

## VALUES

# Rise Reflections on SAMHSA's Core Values of Peer Support Practice

Here, Keyna Franklin, Shakira Paige, Norahsee Ortiz and Imani Worthy of the Rise Peer Vision Team reflect on [SAMHSA's 12 core principles of peer support](#).

### 1. PEER SUPPORT IS VOLUNTARY.

"ACS tries to force people to take services you don't need, that have nothing to do with what you need. Don't force something on people. We should be able to choose."

### 2. PEER SUPPORTERS ARE HOPEFUL.

"You have a shoulder to lean on. That's where we are going. We want the community to be hopeful. We live in a community where people are scared. Having an ACS case is traumatic. We want to make a better future for our children and our community."

### 3. PEER SUPPORTS ARE OPEN MINDED.

"Some families may have a background different from yours—this doesn't mean that what they believe is wrong. Keeping an open mind is a form of respect. It's important to try to see things from many angles, to not be judgmental and to not give up on someone just because their beliefs don't mirror yours."

### 4. PEER SUPPORTERS ARE EMPATHETIC.

"You connect more with people when you can put yourself in their shoes. Sympathy is pity, and I don't think many people like to feel pitied. Anyone can feel sympathetic, but not too many people practice empathy. Being able to connect to someone else's energy—even if your low isn't the same as someone else's, you can say, 'I've been low, too.' It is easy to feel like you're alone, when you're not."

### 5. PEER SUPPORTERS ARE RESPECTFUL.

"If you don't have patience, kindness, warmth and dignity, people don't want to talk to you. You want to be welcoming and kind. You have to respect the family. You never tell the family what they need. If you respect what the family says their needs are, they will respect you as their peer support."

### 6. PEER SUPPORTERS FACILITATE CHANGE.

"As Peer Supporters, we want to correct injustice and make change for people by listening without blame or judgment. We can explore the support they want and need. Having somebody in your corner means a lot to people—when they know you went through the same struggle, dealing with the injustice of the family policing system and a biased world. It is a challenge to overcome injustice. Many of us went through hell and are dealing with that still with the SCR limiting our work options.

We're ready to show the community that they can trust us. We can offer a listening ear and point people in the best possible direction to facilitate change."

### 7. PEER SUPPORTERS ARE HONEST AND DIRECT.

"To keep people grounded, to gain respect and trust, it's important to be honest and direct with people. It shows that you care not just about making others feel good. Even if they don't like what you have to say, honesty shows character. Being direct and to the point is also considerate of others' time. Never tell someone you can do something if you can't, because you want them to trust you and what you say."

### 8. PEER SUPPORT IS MUTUAL AND RECIPROCAL.

"Each person has things to teach and learn. You can share back and forth. We can both share powerful things that hold value. It is about community."

### 9. PEER SUPPORT IS EQUALLY SHARED POWER.

"Foster care workers say, 'If you don't do what I say, I'm not going to help you get your kids back.' It is an abuse of power when we are talking about *my* family, *my* needs. As a Peer Supporter, if you have resources and information, you shouldn't use it against someone. We are trying to share power. I'm not going to say, 'Unless you do what I'm telling you, I'm not going to support you.' I'm not telling you what to do and how to do it, but I am going to share what I've learned from my experience."

### 10. PEER SUPPORT IS STRENGTHS-FOCUSED.

"Life is great at pointing out our faults. There's always something I want to fix or better about myself, and in the midst of that I don't even nurture or congratulate my strengths. Being strengths-focused builds confidence and self-esteem. It gives people the opportunity to nurture and pay attention to what they are naturally good at—ultimately creating a better version of themselves, not turning them into someone else."

### 11. PEER SUPPORT IS TRANSPARENT.

"We have to set boundaries. If we don't, people will ask for stuff we can't provide. We're not your doctor, attorney or judge. We're here to support you and give resources. We're not here to say, 'You're going through depression,' but to say, 'Do you want to talk to someone about how you are feeling?'"

### 12. PEER SUPPORT IS PERSON-DRIVEN.

"To motivate is different than telling someone what to do and how to do it. This is listening, helping someone to navigate as their own person and to motivate them in that direction. It's saying, 'This is something you can take advantage of that you might be interested in.'"