Welcome to the 2018 January Newsletter

Happy New Year!

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Our webinar sponsors
Optum
http://www.optum.com
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Createus Media
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iNAPS 14th Annual Conference

Details Coming Soon

Please stay tuned. We are zeroing in on our dates for Fall 2018. Details, along with a call for proposals will be posted on the website and in upcoming announcements.

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**Announcing Webinar #33**

*with Chris Hansen, Director, Intentional Peer Support*

![Chris Hansen](image)

**Redefining Risk in Peer Support Relationships**

*February 16 Noon - 1:00pm EST*

**Join WebEx meeting**

*Meeting number (access code): 642 950 604*

*Meeting password: optum*

**Join by phone:**

*1-763-957-6300 US/Canada (Preferred) | Global call-in numbers*

*Can't join the meeting?*
Creating Hope in the New Year
Lisa St. George, Co-President and Co-Chair, iNAPS

I have heard many people voice their happiness that 2017 has come to an end. They state, “It was a hard year.” There were many sad times in 2017, there were tragedies. There were also some wonderful times in 2017. The way that people came together on many topics, marched in great numbers, held fast through opposition or moments that at multiple points moved to deadly violence. They continued to stand their ground. I also saw women stand one by one, two by two, and more as they said #metoo.

Women, men, adults, children, all races and nationalities and belief systems stood up and said, “I am here, I count, and I matter. I will not engage in hate. I will not stay silent about abuse. I refuse to close my eyes and pretend the issues that concern me will go away.” It felt like we all stood together as one body to support each other, accept and believe in each other and commit to change.

It felt like we met a crisis point in the USA at least, and decided to create and become part of a better world, a change. When we are challenged with hardships in our lives, we all get to a point where we find something must change. That is the point in time in which all things before us and within us stand open to molding, shifting, and changing. We take up that challenge and begin to develop new ways of looking at things, new ways of looking at ourselves, and identifying new choices we can make about our lives.

As we say goodbye to 2017, welcome 2018 as the year waiting for our wisdom, our love, our acceptance and appreciation for each other, our kindness, our hope! We are who we need to make the changes we want for ourselves and our world. Come from peace, come from possibility and look for beautiful ways forward in this New Year!
Replacing Judgment with Genuine Curiosity: How I have Created Safe Places

Martha Barbone, iNAPS Secretary

First, let me be very transparent – I am a judgmental person. I judge others and myself constantly. However, in the last few years, I have begun to notice when I am judging, and pause before I say or do anything...to consider:

“What about my worldview and life experiences have led me to think or act this way, and what is the worldview and life experience of the other person(s) that has led them to think or act another way?”

I still need to continually practice, but this process has greatly enhanced my ability to meet someone else where they are and be genuinely curious about what is going on for them and how I can be supportive, if they would like my support at all.

I have been able to use this basic approach in several groups to help create a safe place for other group members and myself. I am lucky to be a facilitator of an Alternatives to Suicide (AltSU) group that meets every week. Following the charter created by the Western Mass Recovery Learning Community, we mutually create an amazing space where we can talk about anything, be accepted for who we are and where we’re at in the moment. Our conversations stay private and we do not involve traditional clinical approaches or people. It has been truly rewarding when someone realizes for the first time that they are not alone in these thoughts, and they can speak freely without fear of how others will react. I am a facilitator, but the largest role I play is unlocking the door to the room we use in a community building. The rest of the time I am a group member. As a person who has had thoughts of self-harm and suicide for many years, finding a place to explore these thoughts instead of being told to change them or being locked up for expressing them has been the most important ingredient in my ongoing wellness journey.

I am also fortunate to be involved in the Hearing Voices Network (HVN). HVN incorporates the fundamental belief that there are many ways to understand the experience of hearing voices and other unusual or extreme experiences. It is part of an international collaboration between providers, people with lived experience, their families, and allies to develop an alternative approach to coping with emotional distress. This is empowering and useful, and does not start from the assumption that anyone is chronically ill or broken. In these groups we aim to support each other explore, understand, learn, and grow in a
way and time of each person’s choosing. Through participation I learned ways to talk to my own inner critic so that it no longer had so much impact in my life. By approaching my inner critic with genuine curiosity I am no longer just trying to think positive thoughts, which never really helped me. Now I can actually understand where that negative voice is coming from and can have a conversation and talk it through instead of just trying to shut it out.

I have been able to use this approach in a totally different environment in the Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP), facilitating collaborative group workshops in the prison system. Transforming power is at the core of AVP, each of us has the ability to transform any situation with our words or actions into a win-win scenario. Some of the values include listening before making judgments, being ready to revise your position if it is wrong, and building community based on honesty respect and caring. In the prison groups I have participated in, I have experience great growth and learning. Although this is not the same as the peer support I participate in as part of the behavioral health system, it truly aligns with our values. One important aspect of learning to look through a lens of genuine curiosity is also learning that I can dislike someone’s behavior, but that doesn’t mean I dislike the person. An AVP participant said the following:

“After being released in 1989, I found myself in need of a new family. AVP became my secondary family. It allowed me to give back to people... to share my experience, my feelings, my life.”

If you are looking for a way to expand your skills in peer support, I highly recommend looking into this program.

More information:
Alternatives to Suicide - http://www.westernmassrlc.org/alternatives-to-suicide
Hearing Voices Network USA - http://www.hearingvoicesusa.org
Alternatives to Violence Project - https://avpusa.org

Finding Our Way Home
Larry Burg

Greetings to all my fellow Peers, and the other professionals who believe in us and support us.

This article is the first in a series of articles in the newsletter explaining how being employed in the world’s largest care system brings me joy. In spite of the issues within our care system, the VA and it’s Peer Support Specialist workforce is helping to transform our system from the medical model, to a more balanced, Veteran-centered, and recovery-focused model.
I am currently employed with the VA HUD-VASH program in Madison, Wisconsin. All of the Veterans I serve are currently homeless. Some of them have been homeless for over a decade. It’s very hard work and I am honored to be a part of the VA system of care.

We employ Honorably discharged men and women. Veteran status is mandatory to even apply for the position. I myself am a Navy Veteran. As a group, we are the highest compensated Peers and the biggest Peer workforce employed, close to 1,300 strong.

By far the coolest and most joyful part of my job is bringing the light of hope and recovery into some very, very dark places. Hearing Veterans tell their stories about falling on hard times is heart wrenching. It is heart wrenching to listen as they describe how those hard times have affected their families, too. But I get to look each and every one of them in the eye, and tell them that I have hope for their future. I watch them begin to trust again, and I work with them alongside the HUD-VASH professional staff to find them safe, permanent housing. There are 10 of us on our team and I am also honored to work with eight awesome case managers. Two of us are Peer Support Specialists and our role on the team is respected and valued.

Two of us are Peer Support Specialists and our role on the team is respected and valued. We all believe in housing first which means everyone deserves the opportunity for safe housing. To watch a Veteran make eye contact with me when I tell them that I believe in them and they are the one that is being empowered to make choices about who they are and what the future brings their way is why I do what I do. I will be by their side encouraging them to find their way home. Hope is a beautiful thing! Our program challenges Veterans to do the work. We do not do the work for them. Peer support believes that we will help you become housed. If we do it for you we are getting in the way of your recovery.

To watch the process is amazing. To see a Veteran have a landlord hand them the keys to a house or apartment fills my heart with gratitude for the services provided by Veterans for our country and proud of the services Peer Support provides the Veteran.

Larry Burg has 35 years in recovery from a mental health diagnosis, and 25 years clean from drugs and alcohol. Prior to his work with the VA, he was employed for 32 years with the Wisconsin Prison system. He is a husband to a beautiful wife, a father of seven (six step children), and a grandfather of three (so far).
Announcements:

World Federation For Mental Health’s
International Trauma Summit
November 28 - 30, 2018
Houston, TX

Join WFMH for the International Summit on Trauma in Houston on Nov 27-30, 2018 to begin a dialogue about trauma policy recommendations for countries and International NGOs (Non Governmental Agencies or non-profits). And we will develop a call to action on the last day.

EXCITING NEW FUNDING OPPORTUNITY!

Mini-grants of $500 are now available for groups interested in organizing public events that share the power and diversity of the Hearing Voices movement in the USA.

Applications are due by March 30th, 2018. Contact Caroline Mazel-Carlton at Caroline@westernmassrlc.org for submissions or questions.

SAVE THE DATE:

Mental Health National Youth Convergence

August 6-8th 2018 in Washington, DC
Berkeley University of California: Call for Research Participants

Do you currently work as a peer support provider?

If so, your perspective on work-related stress is needed.

Peer Specialists Research Participants

Ready to get started?
For more info, check out:
www.peer-stress-survey.com

Do You Know about Able? You might want to!

www.ablencr.org

The Stephen Beck, Jr. Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Act of 2014 allows those with disabilities to save for qualified disability expenses without the risk of losing their benefits from assistance programs like SSI and Medicaid.

For more information,
please see www.ablencr.org for details!
Peer Newsletters and Updates

The Peer Respite Directory

Help Live & Learn, Inc. update its peer respite directory. Live & Learn is a consumer-run and woman-owned social enterprise that provides research, technical assistance, and knowledge translation services to behavioral health system stakeholders. Please check us out, and while you’re at it, sign up for news and more here!

Stay current and up to date by signing up for:

The Key Update

The Key Update focuses on late-breaking news and notes on important mental health and human rights issues.

Click here to view the latest issue of

The Key Update - January 2018

The Peer Leadership Center is a clearinghouse and point of connection for Peer Specialists. Click here for the latest news and upcoming events in the Peer Leadership Center.

The Café TA is one of five national technical assistance centers; providing training, and resources to facilitate the restructuring of the mental health system through effective consumer directed approaches for adults with serious mental illnesses across the country. Click here for the latest news and training offered through the Café TA: cafetacenter.net.
Join iNAPS
To join online and pay by credit card, or to download an application and pay by check, go to:

http://www.inaops.org/join-us/

What’s In It for Members?

There’s a lot in store for members this year. We’re in the process of updating communication, website, and social media platforms. Members will enjoy connecting and contributing to iNAPS through multiple channels via the website, including professional member profiles, and targeted discussion boards. We are also strengthening our use of social media like Facebook and Twitter to grow a community of peer support with members.

Members Also Receive significant discounts for the annual conference.

Members also receive continuing education certificates when they participate in the monthly webinars sponsored by Optum. These webinars are open to anyone, but only members earn certificates.
About iNAPS

The **International Association of Peer Supporters (iNAPS)** is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that promotes emerging and best practices in peer support and peer workforce development.

We send regular newsletters and updates to our members and free email subscriber list of 5000, hold webinars on topics requested by peer supporters, and host an internationally-attended conference that brings together people from all aspects of the peer workforce.

This year marks the 12th annual conference devoted to the peer support workforce and champions of the peer support movement. This year’s conference details will be announced soon.

**Our Mission**

Our mission is to grow the profession by promoting the inclusion of peer supporters throughout healthcare systems worldwide. We learn together and grow in our ability to:

- Demonstrate compassion and hope
- Understand
- Expect more and encourage the next step
- Increase acceptance of those with mental health, substance use, or trauma experiences in their communities of choice
- Increase awareness of the benefits of hiring peer support providers

**Our Vision**

Our vision is to make peer support services an option for anyone who needs the compassion and understanding of someone who has been there.

**Our Values**

Our values come from 98% nationwide approval of twelve core ethical values of peer support that were compiled and distributed by iNAPS founder Steve Harrington in 2013. To download a free copy of the National Practice Guidelines from the iNAPS website: [https://na4ps.files.wordpress.com/2012/09/nationalguidelines1.pdf](https://na4ps.files.wordpress.com/2012/09/nationalguidelines1.pdf)