



Doors to Wellbeing Quarterly

# Newsletter

## TAKING ACTION ON EARLY WARNING SIGNS: A PERSONAL STORY

The nature of self-care is that there is no external validation from society that you are doing something of value. Hence the tendency to relinquish self-care as a rite of passage to work hard is a historical trend. Unfortunately, some of my career success has been built upon the self-made premise that I show up consistently even when I don't feel well. Granted sometimes I feel better if I just get out the door and push through morning malaise but other times it is more distinct, and this is where I lack awareness.

Awareness of Early Warning Signs has been a struggle for me. My awareness is further complicated by medication side effects. Any person that has had the experience of taking psychotropic medications knows that there are almost always unpleasant and sometimes, debilitating side effects. Unfortunately, too often one is required to tolerate negative side effects for a period of time before you can even expect to have positive effects and benefits from taking the medications.

I seek to define a balance between sitting with a reasonable amount of discomfort and clearly taking action when Early Warning Signs appear. For me, the distinction between the two is found in the long-term benefit. Consistently ignoring subtle signs of fatigue and anxiety without taking restorative action and appropriate rest usually results in a crash for me. It is commonplace when you look around at fellow coworkers or community members to buy into a collective feeling of malaise.



**Article written by Eric Larson,  
Peer Support Specialist and  
Copeland Center Facilitator**

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Another interesting self-observation I have made is that if I have too much rest I stagnate and miss other forms of energy input like being in the company of good people who have a common cause. My peer supporter and I have had conversations philosophizing about how to maintain effectiveness in relation to the big complex picture. I have a tendency to be paralyzed by the trauma of past experiences. Especially when being needed to perform while lacking needed energy.

One tool for me is holding a vision of where I am heading while focusing on one step at a time versus focusing on all the details and complexities of the whole journey to the point of feeling overwhelmed and discouraged. Mainly the interplay between the concepts of Taking Action for Whole Health and Wellbeing (Hope, Self-determination, Empowerment, Education Self-Advocacy, Community Inclusion, and Building Support,) often results in an unexpected faith for me that in the long term, things really can turn out OK if I just take a step at a time and plan according to my vision for wellness accordingly.

**"Early warning signs are internal and may or may not arise in reaction to stressful situations. These are subtle signs of change that are often hard to detect and often overlooked. They are those times when you know you are not feeling quite right. . . . If you teach yourself to recognize these signs and take some action before they get worse, you can often prevent more serious difficulties." -Taking Action: A Mental Health Recovery Self-Help Educational Program. (p 111)**

What are some on your early warning signs?

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What are some action plans you can use when you experience an early waning sign?

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**Check out SAMHSA's Taking Action: A Mental Health Recovery Self-Help Educational Program (HHS Pub. No. 14-4857) and Action Planning for Prevention and Recovery (SMA-3720)**

# ANNOUNCING A NEW RESOURCE FOR PEER SPECIALISTS, SUPERVISORS, EMPLOYERS, POLICY MAKERS, AND ALLIES!



Temple University  
**Collaborative**  
On Community Inclusion of Individuals with Psychiatric Disabilities

**Temple University Collaborative on Community Inclusion is hosting a new resource on their website!**

Following more than six years of participatory action activities at peer support workforce conferences, three researchers and practitioners with lived experience, Jeremy Reuling, Rita Cronise, and Jessica Wolf, have developed this agenda identifying **ten peer support workforce priorities with recommendations for action** based on what they heard from members of the workforce.

## Top Ten Priorities: An Action Agenda

1	<u>Value peer specialists' roles and perspectives as disruptive innovators; empower peer specialists as essential drivers of systemic change throughout human services.</u>
2	<u>Raise peer specialist wages to equivalence with comparable supportive and service roles, considering cost of living in different geographic areas.</u>
3	<u>Increase the number of, and respect for, peer specialist jobs, fields of practice, and roles throughout the human services sector.</u>
4	<u>Intentionally create and promote career opportunities for members of historically marginalized communities, including BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ communities.</u>
5	<u>Establish designated funding for the creation of supervisory and advanced leadership roles for peers, not dependent on having advanced degrees or another license, certificate, or similar credential.</u>
6	<u>Expand training opportunities for peer specialists to build skills in supervision, management, and leadership.</u>
7	<u>Assure that all peer specialists are supervised by a person who either identifies as a peer themselves or has extensive training in peer values and practices.</u>
8	<u>Provide trauma-informed workplaces, as well as trauma-informed services.</u>
9	<u>Elevate and emphasize wellness as a necessary component in successful workplaces; grant peer specialists time and resources to support their personal wellness needs.</u>
10	<u>Increase opportunities for peer specialists to develop technological skills and provide resources necessary to utilize and access tools for providing telehealth support.</u>

**YOU CAN ACCESS THE TOP TEN PRIORITIES:  
ACTION AGENDA HERE!**

# JOIN US IN THIS SELF-REFLECTION ACTIVITY ON THE ART OF SELF-DISCLOSURE!

*From DHS of Illinois Manual for Certified Peer Specialists - Self-Disclosure*

Positive Self-Disclosure Best Practices		1	2	3
1	Carry a message of hope.			
2	Identify and describe the supports that promote your recovery and resilience.			
3	Share with a purpose. Self-disclose when the example makes a good point and benefits the person served.			
4	Briefly share challenges.			
5	Identify and describe "turning points" – when what seemed impossible became possible.			
6	Share success stories – your strengths, strategies, and tools used on your recovery journey.			
7	Avoid traumatic stories and graphic details of illness.			
8	Offer choices and options, not final answers – what is right for you is not necessarily right for the individual receiving services.			
9	Listen more than you share. Create plenty of space for the person to share about him/herself.			
10	Share with co-workers and/or at team meetings to bring understanding, insight and hope.			
11	Share your story in certain ways based on who is listening (an educational presentation on what it is like to live with a mental illness would be different than a hope story shared with an individual).			
12	Practice general sharing focused on providing hope and direction toward recovery.			

Self-scoring:

1 = Not doing this well

2 = Doing ok but still room for improvement

3 = Doing this well

## Peer Specialist Webinar Series

**Join us for our monthly webinars - last Tuesday of each month!**

**Click here to view our webinars**



DOORS TO  
WELLBEING

**LOOK FORWARD  
TO OUR NEXT  
NEWSLETTER!  
...JANUARY 2025**



*Doors to To Wellbeing is a Program of  
the Copeland Center*

**Copeland Center**  
FOR WELLNESS AND RECOVERY

This newsletter was developed under grant number 1H79SM082653-01 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.