Peer Support

“Words cannot accurately capture the deep level of understanding and support one feels when you find people who ‘get’ you. When you share stories about overcoming misunderstandings of who you are based on your race, gender, and disability with people who have had identical situations in their own lives, it validates your experiences and existence.”
– Vilissa Thompson, disability advocate

Introduction

The Peer Support session is the second in the Community Living Skills workshop.

The session encourages participants to think about peers as a resource, and how their relationship with their peers is a way to receive and provide support that will help them feel like they are a part of a community.

Content Summary

Introduction: Definitions and possible outcomes of peer support

Benefits of Peer Support: Positive feelings, activities to practice sharing thoughts and listening, exploring options, problem solving with peers, exploring possible peer relationships, and limits of peer support

Finding support: Types of peer support, choosing peers
Learning Objectives

Workshop participants can learn what a peer is and is not, how they might benefit from peer support, where to find peers, and how to identify people in their life who may already be a peer.

Disability Community Partnership Shaped Content

Many participants who are new to independent living may struggle with the general concept of why building relationships with people with similar life experiences can be of benefit, versus relying solely on professionals, family members and other people in their life they view as authorities. There is also often confusion on the difference between friend relationships and peer relationships, even though they may overlap.

The Peer Support session was shaped by HCL project partners through an iterative participatory curriculum development (IPCD) process. In the pilot phase, participants suggested changes to the program, such as increased time on sharing discussions, that helped both the Peer Support session’s flow and also set the stage for participants to connect over the following weeks of the workshop.

Facilitators reported that while taking the Peer Support session, their group “bonded” and it was a “great example of peer support.” In another group, a participant discovered that he “wanted a peer group” and realized that he “had a lot to share.”