



PEER EXPERIENCE NATIONAL TA CENTER

A Program of Peer Support Coalition of Florida, Inc.



PRESENTS

Mental health matters

Newsletter Volume 9

BY DIVYA SHARMA

IN THIS VOLUME:

Mental Wellness Month | 1
Interview with Susan Rogers | 2
Ways to Mitigate & Reduce Stress | 5
Youth Advocacy & Mentoring | 6
Calendar of Events | 9
References | 10

MENTAL WELLNESS MONTH

January marks the start of Mental Wellness Month, and as we greet a new year and begin our journey into 2023, we usher in the opportunity for change, growth and healthy (new) habits.

Mental Wellness Month is a time to focus on all of the elements that make up mental well-being; it is a balance of emotional, physical, spiritual and mental health.

The World Health Organization's (WHO) definition of mental wellness is as follows "*Mental wellness is an internal resource that helps us think, feel, connect, and function; it is an active process that helps us to build resilience, grow, and flourish.*"²

SAMHSA's Eight Dimensions of Wellness, included below, can help provide a visual aid for individuals to be more conscious and cognizant of how they take care of themselves, and based on these different aspects, can allow for them to create a mental wellness plan.

Wellness is holistic, so it is important to reflect on what aspects are most valid to you, create a plan, and begin to work on the areas that you feel need the most attention.⁵ Breaking the process up piece by piece can allow for individuals to not feel overwhelmed and allow for feasible goals to be met. It is an ongoing process, but it is worth it.



SPEAKING WITH

SUSAN:

**AN INTERVIEW WITH
LONG-TIME MENTAL
HEALTH ADVOCATE
SUSAN ROGERS.**



Susan Rogers serves as the Director of the National Mental Health Consumers' Self-Help Clearinghouse, a peer-run national technical assistance center. Rogers, who has been active in the movement for social justice of individuals with mental health conditions since 1984, has had a 36-year career as a writer, editor, public relations professional and public speaker. She is the author of numerous articles on mental health-related topics, and she has edited several publications. We are thrilled to have the opportunity to speak with her today and share it with you all!

You have been active in the field of mental health/wellness and recovery for quite some time! What would you say motivated or inspired you to start working and stay in this industry?

Two easy questions! First, in 1976, after my second stay on a psych ward, a friend thought it was unhealthy for me to live alone, so he urged me to move into a political collective that friends of his had created in a New York City suburb.

The first night at dinner, expecting to shock the others sitting around the table, I announced that I had just gotten out of a mental hospital. But Joseph Rogers, whom I had just met, said he had been in and out of mental hospitals for years. Peer support! We were married eight months later!

I had been working as an editor at a monthly publication in midtown Manhattan, while Joseph—who was working at a community mental health center—became increasingly involved in the burgeoning movement for social justice of individuals with psychiatric histories.


In 1984, because of his growing reputation as a very effective mental health advocate, Joseph was recruited by the Mental Health Association of Southeastern Pennsylvania (now Mental Health Partnerships), in Philadelphia. When we moved to Philly, Joseph invited me to work with him. The rest is history! To answer your second question, I soon found that working for a nonprofit with a mission that I supported was extremely satisfying—and could be fun, too!

I left the agency in 2018 but, because this work is very important to me, I have remained involved in the movement for social justice, including volunteering to help support the [National Mental Health Consumers' Self-Help Clearinghouse](#), which Joseph founded in 1986 because he saw the need for a national technical assistance center to serve the c/s/x (consumer/survivor/ex-patient) movement (now usually called the peer movement).

Subsequently, the federal mental health authority decided to fund the Clearinghouse, and later funded the National Empowerment Center too. Then the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)—founded in 1992—created a competitive grant process to fund five such national technical assistance centers. (The readers of this newsletter may not know that the Peer Experience National Technical Assistance Center [PENTAC] is one of the current SAMHSA grant recipients.)

My Clearinghouse work now mostly involves answering email queries and writing a monthly e-newsletter, the [Key Update](#), which covers mental health news, conferences and webinars, and resources that I believe will be of interest to our readers, including a monthly digest about the [Criminal Legal System](#). One of the manuals I co-authored through a subcontract with the Temple University Collaborative on Community Inclusion is "[Reentry and Renewal: A Review of Peer-run Organizations That Serve Individuals with Behavioral Health Conditions and Criminal Justice Involvement](#)."





In addition, I stay involved with the National Coalition for Mental Health Recovery, comprising member organizations in 27 states and the District of Columbia. (NCMHR was founded in 2006 by movement leaders Dan Fisher, Sally Zinman, Linda Corey, Mike Finkle, and Joseph Rogers.) For example, I occasionally help NCMHR with written documents, such as press releases, e.g., “National Mental Health Coalition Decries NYC Mayor’s Plan to Lock Up Homeless People Who Have Psychiatric Disabilities,” and Alternatives conference documents.


One of my proudest accomplishments is co-authoring an amici brief in Olmstead v. L.C. with Mary Giliberti, then a staff attorney at the Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law. I did all the interviews and wrote it as a magazine article; then Mary turned it into a brief, which was accepted by the U.S. Supreme Court.

Burnout is a phenomenon that is widespread and has a large impact on those working in fields related to mental health and recovery (i.e.: peer support specialists, SUD workers, behavioral health technicians, etc.). As someone who has been a tireless advocate for social justice and change within the community, what are some of the ways that you combat burnout?

Because the work I have done in the mental health arena did not involve direct service, I believe that I was not as likely to burn out as are peers who work with individuals on a daily basis. When I worked full time, I mostly wrote articles and press releases and edited publications; I also gave speeches and created and presented trainings. In addition, I helped organize, and participated in, many protests and rallies. The one-to-one work that many of my colleagues did was not in my wheelhouse.

But I can answer your question because there is a lot of information online about combating burnout. Although this article—“8 Tips for Avoiding Burnout and Functioning at Your Best”—is not targeted toward people who work in the mental health arena, it includes useful—albeit obvious—advice. (The article also includes an ad for a “cortisol manager”; just ignore that!)

In addition, Doors to Wellbeing offers this free (archived) webinar: “Avoiding Compassion Fatigue and Burnout for Mental Health Peer Specialists.” The description reads, in part: “This presentation will explore tools, role plays, and discussions that will help mental health peer specialists build up their wellness and resilience and avoid compassion fatigue and burnout.”



Stigma continues to serve as a large barrier for those seeking mental health care or on their recovery journey. In your opinion, what are some of the ways that people can work to break the stigma that surrounds this field? And what are some of the changes, if any, that you have seen as it pertains to stigma and mental health/wellness, from the start of your career in this field to now?

One of my focuses over the past four decades has been fighting the prejudice and discrimination associated with mental health conditions. (I prefer “prejudice and discrimination” to “stigma,” although I know that “self-stigma” is a “thing,” and “self-prejudice” just sounds wrong.) To your question about ways that people can fight stigma: I co-authored a free manual with the Temple University Collaborative on Community Inclusion called “Tackling Mental Health Prejudice and Discrimination,” which includes 10 anti-stigma campaigns (as well as other information and resources)

In brief, these campaigns are: 1. Photovoice; 2. organizing a protest or rally; 3. sponsoring a Twitter chat; 4. establishing a speaker’s bureau; 5. planning and publicizing a walk/run; 6. supporting a media watch campaign. 7. hosting an art show with artwork by people with mental health conditions; 8. holding a student poster contest with the theme of mental health recovery; 9. creating a mental health theater troupe; and 10. volunteering with your peer-run group to do community service. All are described in detail in the manual.

There are some other ideas in this 1995 edition of People First.

Meanwhile, prominent mental health researcher Patrick Corrigan, Psy.D.–who has lived experience–believes that contact (interactions between people with mental health conditions and the general public) is the best way to defeat stigma.

And I’ve seen massive changes in the mental health arena over the last nearly 40 years.

What appears to be a majority of mental health professionals and policy makers now accept the fact that people with mental health conditions can and do recover; and there’s been a paradigm shift from “What’s wrong with you?” to “What happened to you?” This sea change can be largely (although not entirely) attributed to the work of the c/s/x movement. But there is still much work to do!

Joseph Rogers gave a presentation on the history and accomplishments of the c/s/x movement at Alternatives 2022; it includes some of the highlights. For the slide deck, [click here](#).

With January being mental wellness month, what are some tips/tricks that you employ to promote mental wellness in your life?

Because I stopped going to the gym when the pandemic started, since March 2020 I have substituted brisk daily walks—from three miles up to seven miles—unless it's raining or snowing. Also, six years ago I resumed piano lessons after a 56-year hiatus, and practicing the piano is a great distraction! Most importantly, my connections to my partner and his wonderful family, and to my friends, are indispensable to my mental wellness. I also employ many of the tips for avoiding burnout in the article I cited above—except for “taking a break from the news and social media”! I read The New York Times and Washington Post, as well as The Nation, New Republic, New Yorker, Atlantic, and other publications. I also watch MSNBC, and I am somewhat addicted to Twitter, which I find informative and entertaining! (I mostly tweet about mental health, the criminal legal system, politics, the climate crisis, and music. If anyone reading this is on Twitter, you can follow me @SusanRogersMH and I will follow you back.) ◉

Is there anything else that you would like to add or share?

Thank you for thinking of me and giving me this platform. I appreciate it!

A huge thanks to Susan for participating in this interview and for all the amazing work that she does for the mental health community!



WAYS TO MITIGATE STRESS & IMPLEMENT STRESS MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES

Many people experience stress in their jobs. Tough deadlines, seasonal workload fluctuations, or the very nature of a role can cause stress. For individuals working in the mental health/substance use space, the stress that is sometimes tacked on to a job, can perhaps feel insurmountable at times.

Often times, it is easy to conflate pressure with stress; individuals in a role may feel the constant and ever-present need to perform their best, however, an article published by MindTools states that stress is not the same as pressure. A manageable level of pressure can actually help you to perform at your best. However, if pressure increases to a point where you no longer feel in control, the result is stress. Unlike pressure, stress is never positive.⁴

In fact, according to a survey of more than 2,000 full-time U.S. employees, ages 18-79, more than half of employees find themselves stressed during at least 60 percent of the workweek.⁸

And while it may be easy to write off stress as something synonymous with work, it is important to note that stress can manifest itself in both physical and physiological ways.

Work stress has significant health consequences that range from relatively benign (like getting more colds and flus) to potentially serious (such as heart disease and metabolic syndrome)⁷

While stress can be common to encounter, it is important to note that if your job is consistently stressful, it's imperative to find ways to manage that stress.

Although we may wish all our stress/stressors could magically disappear, incorporating productive and effective strategies and tactics to tackle stress may just be the next best option.

The following page discusses the various causes of stress and some of the ways we can try to reduce/ease the stress that may be associated with our job.

Before we can manage stress, we first have to know what causes it. There are four main underlying causes:⁷

Time stress develops from a fast-paced working environment with unrealistic deadlines. When you're suffering from this type of hurry sickness, productivity, relationships and well-being start to suffer.

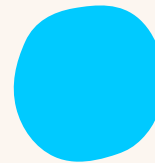
Anticipatory stress is stress about the future. It may be due to a specific event, like an upcoming presentation. Or, you may experience a more general fear about the future – about your employment security, for example.

Situational stress is caused by situations that you feel you can't control. These may be acute incidents, like a sudden supply line failure, or longer-term issues, such as a lack of autonomy or purpose in your work. Unreasonably heavy workloads also come into this category.

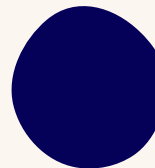
Encounter stress derives from interaction with other people. Poor management, bullying, and dealing with angry or difficult people can all be sources of encounter stress.

Once you've identified the factors that contribute to your stress, you can then take appropriate steps to manage them.

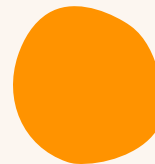
Some effective stress management techniques include:



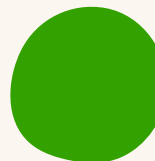
Guided imagery.



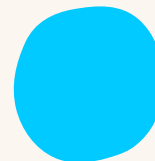
Progressive muscle relaxation.



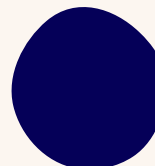
Positive self-talk.



Aromatherapy.



Listening to music or your favorite podcast!



Playing with a pet.



Engaging with nature!



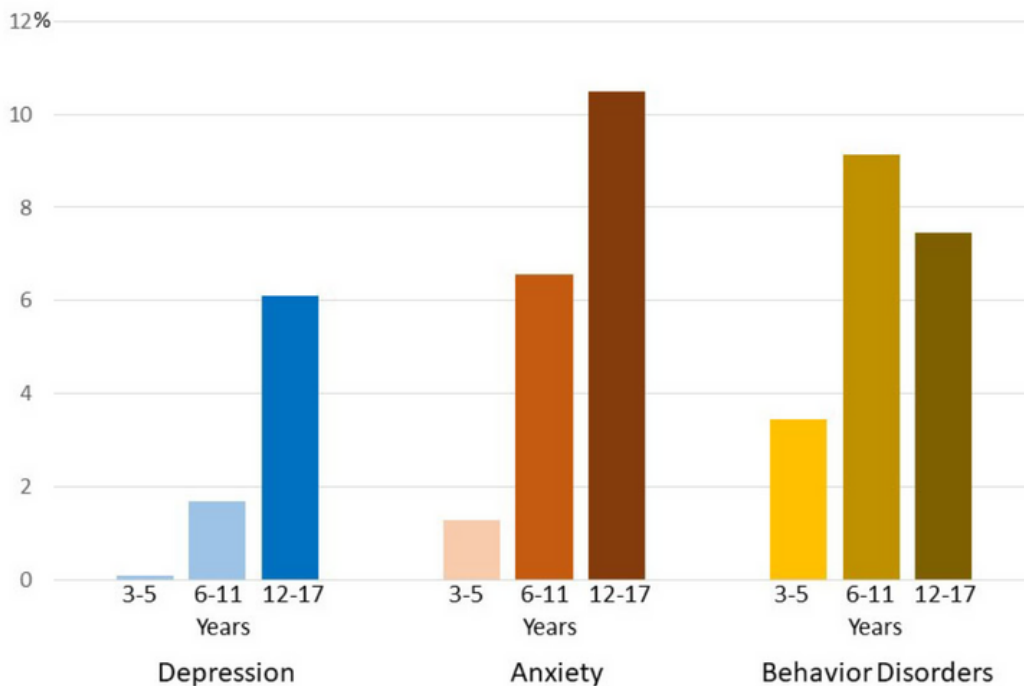
Getting more sleep.



YOUTH ADVOCACY AND MENTORING

For a youth, just knowing that there is somebody there for them who understands, and who has got their back, can be the basis for creating a new sense of hope and possibility. Providing youth with the skills and tools to not only advocate for themselves but for others, can prove to be a game-changer within the realm of mental health and wellness.

Depression, Anxiety, Behavior Disorders, by Age



Statistic provided by the CDC revealing the percentage of depression, anxiety and behavioral disorders by age.

A report by the US Health and Human Services states that while many adolescents experience positive mental health, an estimated 49.5 percent of adolescents has had a mental health disorder at some point in their lives.³ These statistics reveal the crucial need to increase and expand the programming that is catered towards youth and their mental health.

In an effort to meet these gaps and ensure that youth are not falling between the cracks, PENTAC has partnered with Francesca Reichert (Founder of the 501c(3) *Inspiring My Generation*) to share our Youth Advocacy and Mentoring 101 Series. This upcoming series ([click here to register](#)) provides elementary through high school age youth the skills, tools and resources to learn how to self-advocate and how to determine when they need help, support, and connection.

Take advantage of these free, national workshops, and if you have any questions, feel free to contact sherry@peersupportfl.org!

FREE
VIRTUAL



Introduction to Youth Advocacy

WORKSHOP INCLUDES:
Free downloadable worksheets

REGISTER TODAY:



WED. JAN 25, 2023
6:30 - 8PM

FREE Virtual Workshops

Join us for a workshop learning how to be an effective mentor.
Exclusive to individuals age 12+.

Francesca Reicherter, mental health advocate, speaker, author, and founder of Inspiring My Generation is presenting a workshop hosted by PSCFL to teach our youth how to advocate for their own and other's mental health

What we cover in the workshop:

- Self-Advocacy
- 5 Step Guide to Check in With Others
- Identifying Resources
- Your Role as an Advocate
- Developing an Advocacy Plan

This workshop was developed [in part] under grant number 1H79SM082663 from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The views, policies, and opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of SAMHSA or HHS.



For all registrants under the age of 18, a parental consent form must be submitted before attending. Each registered attendee will receive a free downloadable worksheet packet to follow along with the presentation, complete practice exercises, and keep as a resource

2022-2023 Training Offerings

Due to unforeseen circumstances we may reschedule a training. To reference the most up to date training information or register for a training, please visit the [training calendar](#).

CRPS/NCPS Exam Prep Study Session	3rd Friday of odd months from 3:30 - 5:00 pm EST 2nd Tuesday of even months from 6:30 - 8:00 pm EST	
Supervisory Skill Building Workshops	10/13/22, 10/27/22,TBD	1:00 pm - 2:30 pm EST
Supervision of Peer Based Recovery Support Services	11/1/22 - 11/2/22	9:00 am - 4:00 pm EST
Facilitator Development	11/14/22 - 11/15/22	9:00 am - 4:00 pm EST
Recovery Planning Communities of Practice	11/8/22, 2/7/23, 5/11/23	12:00 pm - 1:30 pm EST
Emotional CPR (eCPR)	12/6/22 - 12/7/22	9:00 am - 4:00 pm EST
The Role of Peer Specialists in Promoting Health Equity	1/19/23, 1/26/23, 2/9/23, 2/16/23, 3/2/23	1:00 pm - 2:30 pm EST
Peer Experience Certified Recovery Peer Specialist Training	1/23/23 - 1/27/23	9:00 am - 5:00 pm EST
Youth Introduction to Advocacy & Mentoring	1/25/22, 3/22/22	6:30 pm - 8:00 pm EST
Conversations About Mental Health for High School Students	2/8/2023	6:30 pm - 8:00 pm EST
Learning About Self-Talk & Coping Skills - Middle School	2/22/2023	6:30 - 8:00 pm EST
Peer Workshops	3/14/23 - 3/15/23	9:30 am - 4:30 pm EST
Certified Recovery Peer Specialist - Youth (CRPS-Y)	4/12/23 - 4/13/23	9:00 am - 5:00 pm EST
Learning to Love Yourself - 3rd - 5th Grade Youth	3/8/2023	6:30 - 7:30 pm EST

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Peer Support Coalition of Florida says Thanks for another amazing year!

*The work that we do couldn't be possible
without our incredible team or without
the support of YOU! Thanks for making
2022 an amazing and impactful year
and we look forward to what 2023 will
bring!*

*Sincerely,
The PSCFL Team :)*





WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!



What is your take on peer leadership?
What do you believe needs to happen for
more peers to become leaders? Send us
your thoughts!

If you are a peer entrepreneur or
intrapreneur within your organization, we
would appreciate the opportunity to
connect with you, book you for our
Entrepreneurship Speaker Series, and
even feature your organization in our
newsletter!

Give us a call at (877) 280-7337 or email us
at pentac@peersupportfl.org

KEEP UP WITH PENTAC!

- Sign up [here](#) to get PENTAC updates! Keep up to date with our newsletters and upcoming national trainings and events!
- Feel free to contact us at pentac@peersupportfl.org if you have any questions!