



***Celebrating 5 Years As A
National Technical Assistance Center***

Pentac News

VOLUME 16

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“Change brings opportunity.”

Nido Qubein

As we close out our first cycle as a National Mental Health Technical Assistance Center, we are so grateful for all the opportunities and the connections we have made over these 5 years. Though our SAMHSA grant has ended, we are still committed to the work that we do. We continue to seek alternative funding streams. Some of the training we have developed will be offered on a fee-for-service basis. We have built up a body of knowledge and expertise over these 5 years, and we intend to continue to use it. While we may not be able to offer extended support, we are certainly able to offer direction.

To those who participated in our Aspiring Entrepreneur Workshops and those who presented in our Peer Entrepreneur Speaker series, we say thank you. To Achara Consulting, who have partnered with us over the past 5 years to bring you the Peer Supervisor Series, Role of Peer Specialists in Promoting Health Equity Series, and Transformational Peer Support Series, we greatly appreciate the support and attention you gave to developing these 3 series. To the peers across the nation, from California to New York, from Alaska to Puerto Rico, who registered, showed up, and shared your wisdom with us, we could not have done this without you, and we are truly grateful for each and every connection. To the peer workforce in the Virgin Islands, funding will not prevent us from finishing our mission to formalize your structures, and we are looking forward to the first certified peers in 2025.

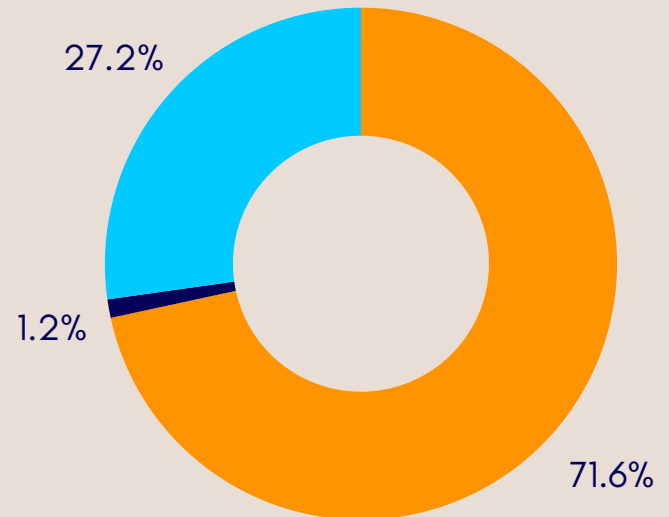
What we are saying here is not farewell. We are saying we'll see you soon. We are still here, still producing, still advocating for peer support, still training, still consulting, still believing that recovery is possible for all, and still living into our values and vision of a stigma-free future where Peer Support is infused into all communities.

We eagerly run towards the new and exciting opportunities.

Peer Experience National Technical Assistance Center

Training Impact

	PENTAC TRAININGS PROVIDED FOR FIVE (5) YEAR CYCLE
71.6%	Integration of Peers (1,962) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• National Training: Health Equity, Peer Supervision and Transformational Peer Support• PECRPS & Other Trainings
27.2%	Supported Education & Employment (746) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Aspiring Entrepreneurship• Peer Workshops• PENTAC Speaker Series
1.2%	Youth Leadership (31)



Our team (r-l) Cheryl Molyneaux, Sherry Warner, Destiny Harris, Akil Meade, Emilis Lamboy, Luz Rodriguez:

TA Impact

VI Workforce Development

Accomplishments

PENTAC collaborated with the Office of Senator Novelle Francis, NAMI St. Croix, the Director of the Governor Juan F. Luis Hospital, University of the Virgin Islands/UVI CELL, Soul Health, Inc., The Village, and the Office of Gun Violence Prevention, as part of our outreach efforts. As a result, PENTAC has established a CRPS VI Testing Center and aim to increase outreach and engagement efforts in St. Thomas and St. John in 2025.



Emotional CPR (eCPR) Training in St. Croix, VI



2-Day Wellness Recovery Action Plan Training (WRAP I) St. Croix, VI



3-Day Wellness Recovery Action Plan Training (WRAP II) St. Croix, VI

VIRGIN ISLANDS TRAINED IN 2024	
PECRPS - VI TA	27
eCPR - VI TA	29
WRAP 1 - VI TA	32
WRAP 2 - VI TA	6



5 -Day Peer Experience Certified Recovery Peer Specialist Training (PECRPS) St. Croix, VI

The Healing Power of Vulnerability in Peer Support

Written By: Luz A. Rodriguez

In both mental health and substance abuse recovery, the journey to healing often requires more than just therapy or medical treatment. It requires connection, understanding, and shared experiences. Peer support, which is rooted in mutual support between individuals with similar lived experiences, is a powerful tool in both mental health and substance abuse recovery. At the heart of peer support lies one essential element—vulnerability.

To some, vulnerability may seem like a risk, but in the context of recovery, it is considered a strength. The act of opening up, sharing personal struggles, and allowing oneself to be seen in their honest and raw truth can have profound healing effects, not only for the person receiving support but also for the peer supporter.

Vulnerability Defined in Peer Support:

Vulnerability in peer support refers to the willingness to expose one's emotional wounds, fears, and challenges without fear of judgment. It involves being open about personal experiences of mental health struggles, addiction, and the road to recovery. This authenticity fosters connection and trust between individuals and provides a foundation for support and healing

In her TED Talk, *The Power of Vulnerability*, Brené Brown emphasizes the profound impact of embracing vulnerability in our lives. She states, “Owning our story can be hard but not nearly as difficult as spending our lives running from it. Embracing our vulnerabilities is risky but not nearly as dangerous as giving up on love and belonging and joy—the experiences that make us the most vulnerable make us the most vulnerable.” This powerful quote speaks to the heart of recovery, particularly in the context of peer support. By owning and sharing our stories—embracing our vulnerabilities—we open ourselves up to deep connection, love, and healing. While the act of being vulnerable can feel risky, it is far less harmful than avoiding those connections, which are essential for true growth and transformation..



Vulnerability is Key in Recovery:

The "healing power of vulnerability" in peer support fosters personal growth and healing between a peer supporter and the person they are supporting by *building trust and connection, fostering empathy and shared humanity, empowering through shared experiences, and reducing stigma and shame.*

Building Trust and Connection:

One of the most powerful aspects of vulnerability in peer support is its ability to build trust. When peer supporters share their personal experiences and struggles, it shows those seeking help that they are not alone. It signals that it's safe to open up without fear of judgment or rejection. When a person can relate to the struggles shared in their peer's testimony, they feel understood and motivated to walk toward their own journey to recovery. Trust is the cornerstone of any supportive relationship, and vulnerability is the key that unlocks it.

Fostering Empathy, Openness, and Shared Humanity:

Vulnerability allows both the peer supporter and the person receiving support to experience empathy in a deep, meaningful way. It humanizes life struggles and the recovery process, showing that it's not just about clinical treatment or changed behaviors but also about emotional and personal healing. When peer supporters openly share the battles they've faced and demonstrate that recovery was possible for them, these conversations encourage individuals to recognize their own adversity and help them feel empowered to become more vulnerable with their peer, breaking down the barriers between them.



Empowerment Through Shared Experience:

Vulnerability in peer support allows the individual being supported to feel inspired and empowered to take back control over their life when their peer shares their testimony of how they overcame the challenges they faced. Vulnerability empowers the person being supported by showing them that they have a voice and choice in their recovery journey, allowing them to take part and control the direction

of their healing. This shift in perspective moves them from feeling powerless to feeling powerful.

Reducing Stigma and Shame:

In mental health and substance abuse recovery, stigma and shame can be major obstacles to being vulnerable. The fear of being judged or misunderstood often prevents people from opening up, seeking help, or fully embracing their healing journey. Vulnerability plays a crucial role in breaking down these barriers. When peer supporters openly discuss their struggles with addiction or mental health, it helps normalize the conversation and reduce the shame associated with these issues.

Vulnerability as a Catalyst for Healing:

The healing power of vulnerability in peer support is profound and essential. When individuals in recovery embrace vulnerability, they break free from isolation, build genuine connections, and regain control of their healing journey. Peer support fosters trust, empathy, and empowerment, helping reduce stigma and creating an environment where individuals can thrive. As the recovery community continues to grow, vulnerability remains a cornerstone of lasting healing and transformation.

Vulnerability dismantles the walls that separate people, enabling individuals to see that they are not defined by their struggles with mental health or addiction, but by their resilience and shared experiences. Peer support programs that embrace vulnerability create an environment where peers can learn from each other and heal together.



In recovery, vulnerability allows individuals to acknowledge past challenges while celebrating their progress. It transforms recovery from something passive into an active, self-empowered process, motivating individuals to take ownership of their journey and continue moving forward despite any obstacles.

Self-Care in the Age of Social Media: Finding Balance and Setting Boundaries

Written By: Allison Shenson

We live in an age where it seems everyone is glued to either their phone or computers. What are they glued to? Oftentimes the screen reflects a social media app. Social media platforms are more than just communication tools—they have become integral to many of our daily routines, providing avenues for connection, sharing, and learning. Yet, this constant connectivity can also challenge our mental well-being. Recognizing the need for self-care in a hyper-connected world is essential for establishing balance and setting healthy boundaries.

The impact of social media on mental health has been widely documented. Excessive use has been linked to increased anxiety, depression, and loneliness. The tendency to compare ourselves to someone else's "picture perfect" life online often intensifies feelings of inadequacy and burnout. Acknowledging these effects and becoming aware of the feelings we have



while scrolling social media is the first step toward navigating negative outcomes while still benefiting from the positive aspects of our online communities.

Mindful engagement with social media involves deliberate strategies to protect mental health. This can include setting specific time limits, creating designated "tech-free" zones in your home or workplace, and curating your social feeds to feature uplifting content. Periodic digital detoxes have also been shown to alleviate stress and enhance overall well-being. Before you open up Instagram or TikTok on your next lunch break, consider pausing first to ask yourself, "Why am I choosing to open this app right now?". When you finish scrolling, try asking yourself, "How do I feel at this moment?". By adopting these, or other mindful practices of your choosing, you can transform your online experiences into ones that support rather than undermine your mental health.

Peer support can be a powerful resource in managing digital consumption. Whether through engaging in supportive online groups or seeking advice from friends facing similar challenges, peer networks can provide comfort and practical strategies for healthier social media habits. These communities encourage the sharing of personal experiences and effective boundary-setting techniques, which are crucial for building resilience in today's digital age. Peer support can also offer us opportunities for accountability and check-ins once we've decided on our social media boundaries.

Balancing social media use with robust self-care practices is key to preserving mental well-being in a digital era. Acknowledging the challenges posed by constant connectivity and leveraging peer support around our media intake can empower us to set and maintain healthy digital boundaries. By integrating strategies into daily routines, we



mindful strategies into daily routines, we can foster a healthier relationship with technology—one that nurtures both our digital lives and our mental health.

Stay Connected!



Training
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