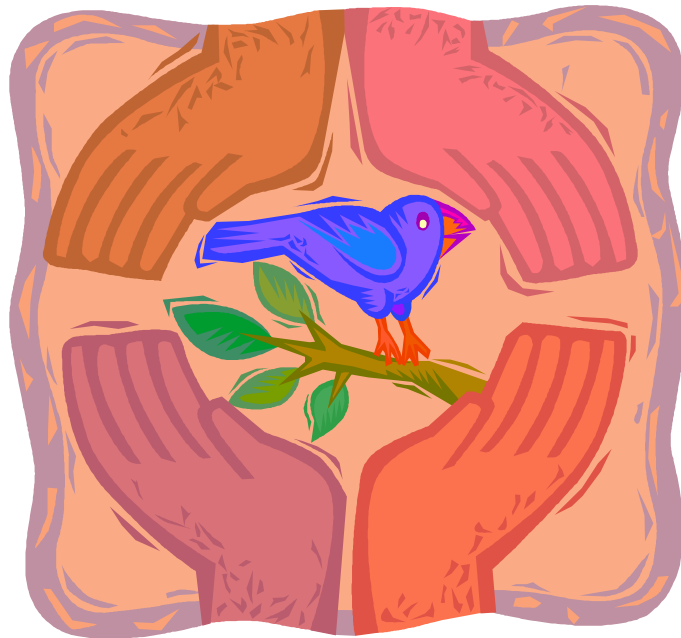


Family Peer Support Buddy Program



**Families of persons with a mental illness
helping one another**

Buddy Information Guide

Peer Support Buddy Information Guide

2005 Produced by the BC Schizophrenia Society on behalf of BC Partners for Mental Health and Addictions Information. Project Manager: Nicole Chovil, PhD, Director of Education, BC Schizophrenia Society; Writer/Researcher: Sophia Kelly, DVATI

BC Partners for Mental Health and Addictions Information is a collective of seven provincial mental health and addictions agencies working together. We represent the Anxiety Disorders Association of BC, Awareness and Networking Around Disordered Eating, British Columbia Schizophrenia Society, Canadian Mental Health Association BC Division, Centre for Addictions Research of BC, FORCE Society for Kids' Mental Health and the Mood Disorders Association of BC. Our reason for coming together is that we recognize that a number of groups need to have access to accurate, standard and timely information on mental health, mental disorders and addictions, including information on evidence-based services, supports and self-management.

Acknowledgements

The Family Support Buddy Toolkit was made possible through funding provided by the Provincial Health Services Authority.

The section on communication skills and portions of the section on boundaries in this guide is adapted with the generous permission of the 411 Seniors Centre Society.

Welcome to the Peer Support Buddy Program

Thank you for agreeing to help support other family members and friends of persons with mental illness.

In this binder you will find information that will help you to be an effective "Buddy". The sections on Communication Skills, Boundaries, Sharing Your Experience, Support VS Counselling, and Buddy Do's and Don's provide information on some of the skills and guidelines you will need. Please review these materials and ask your Program Coordinator if you have any questions about any of the content. The later sections provide information and resources that you can refer to when providing information to your "Match". Your Program Coordinator can also provide information on referrals to you or your Match. We hope you will find these materials useful.

Remember you don't need to be an expert or a professional counsellor to provide a listening ear. You already have all the qualifications you need, experience supporting a family member or friend who is ill. If you have any questions about this material or the program, or need help with anything to do with your match, please contact your Program Coordinator.

Program Phone Numbers

Program Coordinator:

Main office:

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Additional Resource: FAMILY TOOLKIT

The complete “How you Can Help – A Toolkit for Families” is available in pdf format at: <http://heretohelp.bc.ca/helpmewith/ftoolkit.shtml>

Communication Skills

Communication skills are essential to the role of Buddy.¹ The way we communicate forms the basis of our relationships with other people — the way others view us, respect us, feel toward us, expect us to act, trust or do not trust us, consider us as friends, etc. In a helping relationship, communication skills are absolutely crucial.

By understanding how effective communication works, by developing listening skills and practising helpful ways to respond, and by bringing to the helping relationship respect for other people's experiences and feelings, we enhance the chance for good communication and successful outreach work.

The Nature of Communication

All through our lives, we communicate: we speak, write, use body language, and thereby convey our thoughts, attitudes, and feelings. At the same time, we listen, observe, read, and learn about other people's thoughts, attitudes, and feelings.

Effective Communication

To communicate effectively means that the message a person wants to communicate is received as it was intended it to be received.

It is common for messages — and thus for people — to be misunderstood or misinterpreted. This happens because all people have special ways of expressing themselves, because a word or a gesture can mean different things to different people, there is often more left unsaid than is put in words, and also we are not always very attentive.

In a successful communication process, people feel understood, respected, and cared for. It is a positive experience. If the communication process is not successful, negative feelings are generated because at least one of the parties involved feels unheard or unconnected.

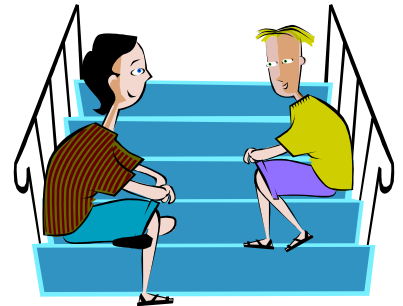
¹ The following section on communication skills is adapted with permission of the 411 Seniors Centre Society from the Seniors Outreach Counsellor Toolkit.

Elements of an Effective Communication Process

Attending: By being attentive we show the other person our involvement and interest as well as making sure that we are open to receive both verbal and non-verbal messages.

Attending attitudes include:

- Facing the other person squarely.
- Adopting an open posture (crossed arms or legs can be interpreted as defensiveness or withdrawal).
- Maintaining eye contact. Eye contact is a strong indicator of involvement.
- Assuming a relaxed attitude. This requires that we eliminate fidgeting behaviour that may suggest that we are preoccupied, nervous, or uncomfortable with the topic being discussed.



Listening: Listening is more than remaining silent when the other person speaks. Good listening is hard work.

The goal of a good listener is to arrive at some degree of shared understanding on the topic under discussion with the other person.

People under stress generally

- Need to talk.
- Need to be heard.
- Need to feel cared about.
- Need to feel a real connection with another person.



Listening is one of the greatest gifts we can give to another person, because it shows them that we care about them. Being listened to boosts the self-esteem of the person being listened to.

