

accare eber Promens Care mensa alting BOSTON University Living Learning Programme

Experts by experience

The power of peersupport in education



Centre of Applied Sciences

Program

- Learning objectives
- Who am I and who are you?
- Exercise
- A peer support group
- The four cornerstones
- Recruitment and meetings
- Guest speaker: Willemijn
- Method
- Most discussed themes
- A peer support group requirements
- What evaluations show us
- Questions

Learning objectives

- The participants have increased knowledge about starting and providing a peer support group for students with mental health problems.
- The participants have learned about ways of stimulating and maintaining a peer support group.
- The participants have experienced the power of peer support
- The participants have taken home an example of a good practice.

Who am I?

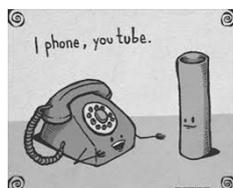
- Laura van Meijeren
- 24 years old
- Lives in Groningen with her fiancé, three cats and a rabbit
- Graduated in June 2015
- Peer support worker for the Hanzehogeschool and in the Mental Health services
- Bipolair, but mostly happy



Who are you?

Tell the person who is sitting next to you:

- Your name
- Where you're from
- Where you work
- About your job/function
- What you like about your work



Exercise

The first step

- One participant will try to touch all the numbered objects as fast as he or she can.
- There is no help allowed!
- The objects have to be touched in the right order. Counting from 1 to 30.

The second step

- Now, the first participant gets a second person to help him/her. They will try to do the same exercise, previous rules apply.

The third step

- Now the entire group joins in and repeat the previous exercise together.

Fourth step

- Feedback after assignment. (5 min)

Goal of the exercise

- The goal of this exercise was to show you how working together can make things easier. With the right support you can accomplish more, than you did alone.
- This also applies to sharing our experiences. We can gain much more: new ideas, sometimes even hope and a new perspective on life.
- This is also what the peer support group is about. With sharing our experiences and working together you can achieve more.
- But also sharing your frustration and struggles can make a big difference in relieving stress and changing your perspective.



A peer support group is:

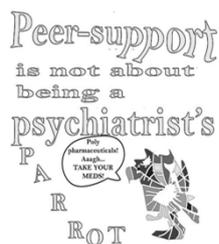
- For students who have had treatment by Mental Health Services.
- For students who want to exchange experiences about studying with mental health problems.
- For students who rationally know how to handle problems during their study, but experience problems with actually applying and maintaining these solutions.

Goal:

- Preventing drop-outs by offering a group of allies, where students can exchange experiences and gain skills to maintain their study.

The four cornerstones

- Acknowledgement
- Recognition
- Support
- Empowerment



Recruitment via

- Brochures
- Posters
- Inform teachers, deans and mentors
- Inform students
- Advertising on the Hanzehogeschool website
- Social media
- Inform Mental Health Services
- We will have a stand on the Hanzehogeschool introduction days/open door days, where we will give out information

Meetings

- A meeting every two or three weeks
- Minimum participants is five
- Maximum participants will be twelve
- 17.30 till 19.30 on Tuesdays
- A peer support worker
- An experienced rehabilitation teacher
- Sandwiches, coffee and tea during the meeting
- Participation is free!
- Sign up by email or via telephone
- Meetings are at the School of Social Studies



Method

- R** = Review
- O** = Overview
- P** = Presentation
- O** = Exercise
- S** = Summary

Most discussed themes

Social

- Working in projectgroups
- Interacting with other students
- Exclusion / feeling left out

Emotional

- Recognition and acknowledgement
- Support system during study
- Disclosure
- Failure
- Social stigma
- Perfectionism

Practical

- Facilities at the school
- Payments and financial arrangements
- Planning and managing your study



A peer support group requirements:

From the peers:

- Being honest
- Willing to listen to eachother
- Willing to self-reflect
- Willing to set up rules about interacting with eachother
- A safe environment
- Knowing it is not a therapy group, but a support group!
- Ownership: the peers determine together what topics will be discussed.

- What happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas!



A peer support group requirements:

From the peer support worker:

- Faith in their peers
- Active use of personal experiences (as a student with vulnerabilities)
- Not being afraid to ask questions
- Encourage students
- Giving information (about school facilities)
- Giving hope: "if she/he can do it, maybe I can do it too" and "feeling that you're not alone"
- Giving acknowledgement and recognition
- Guide the groupprocess (safety first!)
- **Be modest in giving advice, don't make your own experiences the standard!**

What evolutions shows us:

Random facts in the Netherlands

- The newspaper 'Trouw' reported that 25% of the students in the Netherlands struggle with mental health problems (2013)
- 28% of the students reported that the main cause of their stress and depression is the pressure to succeed and to maintain their study
- Most reported problems were: depression, exhaustion, anxiety and stress

Peer support group Hanzehogeschool(2014-2015)

- Last years peer participants still remain students of the Hanzehogeschool and reported that the peer support group played an important factor in this.
- Three out of four students reported that they felt more confident after participating in the peer support group.
- Most positive experiences were: the participation of a peer support worker, the used method (TOPOS), and the chance the exchange of experiences with other students.

Questions

- Are there any questions?



"It ain't easy, Doc. There's a lot of pier pressure."

Thanks for your participation!

