (handout), Referral Roleplays (handout)

Activity (10 mins): Discuss with the participants how referrals need to be handled sensitively. If someone has shared their worries you, it means that they trust you and are hoping that you can help and support them. Ask the participants to consider a poor referral scenario: a student confides in a peer who insensitively and abruptly suggests that they seek help elsewhere. How might the student feel? Write participants' responses on the flipchart, allowing 10 minutes for this discussion.

Possible participant reactions:
- Abandoned
- Rejected
- They aren't able to help
- I'm a hopeless case
- My problems aren't serious enough
- Too busy to help me
- They aren't interested in helping
- I'm a burden to them

By acknowledging that these are possible misunderstandings that can occur when making a referral, it should help participants think about what they need to do to make a referral as sensitively as possible.

Input (15 mins): Explain how to make a referral. You can do this by talking them through both handouts – How to Make a Referral and Tips for Referring Reluctant Peers.

HOW TO MAKE A REFERRAL
Adapted from Brown (1998).

- You need to know what the problem is before you can refer.

- Choose your words carefully. Use phrases like:
    You might find it helpful to…
    You might like to talk with…
    Would you consider talking with…
    I think it might be useful for you to…

    Do not say, You *need* to see… or You *must* talk…

- Be honest. Tell the person why you are not the best person or why someone else might be better help at that moment.
- You can continue to be supportive by keeping in touch and asking how things are going.

- Know your limitations and do not get out of your depth.

- Remember, ultimately, it is another person's problem - not yours. Do not feel overwhelmed or guilty if you cannot help.

TIPS FOR REFERRING RELUCTANT PEERS

When you believe that a peer might benefit from professional help, it is best to be honest about your reasons and express your concern about his or her well-being. Sometimes people may be reluctant or shy in accepting a referral, so here are some suggestions.

No analysis couch involved!

Dispel myths that surround seeking help. Explain that seeing a counsellor does not mean that s/he is crazy or that s/he will spend years on an analysis couch. Encourage your peer to schedule 'just one' appointment with a professional, and often one appointment is all that is needed. Suggest that to get help is a positive sign of personal strength.

Suggest all options

Some people may not feel comfortable about seeing a counsellor, but will agree to visit a G.P. Others may choose to talk with a chaplain or contact a local support group. Therefore, it is very helpful and often enlightening to present all of the person's options when discussing support services.

Explore the person's reluctance

If your peer is reluctant to seek help, ask why s/he is not keen on seeing a professional. Possibly it relates to a previous negative experience. Or maybe there is a misconception that, if s/he sees a psychiatrist or counsellor in College, the information will be passed on to his or her lecturers and family. If you explore the reluctance, you may be able to resolve the concerns.

Second opinion needed

Present the referral as a help to you, because you are unsure of how to provide help. Explain that the problem is outside of your area of expertise.

Get out the telephone book

If s/he is unsure about seeking help, it may be useful to provide the person with names and contact numbers that can be used at a later date.

Help your peer make an appointment

Ask the person if he or she would like you to arrange an appointment with a professional. This is especially helpful if s/he is depressed and lacks the energy to negotiate details. If you arrange the appointment, inform the professional of your specific concerns regarding the person.

Honesty about involving others

If you feel the situation is an emergency (you believe there is the possibility of harm to the person or others) and the person will not see a professional, you may need to speak to someone on his or her behalf. If possible, before doing so,

gently explain that you will need to speak with a professional. Sometimes it can be useful to give the person the choice about who you will contact.

What is a CRISIS & what do you do?

A crisis is when you are concerned about a person's immediate well-being. In a crisis, you should seek urgent professional attention from any of the sources listed below. If appropriate, you may want to accompany the person to a professional. A crisis is not when a person cries or if s/he is suffering from an ongoing problem (unless it has become an immediate crisis and his or her well-being is endangered). However, your peer still may benefit from seeking help from a professional.

What if the person refuses?

Unless it is an emergency situation (potential harm to self or others), everyone has the right to refuse support. Or s/he may just need time to think about a referral. Offer an open invitation to the person to come back to you. When you see the person again, ask how s/he is and reiterate that support is available if s/he wants it. However, refusal to seek professional help does not mean that you must provide help that is outside your area of expertise.

What if YOU need support?

If you have any concerns about what is best to do, please consult with one of the college student services (phone numbers below). We will support you and help you to clarify the best course of action. Please remember that if you have serious anxieties about a peer, it is important that you yourself have adequate support. You need to feel confident that you have done all that you can do to make sure that the distressed student is safe.

Places to Get Help for a Distressed Student in College

Senior Tutor's Office 608 1095/2551
Student Counselling Service 608 1407
Student Health Service 608 1556/1591
College Chaplains 608 1260/1901
Niteline (9.00pm—2.30am in term, Thursday—Sunday) 1800 793793

Places to Get Help Outside of College/After-Hours

DUBDOC (weekdays 6—10pm, weekends/bank holidays 10am—6pm) 454 5604
Samaritans (24 hours) 1850 609090
AWARE's Depression Line (10am—10pm) 676 6166
Emergency services (fire brigade, Gardaí, ambulance) 999
Accident & Emergency: St. James's Hospital 453 7941
Local G.P., psychiatrist, counsellor, community or support group

Adapted from Kracen (2003).

Activity *(35 mins):* It is now time for participants to practise making a referral. Distribute the Referral Roleplays (handout) and ask everyone to get into pairs. They should spend 20 minutes working through the two scenarios, swapping roles so that they each have a chance to play the student and peer supporter. Bring the group back together and discuss the activity for 15 minutes. How did they find making a referral? Was it difficult? What did they feel they did well?

REFERRAL ROLEPLAYS

A BEREAVED PEER

You are a class representative and notice that one of your classmates has been missing a lot of morning lectures. When the student does show up for the afternoon lectures, she looks exhausted and worn out, which is out of character. After two weeks of this same pattern, you approach the student to see if you can be of any help. Using open questions, actively listening and showing genuine concern for the student's well being, the student confides to you that her mother has recently died. She is very traumatised. To complicate her grieving, she has five other younger siblings and has a very rocky relationship with her father.

You sit and talk with her, but realise you can best help by making a referral. Practise doing this.

A PEER WITH A MENTAL ILLNESS

You are a well-liked postgraduate student and often assist undergraduate students in your department. Through a series of conversations and hints, a first year student has indicated to you that he has schizophrenia, but is not taking his medication. You have begun to notice changes in his behaviour. You realise that you cannot provide the help that this student needs, and to complicate matters, you will actually be assessing his coursework and awarding grades. You are available to him, but would prefer not to get over-involved with his personal issues.

How and where do you refer the student? Practise doing this.

Step 4: Responding to distressed/suicidal peers

Aim: To equip participants with guidelines for handling a distressed or suicidal peer

Materials: Responding to Distressed/Suicidal Peers (handout)

Input *(20 mins):* Talk about this issue, going through the handout, and answering questions. Reassure participants that helping a distressed peer is a rare situation, but it would be a disservice if this information was not provided to them. However, peer support is not intended to manage distressed or suicidal students.

Attending college is an exciting, enlightening experience for most students. Some students wrestle with mental health problems, such as depression, but most are able to have enjoyable, productive college careers. However, in extreme situations, and usually complicated by mental health difficulties, people become overwhelmed by life's problems and sadly take their own life. They are making a *final* decision to *temporary* problems. If someone is suicidal, they need immediate professional help. Peer supporters, along with many others, may recognise that a fellow student is depressed and/or suicidal. This can be a frightening situation but there are important guidelines that can help you through it.

Distribute and talk through the handout, Responding to Distressed/Suicidal Peers *(will need to be adapted to suit each college).*

Note: This is a particularly important and sensitive topic for discussion. It is recommended that the subject is addressed in an open, clear presentation with an opportunity to ask questions. Some of the participants may have some experience of suicidal behaviour themselves or among their own circle family and friends. They may still have unresolved feelings around such experiences, and these may come to light in any discussion on this matter. Therefore, facilitators have to be especially attentive and proactive in managing the group process that may occur.

RESPONDING TO DISTRESSED/SUICIDAL PEERS

If a peer says to you that they are distressed, very depressed or indicates that they are having suicidal thoughts and feelings, the following is a recommended action plan for you.

Starting step:
Be kind, empathetic and calm. Ask who else knows about their feelings (i.e. friends, family, GP, counsellor).

1. If they tell you they are attending their GP or counsellor:
- Ask if the GP or counsellor is aware of the *extent* of their distress. Also, ask when is their next appointment.

- See if they will make an earlier appointment (i.e. *immediately*).

- Ask if they would like you to help them organise the appointment (people experiencing depression often find it difficult to energise themselves to do this on their own).

2. If they tell you that they are not seeing a GP or counsellor or that nobody else knows about their feelings:
- Ask them if they will go and see a GP or counsellor.

- If they agree, organise this with them – help them make an appointment.

- If they do not wish to speak with a professional and you continue to be concerned about their safety, tell them you will have to speak to someone on their behalf. Then contact their family, Tutor, or Head of Department.

As this process could be upsetting for you, feel free to consult with the **Student Counselling Service** if you have any concerns about what is best to do. We will support you and help you to clarify the best course of action. Please remember you should not hold serious anxieties about someone else on your own. You need to feel confident that you have done all that you can do to make sure that the distressed person is safe. Sometimes this can be difficult, especially if a distressed person asks you not to tell anyone and feels betrayed.

Places to Get Help for a Distressed Student in College
Student Counselling Services at 608-1407   Student Health Services at 608-1556/1591
University Chaplains at 608-1260/1901   SU Welfare Officer at 646-8437

Places to Get Help Outside of College/After-Hours
Local GP or hospital accident & emergency room
DUBDOC 454-5604   (weekdays 6-10pm, weekends 10am – 6pm)
The Samaritans at 1850-60-90-90   (24 hours per day)

Step 5: Closure

Aim: To evaluate and close the session, answering any remaining questions

Materials: Evaluation forms (see Appendix one), pens

Input (10 mins): You should open the floor for the group to ask questions or discuss any unresolved issues. Before leaving, participants should complete the standard evaluation form that will be used at the end of each day.

WORKSHOP NINE

Time required: 3 hours, including a 15 minute break

Themes covered: Self-care
                          Practice integrating skills
                          Closure and feedback

Introduction: This workshop commences with discussions to raise awareness about self-care among peer supporters. During their time in college, they may encounter issues and situations that could be personally upsetting and stressful. Thus, it is useful to talk through the importance of handling stress and taking care of themselves. Participants should be reminded that, not only will they benefit, but they will be of optimal help to others by maintaining wellness in their own lives.

The introduction of new topics and skills is complete, and so the workshop continues with an opportunity for a final roleplay. Participants should be encouraged to integrate the knowledge that they have learned during the last few weeks, and use the roleplay as a chance to put it all together!

The remainder of the workshop is dedicated to closing the training course and offering positive feedback to each other and to the facilitators. Facilitators should highlight and encourage a sense of accomplishment among participants. Hopefully they can see how much they have learned and how far they have come since the first workshop.

Step 1: Welcome, review of previous workshop and a general overview of the themes to be addressed in this session

Aim: To answer questions or concerns from the previous workshop and to provide continuity between the sessions

Materials: None

Input (15 mins): Begin by going over the main themes from the previous session and ask for questions. How has the material "settled" with students? Then introduce the topics to be covered in the current workshop, highlighting how the new learning builds on topics previously addressed.

Step 2: Self-care

Aim: To encourage participants to look after themselves as part of the helping process

Materials: Stress Test: Ready to Deal with Stress? (handout), pens

Input *(5 mins):* Discuss stress and how it can be managed, because it is often a misunderstood phenomenon. There are two types of stress – eustress is positive, useful and motivates us to our maximum performance. The other type – distress can be harmful and destructive. However, as stress is inevitable and present in all our lives, we must learn to manage it. We have many options of managing stress and some are more useful than others. It is not helpful to drink, smoke, use drugs, engage in risky behaviour, etc. Instead, there are other more useful stress-reducing activities we can participate in (*do not elaborate on these as participants will be asked to brainstorm a list*).

Activity *(5 mins):* Distribute the handout, Stress Test: Ready to Deal with Stress?, to participants. Have them spend 5 minutes taking the test. Clarify to participants that the test is not a definitive instrument, but rather just a short exercise that can be used to inform themselves. The next activity will give them an opportunity to discuss stress and the ways that they can take care of themselves.

Stress Test: Ready to Deal with Stress?

One of the most effective ways to minimize stress is to take care of yourself. Check the following statements if they represent your lifestyle.

- ☐ I eat at least one hot, balanced meal a day.
- ☐ I get seven to eight hours of sleep at least four nights a week.
- ☐ I give and receive affection regularly.
- ☐ I have at least one relative within 50 miles on whom I can rely.
- ☐ I exercise to the point of perspiration at least twice a week.
- ☐ I do not smoke.
- ☐ I drink fewer than five alcoholic beverages a week.
- ☐ I am the appropriate weight for my height.
- ☐ I have an income adequate to meet basic expenses.
- ☐ I get strength from my religious beliefs.
- ☐ I regularly attend club or social activities.
- ☐ I have a network of friends and acquaintances.
- ☐ I have one or more friends to confide in about personal matters.
- ☐ I am able to speak openly about my feelings when angry or worried.
- ☐ I have regular conversations with the people I live with about domestic problems, chores, money and daily living issues.
- ☐ I do something for fun at least once a week.
- ☐ I am able to organize my time effectively.
- ☐ I drink fewer than three cups of coffee, tea, or cola drinks, per day.
- ☐ I take quiet time for myself during the day.

How Many Checks Do You Have?
You should have more than 50% of the boxes checked when you have completed the form. Otherwise, your lifestyle is not fully equipping you to effectively deal with distress.

Retrieved from http://www.lifelines2000.org/services

Activity *(20 mins):* Combine teaching with brainstorming and group discussion to raise awareness among participants about issues of self-care.

We all need to strive to maintain some balance and wellness in our lives. As we know, well-being is essential to most areas in our lives – relationships, studies, etc. It particularly improves our abilities as peer supporters, because it helps ensure that we have perspective on a situation. Although we do not need to be perfect, we should all seek to model an attitude and behaviours consistent with taking care of ourselves – mentally, physically, emotionally, spiritually, etc.

Ask participants, what they can do to ensure that they are at their best with regard to well-being (mentally, physically, emotionally, spiritually, etc.)?

Record their answers on the flipchart and discuss them during the brainstorm. Possible answers might include:
- Sleep regularly
- Eat regular healthy meals
- Exercise
- Drink in moderation
- Manage stress levels
- Spend leisure time with family and/or friends
- Take part in activities that allow you to 'switch off' (e.g. going to the cinema, reading a novel, sailing a boat, etc.)
- Talk with confidants about your life
- Seek help if you experience problems
- Treat yourself occasionally (i.e. take a bath, buy a CD, etc.)
- Practise relaxing (music, yoga, meditation, candles, nap in the sun)
- Balance working and studying hours

It is also very important that we care for ourselves while helping others. When we talked about personal boundaries, we mentioned the need to remain detached from the situation. That space is useful for the person being helped, but also critical to protecting our well-being. If at any point while supporting a peer (or anyone else in life), you feel that you are 'losing yourself' – alarm bells should ring! Always remember that we cannot save a person or solve their problems. If participants find that they are devoting too much energy to helping a peer, they may need to talk with a professional themselves (a counsellor, peer support supervisor, etc).

Peer support often involves helping others with problems that can affect us all. Thus, there may be times when participants have issues that they need to explore and they should not reach out to others. During these periods, it is better to devote energy to themselves, rather than trying to support others. There is no problem or shame in focussing on themselves, especially because it makes them better, more integrated peer supporters in the long run.

Ask participants, when should they not take on peer support?

Record their answers on the flipchart and discuss them during the brainstorm. Possible answers might include:

- Crisis in your life – family, relationship, college, etc.
- Following a bereavement
- Commitment to other obligations
- Physical or emotional health problems
- Anxious or stressed out
- Overworked at job or studies

To conclude the discussion, distribute the handout, We Need to be Helpers to Ourselves.

WE NEED TO BE HELPERS TO OURSELVES

Often, the helper's self is left behind as though it could safely be overlooked or disregarded in view of fulfilling an ideal of services to others. A failure to listen to what is going on inside ourselves, under the banner of heroic self-forgetfulness, may increase our experience of stress and place a heavy mortgage on our effectiveness. It may also make us vulnerable to being slowly consumed by our own unrecognized needs. The reverse of the golden rule applies here: helpers should do unto themselves what they try to do unto others. This means that they should listen carefully to their own feelings in an accepting and non-judgemental manner.

Adapted from Kennedy & Charles (2001).

Caring for Yourself

1. Be gentle with yourself. Remind yourself that you are a supporter, not a magician.

2. Establish your own network of support – family, friends, colleagues, etc.

3. Change your routine often and your tasks when you can.

4. Learn relaxation techniques that work for you and remember to use them.

5. Be good to yourself. Reward yourself for the work you are doing.

6. Develop varied interests outside the network of peer support.

7. Learn to recognize the difference between complaining that relieves and complaining that reinforces negative stress.

8. Give support to peers. Learn to accept it in return.

9. Remember that you cannot change anyone else. You can only change how you relate to others.

10. Find a hermit spot — use it daily.

11. Each day, focus on a good thing that occurred during the day.

12. Ensure that you are eating a healthy and balanced diet, exercising often, and getting enough sleep.

13. Remember that the self has four parts (intellectual, emotional, spiritual and physical) — all need to be nurtured.

14. Take breaks — schedule them if needed. Remember to have fun during these breaks.

Step 3: Roleplay

Aim: To give participants a final opportunity to practise the skills they learned during the course

Materials: Roleplay Scenarios (handout)

Activity *(55 mins):* Participants now have the opportunity to integrate all of their skills. Ask participants to work in pairs. Distribute the handouts, Roleplay Scenarios. There are three roleplay scenarios, and they should choose to do two. Each person will assume a role – one is the fictional person portrayed in the roleplay and the other is the peer supporter. Pairs will spend 20 minutes doing each roleplay, so participants should really get into their roles and attempt to practice all their skills. Before switching over to the second roleplay, participants should briefly discuss the experience: What is working? What is difficult? What have they learned from each other?

Facilitators should float among the groups to observe progress and offer advice while the groups are roleplaying. They should also 'call time' when it is time for participants to swap roles.

After the 40 minutes of roleplaying, the large group reconvenes. Facilitate a 15-minute discussion about how participants found the activity. ***Specifically ask participants about the skills that they would like to have another look at in the final workshop (in which there is a window of 90 minutes that can be used at the discretion of the facilitators and participants).

ROLEPLAY SCENARIOS

Add any information that you wish, providing that it is in keeping with the role. Please do not make things too difficult for your partner by inventing complex emotional problems.

Situation A

You are a mature student in the first year of psychology. You are also married with two young children. Your spouse has just been offered a job with an IT company that is 150 miles from home. This is a dream opportunity for your spouse, and the package includes a substantial increase in salary and a new company car. However, you are concerned about the upheaval to the children and to yourself as a first year student. You really want to continue your studies as the course has been your lifetime ambition. At the same time you want to support your spouse and provide for your children. You are feeling very confused by this turn of events. At the recommendation of your class representative, you ask a peer supporter for advice.

Situation B

You are a 3rd year business student and really enjoy your course. Your classmates are your closest pals. However, recently something has begun to take place within the class that makes you uncomfortable. A hearing-impaired American student has joined the class for the year. You think he seems quite nice, but lately classmates have begun to mock how he speaks when he joins in class discussions. You do not think the lecturer is aware of what is happening, but you can tell that the student knows what is going on. You have seen the hurt looks on his face. Your peers embarrass you. You cannot talk about this with anyone on your course, therefore you seek out a peer supporter.

Situation C

You are a first year science student, aged 18, and living away from home for the first time. You have completed one term of college, had a good time, settled in well, made friends, but found it difficult to get down to study. It is the beginning of the final term and you have just been to see your lecturer. She informed you that your grades are not up to standard, and you are at risk of failing the year. You are attracted to college life, but are unsure about being able to make the commitment required for your studies and doubt even if you have chosen the best course of study. You have requested to meet with a peer supporter to talk through your options.

TAKE A BREAK (15 minutes total)

Step 5: Review personal goals

Aim: To revisit participants' goals for the course

Materials: The envelopes (which were held by the facilitators until now) in which participants sealed their personal goals during the first workshop

Activity (5 mins): It is useful and enlightening for participants to return to the goals that they set for themselves during the first session. Distribute the envelopes to all participants and give them a few minutes to privately reflect on what they wrote a few weeks previously. Reviewing their personal goals usually reminds participants about how far they have come and what they have learned since the first workshop.

Step 6: Feedback fan

Aim: To have participants provide positive feedback to their fellow participants

Materials: Blank sheets of paper, pens

Activity (40 mins): This activity is a nice way to end a training course and involves feedback from all participants. Distribute a blank sheet of paper to all participants, and ask them to sit in a circle. Each person writes their name at the top of the sheet and passes it to the person on their right. That person writes a positive comment about the individual whose sheet he or she has. The comment could be something that impressed them during the course, something that they learned from the person, something they appreciated, etc. Essentially it needs to be positive feedback. The comment is written anonymously (no names are attached to comments), and then the person makes a small fold in the paper and passes it to the next person on the right. The next person flips the sheet over, writes a comment on the reverse, and passes it to the right. When the activity is over, everyone should receive the paper with their name at the top. The paper will resemble a fan with comments in the folds on both sides of the paper.

After participants have had a chance to read through them, reconvene the group for brief (5 minutes) feedback. How did they find the activity?

Step 7: Closure

Aim: To evaluate the course and close the session

Materials: Evaluation forms (see Appendix one), pens

Input (20 mins): In addition to completing the standard evaluation form, open the floor up for a 15-minute discussion. Ask participants for any constructive

criticism regarding the course, its content, instruction style, logistics, etc. Facilitators may want to ask what participants liked best and found most useful about the course. Conversely, inquire as to what they found difficult and would like to change.

Take detailed notes as these suggestions should be considered when offering future training courses.

WORKSHOP TEN

Time required: 3 hours

Themes covered: Flexible time
                      Recognition ceremony

Introduction: This final workshop is split into two halves. The first half is flexible time, because the first nine workshops are quite packed and leave little room for exploring issues that may arise. Thus, this block of time is available for use as the group sees best. We often use the time for a review of any issues that participants want to revisit. Usually, we ask participants to suggest these topics during Workshop 9, so that there is time to plan and organise the final session.

The second half of the workshop is devoted to a recognition ceremony. We believe that it is important "to promote the development of each student's full potential and to support them in acquiring the skills which will fit them to make a valuable contribution to society and to be active, thoughtful learners in their life after graduation" (Trinity College, 2003). Participants have just spent 30 hours learning new skills. Thus, they should be acknowledged for the effort and dedication they have invested. Such a ceremony publicly demonstrates the institution's commitment to nurturing such skills among students. The ceremony also provides a social, enjoyable conclusion to the training course.

Step 1: Flexible time

Aim: To have a window of time that can be used as facilitators and participants see best, possibly to explore a topic that arose in group discussions, review issues, practise skills, discuss the institution's peer support programme, etc.

Materials: As required

Input/Activity (90 mins): As decided, based on participants' and facilitators' opinions

Step 2: Recognition Ceremony

Aim: To recognise, on behalf of the institution, the participants' achievement in learning new skills and completing the course

Materials (suggested): Certificates (see Appendix one), tea/coffee, desserts

Input/Activity (90 mins): The recognition ceremony is a casual, social affair that participants highly enjoy, and they leave with a sense that their training is positively recognised by the college. In addition to participants and facilitators, we usually invite a college official to host the ceremony (dean of students,

director of the counselling service, etc.) and also extend invitations to relevant college staff members (tutors, chaplains, etc.). The ceremony commences with a short speech by the official which recognises the commitment shown by participants and the importance of their new skills, thanks the facilitators, and finally calls each participant up to receive a certificate of completion (see Appendix).

After the ceremony, we invite guests to stay and mingle. In line with TCD's alcohol policy, we have sought alternatives to providing alcohol, and therefore offer tea, coffee and a variety of desserts.

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APPENDIX ONE

Materials used in TCD's peer support training course

PEER SUPPORT[1] TRAINING COURSE

Learn basic counselling skills

30 hours on Tuesdays & Saturdays
Plus…it is a FREE course

APPLICATIONS AVAILABLE
In the Student Counselling Service
Or email: kracena@tcd.ie
Deadline: Thursday, Oct 24

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[1] Poster used to recruit students for the training course

Peer Support Training Course[2]
in Basic Counselling Skills

An opportunity to help yourself and your peers!

As College life can be daunting, we are looking for students who are interested in helping others. All students are invited to take part in a FREE course on peer support skills; this is a unique opportunity to develop your social and interpersonal skills. Thirty hours of training will be delivered by two professional counsellors and will cover issues such as:

- Self-awareness and peer relations
- Diversity in College
- Helping skills
- Importance of language and listening
- Roles and boundaries
- Etc.

After the training you should feel comfortable talking with people about their personal problems and referring peers to sources of help in College. Additionally, you will have learned skills that will benefit you in many aspects of your life. Future employers will be impressed by your skills and your effort to help others.

All students who complete the 30 hours of training will receive a certificate verifying their participation. Additionally, students will have the opportunity to apply to volunteer as a Peer Supporter (more details will be given later).

Workshop dates and times –
please make sure that you can attend ALL of these!
Tuesdays, from 5–8pm   Oct 29, Nov 5, 12, 19, 26, Jan 14 (certificate night!)
Saturdays, from 10am–5pm   Nov 2 and 23

Places are limited, so please book early. **The application deadline is Thursday, October 24th. Please DO NOT apply if you already know that you will miss a training date.** Drop your completed application form to the Student Counselling Service, 199-200 Pearse Street, College or email it to: kracena@tcd.ie

If you have any questions, please contact:
Amanda Kracen, Student Counselling Service
Telephone: 608-1407/Email: student-counselling@tcd.ie

HELP YOUR FRIENDS REACH FOR THE STARS!

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[2] Information sheet given to students interested in applying for training course

Peer Support Training Course: Application Form[3]

Workshop dates and times
Please make sure that you can attend ALL of these:
Tuesdays, from 5pm – 8pm   Oct 29, Nov 5, 12, 19, 26, Jan 14
Saturdays, from 10 am – 5pm   Nov 2 and 23

Date of application:_____

Name:_____

Year and course of study:_____

Mobile number and email address:_____

Any access or dietary special needs?_____

1. Why do you wish to take part in the peer support training?
_____
_____
_____
_____

2. What qualities do you have to offer to the training group?
_____
_____
_____
_____

3. What do you hope to gain from the training experience?
_____
_____
_____
_____

4. What qualities do you think are needed to be a supportive friend/peer?
_____
_____
_____
_____

Places are limited, so please book early. Application deadline is Wednesday, October 24th. Drop your completed application form to Student Counselling Service, 199-200 Pearse Street, College or email it to: student-counselling@tcd.ie

HELP YOUR FRIENDS REACH FOR THE STARS!

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[3] Application form for students applying for the training course

EVALUATION FORM[4]

Date:
Facilitator(s):

1. I found this course to be:

Not at all helpful   Very helpful
1   2   3   4   5   6

Why?_____
_____
_____
_____

2. As a result of this training, how prepared do you feel to deal with supporting people in your daily life?

Not at all prepared   Very prepared
1   2   3   4   5   6

3. Will you make any changes as a result of this course?

☐   Yes   ☐   No

If "Yes", what will they be? If "No", why not?
_____
_____
_____
_____

4. In general, the facilitator's presentation was:

Very ineffective   Very effective
1   2   3   4   5   6

5. Please comment or make suggestions regarding the course content.
_____
_____
_____
_____

6. Any other comments:_____
_____
_____
_____

---

[4] Evaluation form students complete after each workshop

Trinity College Dublin
Student Counselling Service
Serbhis Chomhairlithe Mac Leinn

This is to certify that[5]

Ronan Wallace

Completed 30 hours of training in Peer Support Skills

Covering issues such as

- Values, beliefs, and attitudes
- Diversity
- Core conditions of peer support
- Active and effective listening
- Communication skills
- Closed and open questions
- Roles and boundaries
- Confidentiality
- Referrals

Signed: _____   **Date:** *15 April 2002*

Deirdre Flynn
Director, Student Counselling Service

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[5] Certificate given to participants at the Recognition Ceremony

APPENDIX TWO

Materials used in
TCD's Peer Support Network (PSN)

SCREENING GUIDELINES[6]

The peer support coordinator screens potential peer supporter volunteers at the conclusion of the 30 hours training. The purpose is to ensure that potential volunteers have learned from the training and feel able to undertake their role as peer supports in the college community.

The screening process involves a one-on-one consultation between potential volunteers and the peer support coordinator. This is a valuable opportunity for both parties as not only does it allow the peer support coordinator to assess the 'readiness' of the candidate, but the potential peer supporter can also find out more about the peer support programmes.

During the 15-minute consultation, the peer support coordinator asks the candidate the following questions:

1. How did you find the training programme? Have you any suggestions for improving future training courses?

2. Can you think of any reason that you should not be a peer supporter? (this gives the candidate an opportunity to disclose any information that would deter them from carrying out their role effectively and in an ethical manner)

3. What situations do you anticipate having to deal with in the role of a peer supporter?

4. What particular resources do you have that would make you an effective peer helper?

Following the consultation, the peer support coordinator records the candidate's performance on a feedback form (see next page) and notes whether s/he is ready to undertake the role of peer supporter.

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[6] Questions asked of participants when applying to volunteer with the Peer Support Network

SCREENING FEEDBACK FORM[7]

Name:

Strengths/skills:

Weaknesses/concerns:

Other notes:

Do you perceive that this potential peer supporter is ready to volunteer?

Yes   **No**

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[7] Form used to evaluate participants when interviewing to volunteer

EXPLANATION OF THE[8] PEER SUPPORT NETWORK

The Peer Support Network is a peer support service, run in conjunction with the Student Counselling Service. The aim of the programme is to support students who are experiencing difficulties adjusting academically and socially into university life. Trained and supervised peer volunteers provide this support.

Peer Supporters are available to meet with students on a one-to-one basis to go for a coffee and chat. There are many different reasons that a student might meet with a Peer Supporter, including loneliness, considerations of leaving college, personal pressures, relationship problems, etc. Peer Supporters can listen, answer questions, suggest extracurricular activities, make referrals for specialist help, etc.

The relationship between a student and a volunteer is a flexible one. There are no requirements for meeting, such as number of times, location, etc. The students negotiate these decisions together.

Peer Supporters have undergone 30 hours of training in basic counselling skills, but it must be very clear that Peer Supporters are NOT professional counsellors. They do not have the experience to deal with personal problems that may require ongoing assistance and treatment. Instead, the role of the Peer Supporter is to be a confidential peer support by helping other Trinity students settle into college life. If you feel your concerns are more appropriate for a professional counsellor, it may be wiser to make an appointment with one of the counselling staff. Additionally, at any time throughout your meetings with a Peer Supporter, you are also welcome to make an appointment with a counsellor.

All meetings and conversations with a Peer Supporter are strictly confidential, however, there are limits to confidentiality. To ensure that they are being helpful and to provide an opportunity to ask questions from a professional, Peer Supporters are required to attend group supervision with a College counsellor each fortnight. Issues and concerns will be discussed, but without the use of student names to ensure confidentiality. If a Peer Supporter is worried that a student will cause harm to him/herself or another person, it will be necessary to discuss the situation with the counsellor.

If you have any questions, please contact:
Anne Marie Naughton, Student Counselling Service
Tel: 608-1407, Email: student-counselling@tcd.ie

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[8] Sheet given to students who are applying to be 'matched' with a Peer Supporter

PEER SUPPORTER[9]
REGISTRATION SHEET

Date:

Name:

ID number: Course:

Year: Tutor:

Email address: Mobile:

Referred by:

Concern:_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Name of Supporter:

DATES OF MEETINGS

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[9] Form used when students are applying to be 'matched' with a Peer Supporter