

## 7 Tips to Foster Peer Support and Mentoring



Research indicates that individuals engaged in peer support draw significant benefits from helping others. These benefits come about through the emotional connections, new relationships and the exchange of advice.

### Peers helping Peers

Peer support and peer mentoring offer opportunities to build a valued social identity, reduce loneliness and social isolation. Helping others improves health and happiness and there are many creative ways to do this. It only takes a little creativity and a lot of love.

Here's how to get started:

- Offer a weekly peer support meeting in each neighbourhood within your community. Invite participants to talk about how they are doing. Be sure that each member is offered an opportunity to share.
- Copy the 7 tips on the next page to share with the group.
- At the end of the group, encourage participants to think about who may be lonely in their neighbourhood. E.g., Who just moved into your community, lives alone, or has lost a spouse?
- Do a short brainstorming session using one tip at a time. What works for one person may not work for another. Explore options, discuss different approaches and evaluate weekly.

*Please turn over...*

## 7 TIPS TO FOSTER PEER SUPPORT AND MENTORING

1. **Express kindness to another.** Here are a few suggestions. Every day smile at someone in your neighborhood you don't know. Express kindness through bringing a small gift—a coffee, a flower, a poem, an ice cream. Invite them to join you for a walk keeping a safe physical distance. While you are on the walk, stop to say hello to someone else. Ask them if you can help them with anything. Consider expressing kindness once a day to someone. Everyone matters. Everyone counts.
2. **Express sincere appreciation.** Let a fellow being know something you appreciate about them. We often think appreciative thoughts but do not voice them. The sentence beginning with “One thing I really appreciate about you is \_\_\_”, often ends well (maybe in a new friend)!
3. **Practice listening well.** Do your best to listen to what others say. Try to be present and listen closely. Make a point of looking into their eyes, smile when appropriate, and nod your head—it makes a world of difference. There is no need to fix things or offer advice. Just listen.
4. **Check on someone who is struggling with something.** Showing support when someone is struggling or isolated is a social responsibility we all share. Go visit someone, show concern and care - bring a card or a note to drop off if visiting is not possible. Little things matter.
5. **Volunteer in some way that is needed in your community.** Think of someone who might be socially isolated or lonely. Give them a call and invite them to join you in serving your community. Check with a local agency or hospital and ask if you can be of service.
6. **Nurture talent in others.** If you know someone in your community that has a talent that they aren't putting to use, let them know you've noticed. Gently encourage them or offer suggestions of where they can share their talent, e.g. If they sing, they can sing to residents in care homes from the street. Brainstorm with the group.
7. **Bring optimism.** Create a basket of inspiring quotes using large font sizes. Go find someone who is lonely or struggling and pass it on. Then invite them to come with you to your peer support group.

**Use your creativity—there are 101 ways to help others every day!**



Try it out and let us know how it goes. We'd love to hear from you!