



CENTRE FOR INNOVATION IN PEER SUPPORT

# Developing Your Resilience Stories Toolkit

Version 1.1

# How to Use This Resource

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# Meaningful Selective Disclosure

Throughout our interactions we may tell those we support about our experiences in a way that is meaningful to them. Meaningful selective disclosure is when we share from our personal lived experiences in support of exploratory response. The purpose of sharing from our journey is to aid in the other person's self-determined exploration, not to direct people to take steps, or support themselves the same way that we have.

Meaningful selective disclosure requires us to reflect on points of connection between our experience and the experience of others. Even with differences in our journeys, we can look within ourselves and seek points of connection with emotions, impacts, and experiences of others as similar to our own.

Sharing our experiences in a way that is meaningful to the person can convey that people are not alone in their experiences and struggles, inspire hope, provide validation, and aid in their exploration of choices and options available to them, including sharing the ways that we take care of ourselves.

We share meaningfully using **Resilience Stories**. This way of sharing from our journey addresses the pain or struggle of an experience but focuses on the impact of our experiences, the learnings we've had, the actions we took and supports we found helpful. Resilience stories are brief, as the interaction is not about us, but rather to be of support to others.

We can support others without selective disclosure, but we avoid disclosing/sharing without having the purpose of conveying that people are not alone in their experiences and struggles, inspiring hope, providing validation, and/or aiding in their exploration of choices and options available to them. If the conversation becomes about our journey and experiences instead of being in service of the other person's experience we have shifted away from a supportive interaction. Skillfully and mindfully sharing from our journey requires practice, and training may be helpful.

## W.A.I.T. - Why Am I Talking?

This acronym is taken from: (TED - The Empowerment Dynamic, 2017).

### What will I share?

- Does my share connect with an aspect of the other person's journey?
- How much detail will I share?

### What's my purpose in sharing?

- To share for exploration? To validate? To inspire?
- Is it in service of the listener(s) and not just about me?

### What's the risk to others?

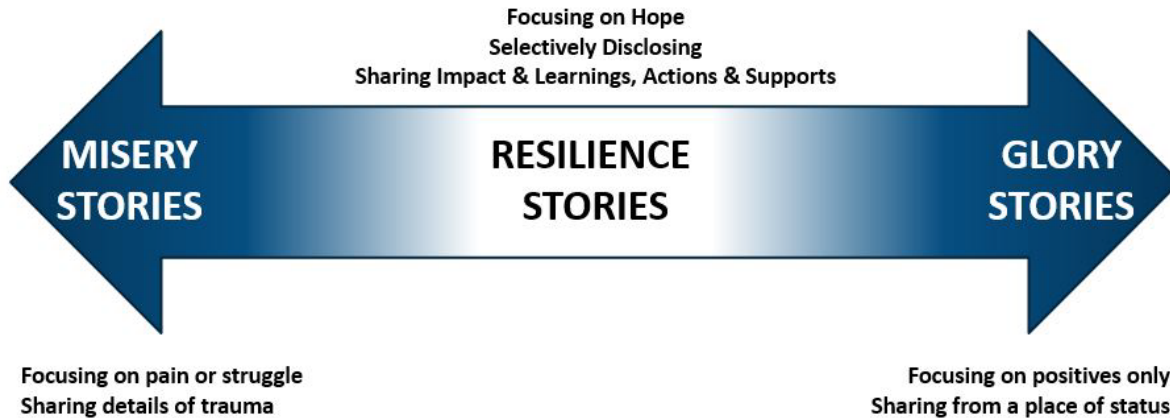
- Will this enhance or hinder the conversation?
- Will I cause harm? – shame, blame, create comparison, re-traumatize

### What's the risk to myself?

- Am I ready to share?
- Will this have a negative impact on me?

## The Sharing Spectrum

The Sharing Spectrum was created by the Centre for Innovation in Peer Support (2021).



### Resilience Stories

When we are connected to our experiences, we intentionally share parts of our personal lived/living experiences in a way that is meaningful to others. This means we share to support compassionate understanding, inspire hope, provide validation and support exploration of challenges and solutions.

These **Resilience Stories** address the pain or struggle of an experience but focus on the impact of our experiences, the learnings we've had, the actions we took and supports we found helpful. Resilience stories are brief, as the interaction is not about us, but rather to be of support to others.

### Misery Stories

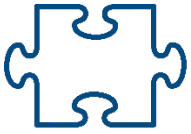
When we are consumed by our experiences we may overshare from our journey, rather than intentionally sharing parts of our journey that are of support to others.

These **Misery Stories** focus on pain or struggle. Sharing misery stories means we stay in sorrow and we may overshare details of experiences causing vicarious trauma or re-traumatization for ourselves and others, ultimately causing harm.

### Glory Stories

When we are removed from our journey, we may be unable to meaningfully use our lived experiences when they could be of support, or share very little.

These **Glory Stories** are shared from a place of status or glorification, only focusing on positives, often accompanied by minimal vulnerability. Sharing glory stories creates shame, comparison, and they can be dismissive and prescriptive, ultimately causing harm (i.e., "You just need to work hard").



## Getting to Know our Journey

This handout has been adapted from: (Mental Health Commission of Canada).

### Key Reflection Questions

Pick a few of the following questions that you would feel comfortable sharing in a peer support relationship and record your answers below.

What are some successes you have had in your life?	What was your life like before your struggles?*	What activities do you enjoy?	What factors do you think contributed to your experiences?
What effects did/does your lived experience have on your life?*	What is/was it like living with _____?	What contributed to your decision to seek support?	How did your family and friends respond? What responses were helpful/unhelpful?
What were your experiences with the health system? What was helpful/unhelpful?	What were your experiences with community services? What was helpful/unhelpful?	What were your experiences with the justice system? What was helpful/unhelpful?	What were the challenges or barriers in your journey?
What would you have done differently if you could do it over again?	What means the most to you in your journey?	What have you learned?	What is your life like now?
What signs did you have that something was becoming a problem?	What/who was helpful in supporting your journey?	What positive experiences happened in your recovery journey?	What are your coping strategies? How do you manage now?

\*Work, education, relationships, activities, spirituality, childhood, attitudes and beliefs about life



## Exploring our Resilience Messages

By exploring the events and feelings we have experienced, we may find areas that connect with other people's experiences. We can then explore the impact, learnings and actions to help create resilience stories to share with others. This is also a chance to identify experiences you do not want to share with others.

### Part 1: Circle the experiences below that connect with your journey.

Loneliness and/or isolation	Sadness	Anger
Substance use and/or Addiction	Disability	Psychosis
Caregiving for others	Self-Harm	Grief and feelings of loss
Violence	Chronic illness	Hoarding
Confusion	Sex work	Trauma
Mental Illness	Extreme Mood Changes	Stress
Poverty	Bullying	Happiness
Harm Reduction	Self – help	Shame and guilt
Fear and Phobias	Avoidance	Experiences with Medication
Employment Challenges	Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation related challenges	Connection with the justice system and/or incarceration
Discrimination and/or Oppression (racism, sexism, etc.)	Homelessness and challenges with housing	Stigma, Prejudice, Being "Labelled"
Challenges with relationships (friends, partner, family etc)	Suicidality (thoughts and actions)	Engagement with Supportive Professionals/Groups
Engagement with Community Supports and Hospital	Being self-critical and negative self-talk	Other: _____
Things in my journey I do not want to share about...		

**Part 2: Choose some of the experiences you circled. And answer the following questions about those experiences. This will give you some resilience messages to include when you share with others.**

What was the impact?

What were your learnings?

What actions did you take and what supports did you have?


## Skillfully Sharing

<p><b>Trauma &amp; Harm</b></p>	<p><b>AVOID:</b> Sharing details about: self-harm actions, suicide plans, violent actions, traumatic event details, drug use rituals, abuse details. Glorifying, comparing or reminiscing on these topics.</p> <p><b>DO:</b> Acknowledge the experience then discuss impacts, learnings etc. and then openly share about feelings, meanings, thoughts, impacts, learning etc.</p> <p><b>Example:</b> “I used to self-harm too, it helped me cope with things and gave me a sense of control, something I felt I had very little of at the time. I learned new coping strategies and slowly I was able to stop self-harming.”</p>
<p><b>Medication</b></p>	<p><b>AVOID:</b> Sharing about specifics (dosages, names etc.), medical advice, encouraging or discouraging medications.</p> <p><b>DO:</b> Remain neutral, medications are part of some people’s journey and work well, they may have side effects and journeys with medication are personal. We can support people to bring questions to their doctors should they want to know more about medication.</p> <p><b>Example:</b> “Medication and the process of finding the medications that work or don’t work is personal, it’s about finding the best fit for you. I know for some people medication has been part of their journey and for others it has not. You have the right to be curious and ask questions about your medication process if you would like to.”</p>
<p><b>Other Service Providers</b></p>	<p><b>AVOID:</b> Sharing about specific positive or negative experiences with specific service providers, Encouraging or discouraging a service.</p> <p><b>DO:</b> Remain neutral. Experiences with services are personal. We can support people to explore options open to them, and explore the different offerings of a service. Be sure to support their self-determination and honour the experiences people have with different providers. We can support people to share their needs, their gratitude and their concerns with services they interact with.</p> <p><b>Example:</b> I have had both positive and negative experiences with services, sometimes you find a great fit, and sometimes it does not feel great. The experience with services is personal. If it fits for you that’s great, if it does not seem to fit there are options for services we can explore.</p>

## Crafting our Resilience Stories

This is an example of a resilience story. It focuses on the reframing of an experience to the story that is truly meaningful for us. Resilience stories can acknowledge the challenges and impact but focus on the learning, growth and hope of the experience.

Resilience stories consider:

- Where are/were the opportunities?
- What was helpful?
- What did you learn?
- What did you gain?

### Original Story

In 2016 I started university, enrolled in a Criminology program. The following months were awful. It felt like I was running on fumes, running from work to school, work, school and then spending any remaining time I had with the girl I had been dating for over a year. Two months into the school year my girlfriend told me she was interested in someone else – we broke up. By the end of the semester, I had nothing left, I dropped out of school. I came to be referred to as “the dropout” and “the disappointment” by family members and old friends... it wasn’t long until I started referring to myself the same way. I felt alone and ashamed.

### Reframed: Resilience Story

In 2016 I started and finished my time at university. It was at a really challenging part of my journey. I went through a rough breakup, and with various mental health challenges piling up I made the decision to leave school. Family members and friends came up with a lot of names for me, “dropout” was the most common. I felt a great deal of shame. I spent three months working through my mental health challenges – journaling, going on walks and asking myself what would bring happiness to my life. I started volunteering, facilitating children’s mental health groups. It just felt right. I kept volunteering and after a year I enrolled in a Child & Youth Care program. I now recognize the essential growth and healing I did in that time and I am so grateful that I “dropped out” of university and gave myself the time I needed.



## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES TO EXPLORE

All programming from Support House Centre for Innovation in Peer Support is delivered through our [Learning Centre & Resource Hub](#).

The **Learning Centre** provides a range of opportunities, including self-directed e-learning, facilitated learning programs, consultation services, and provincial communities of practice.

The **Resource Hub** houses our educational toolkits, documents, and videos. Together, these resources reflect current best practice in the delivery and implementation of Peer Support across Ontario.

### Products on our Resource Hub:

- ***Guiding Standards of Peer Support*** (from Mental Health Commission of Canada, Peer Support Canada & Centre for Innovation in Peer Support)
- ***The Relationship to Lived Experience Spectrum***
- ***Empathetic Communication Toolkit***

[CLICK HERE TO VISIT OUR YOUTUBE CHANNEL](#)



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## About the Centre

Recognized provincially for its award-winning services, Support House Centre for Innovation in Peer Support (the Centre) has evolved into a "Benchmark of Excellence" in peer support and experience-based engagement and co-design. The Centre is dedicated to implementing innovative best practices for meaningful and equitable engagement and partnerships with individuals who have lived/living experience, as well as their family/caregivers, across Ontario.

### Our History

Originally established as a Consumer Survivor Initiative in 1999 under the name TEACH (Teach, Empower, Advocate for Community Health), the need for support and training for agencies providing authentic peer support was identified. As a result, in 2015, the Centre received new base funding from the legacy Mississauga Halton LHIN to offer regional and provincial system support for Health Service Providers (HSPs). This support includes hospital psychiatric inpatient units, addiction residential treatment, supportive housing programs, central access, employment support programs, justice, community mental health and addiction providers, and self-help education and support groups. This scope has since expanded to encompass regional, provincial, national, and international collaborations.

### Supporting People Engaging in Services

Our service offerings include wellness-based, peer-led self-help and social connection programs for community members. These programs are designed, developed, implemented, and evaluated by individuals with lived/living experience. We work together to foster community and connection by creating safe spaces where people navigating mental health and substance use/addiction challenges, can heal and grow.

### Supporting Provincial Systems & Partners

The Centre's Provincial, Systems & Partner stream is continually evolving to support organizations that provide peer support services and to foster meaningful, equitable engagement, co-design, and partnership with individuals who have lived/living experience, as well as family/caregivers for roles on advisory tables, working groups, committees, and government boards. We create learning opportunities through co-design, education and training, consultations, capacity building, collaborations and partnerships, and the development of resources and toolkits, drawing on our expertise in engagement stewardship.

Additional learning resources are available in our Virtual Learning Centre and Resource Hub, where you can explore information about our provincial communities of practice, toolkits, models, and other resources. The Centre is committed to enhancing the capacity of individuals with lived/living experience, family/caregivers, peer support workers, supervisors, health service providers, and regional and provincial healthcare systems. We aspire to co-design and co-create an inclusive and equitable healthcare response, regardless of complexity.

### About Support House

Support House is guided by our core values, which shape our agency's decisions and actions, unite our staff, define our brand, and inspire our culture. We put people first—our supports are person-directed. We connect and engage, starting conversations to build and maintain relationships. We focus on health and wellness practices to inspire our culture. All employees are required to adhere to our values-based oath of conduct.

## References

- Gremmen, A., & Hopkins, E. (2022). Empathetic Communication Toolkit. Support House: Centre for Innovation in Peer Support.
- Mental Health Commission of Canada. Sharing Your Personal Story: Speaker Toolkit.
- TED - The Empowerment Dynamic. (2017, May 26). W.A.I.T. – Why Am I Talking? TED – The Empowerment Dynamic. <https://powerofted.com/w-a-i-t-why-am-i-talking-2/>.