

Purpose and Connection In Action



ALTERNATIVES TO
SUICIDE APPROACH



Cindy Hadge



HEARING VOICES
NETWORK
USA



Voices, Visions & Other Unusual or Extreme Experiences



Psychosis ? ?

I reached a point in my life when I could no longer bear reality, and in my struggle to make sense of the senseless, I become lost. I was told to believe in a reality that did not match what my heart, mind, soul and body knew to be true. Research has shown that this can be a necessary and protective response to trauma. The effect was that the only certainty I had was that impending doom would be my constant companion in a hostile world. In my efforts to find a path upon which some piece of myself could survive, my soul was shattered and contorted. When I sought help, instead of finding care for and understanding of my own true self, my identity was stolen by diagnosis.

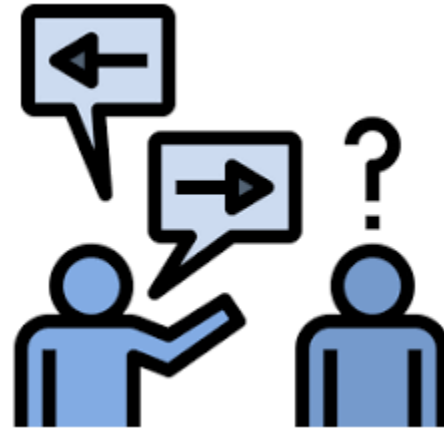


Andelka Jovanovic

WHAT IS MY PURPOSE?

CARE WITH HUMAN CONNECTION

- Empathy
- Integrity
- Growth
- Equity
- Connection



- Containment
- Control
- Compliance
- Coercion
- Correction



The **Wildflower Alliance** (home of the Western Mass Recovery Learning Community) supports healing and empowerment for our broader communities and people who have been impacted by psychiatric diagnosis, trauma, extreme states, homelessness, problems with substances, and other life-interrupting challenges through:

Peer-to-peer support & genuine human relationships

- Alternative healing practices
- Learning opportunities
- Advocacy

Essential to our work is recognizing and undoing systemic injustices such as racism, sexism, ableism, transphobia, transmisogyny and psychiatric oppression.

WHAT IS THE “WILDFLOWER ALLIANCE”?

World Health Organization Guidance on the Importance of Rights-Based Approaches Features The Hearing Voices Groups

On June 10, 2021, The World Health Organization released new 'Guidance on Community Mental Health Services' recognizing Hearing Voices Support Groups as one of a few dozen worldwide examples of key rights-based approaches. Other approaches recognized included:

Peer Respite <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9x8h3LvEB04&t=146s>

Soteria House <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UXe2dgBF70w>

Open Dialogue <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NID3Xcri2yo>

And More!

<https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240025707>





Hearing Voices Network

for people who hear voices, see visions or have other unusual perceptions

Seeing

Smell

Taste

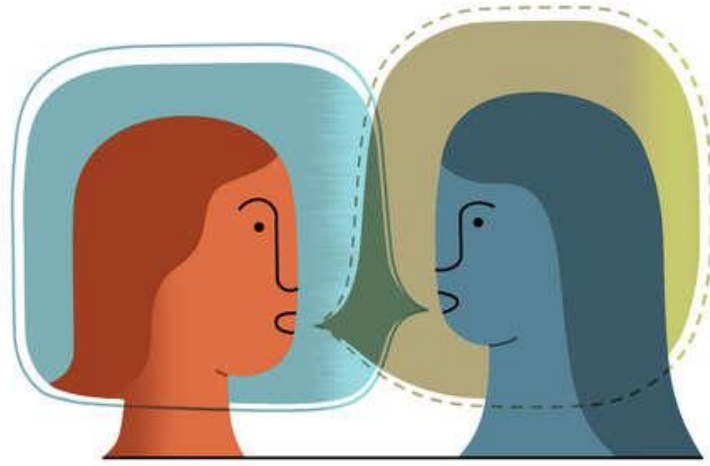
Hearing

Touch

Etc...

- Values that incorporate a fundamental belief that there are many ways to understand hearing voices.
- A collaboration between people who have had these experiences themselves, friends and family members, professional supporters, and other allies to create a space to talk openly about voices, visions and more, without the assumption that anyone is sick or has an illness.

Hearing
Voices
Network
Movement
USA



Hearing voices makes sense in relation to personal life experiences...



...the problem is not hearing voices itself, but the difficulty with navigating the experience.

General Strategies

- Acknowledging that the experience is REAL and meaningful.
- Look for the metaphor/meaning and or feeling conveyed by the experience and not needing to take them literally or do what they say.
- Talking with people:
 - Particularly those who have similar experiences and who have learned to manage and integrate it
 - Particularly in a safe (judgement free, non fear based, non pathologizing) place.



One in Ten People Hear Voices at some point in their lives...Research shows “good copers”:



Feel themselves to be stronger than their voices.



Communicate more often about and to their voices.



Set limits and listen selectively to their voices.



Use fewer distraction techniques.

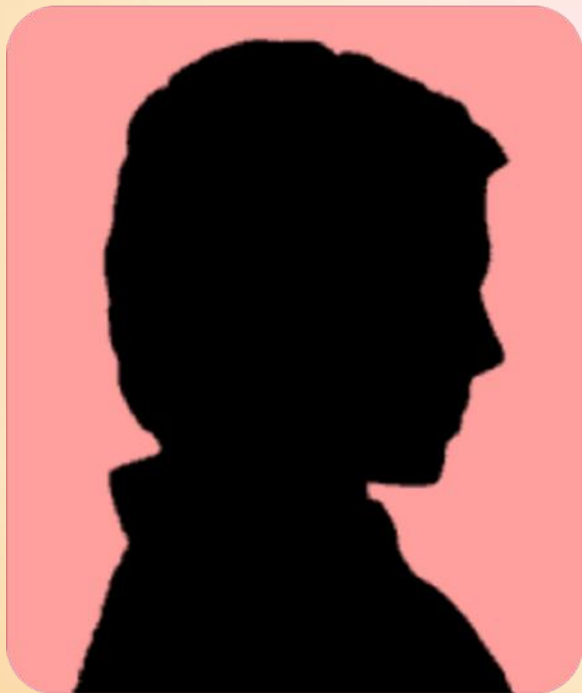


Many frameworks work equally well (with one exception...)

Romme & Eschur



From Helping to Learning Together
From Individual to Relationship
From Fear to Hope & Possibility

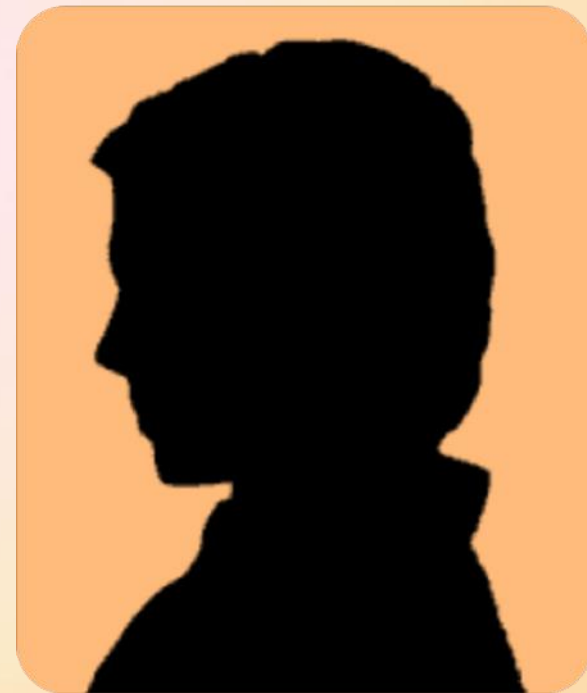


Connection

Worldview

Mutuality

Moving Towards



FROM FEAR TO HOPE & POSSIBILITY

Fear-based
relationships are
about what's

WRONG

Hope-based
relationships are
about what's

POSSIBLE

Credit: Created by Intentional Peer Support in collaboration with Wildflower Alliance

FROM INDIVIDUAL TO RELATIONSHIP

Focus on the INDIVIDUAL



Focus on the RELATIONSHIP

One person needs to change

We all change

Particular goals and outcomes are assumed

We risk honesty, openness and courage

Conversations are on fixing and problem-solving

No one person or thing is 'the problem'

Focus on what we need to do about a specific person

Everyone's needs matter and should be considered

Co-learning doesn't often happen

Learning together is possible

Adapted from slide created by Intentional Peer Support in collaboration with Wildflower Alliance

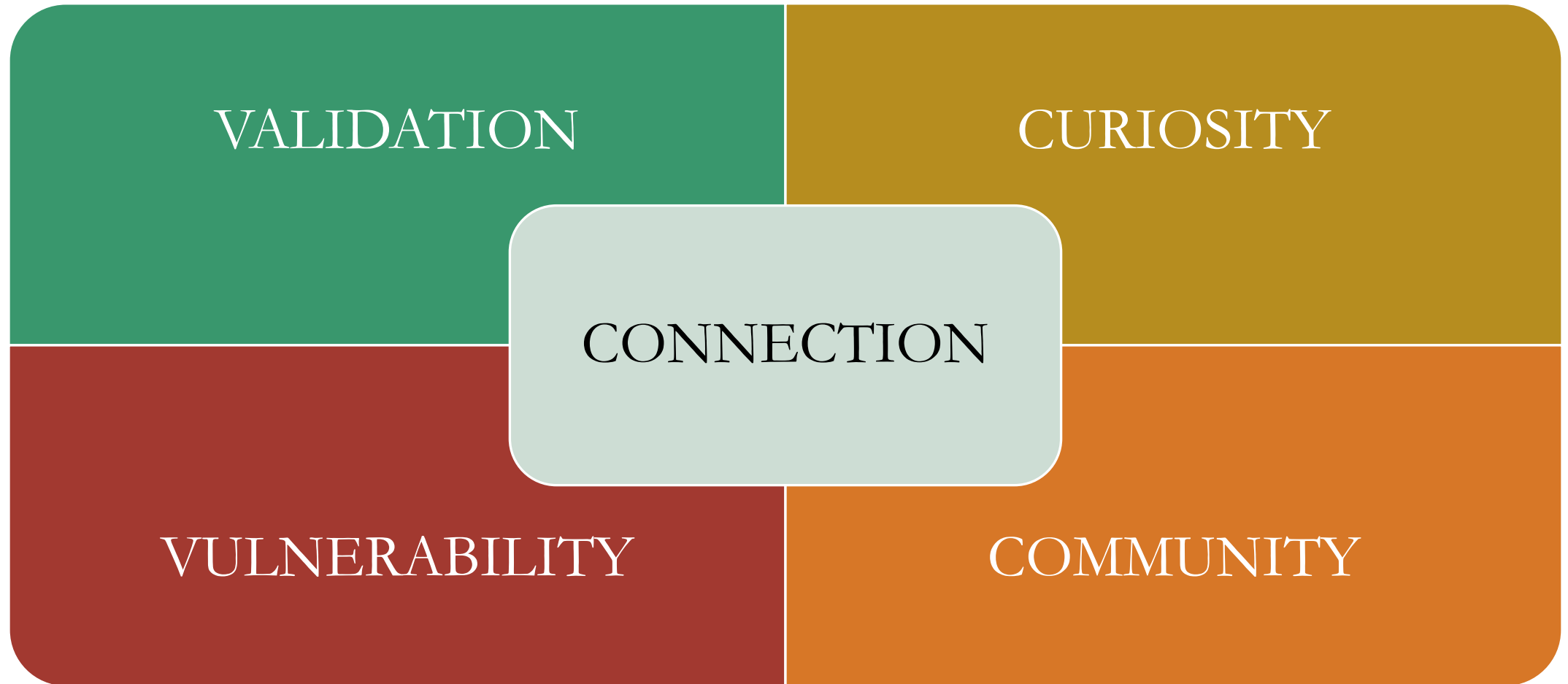
Power-With & Acknowledging Trauma

- Inviting someone to share experiences in their own words
- Being transparent about power differentials
- Being open about limits
- Recognizing and acknowledging the impact of systemic and ongoing trauma: such as racism, classism, sexism, able-ism, psychiatric oppression and other forms of marginalization.



Adapted from slide created by Intentional Peer Support in collaboration with Wildflower Alliance

IF CONNECTION is the DESTINATION... HOW DO WE GET THERE?



Adapted from image created by Leo Rhodanthe

Partnering Approach	The Goal
Validation	I see you. I accept you as you are. I am here to partner with you.
Curiosity (respectful)	I value your individual story. I see you as whole human being (not a case number or a label). I care about the context of your life and this moment. Check assumptions.
Vulnerability	I am also a whole human being with my own strengths and limits, including the limits of my role.
Community	We are not alone. Our connection exists in wider community. Share resources, encourage and help identify a broader network of support.

LET'S MAKE A P.A.C.T.

Pause for a moment: To consider how to respond instead of reacting.

Avoid assumptions: Be curious. Assumptions and negative responses can move things from distressing, disruptive or destructive to dangerous.

Consider everyone's needs: Is there a way to address everybody's needs and concerns?

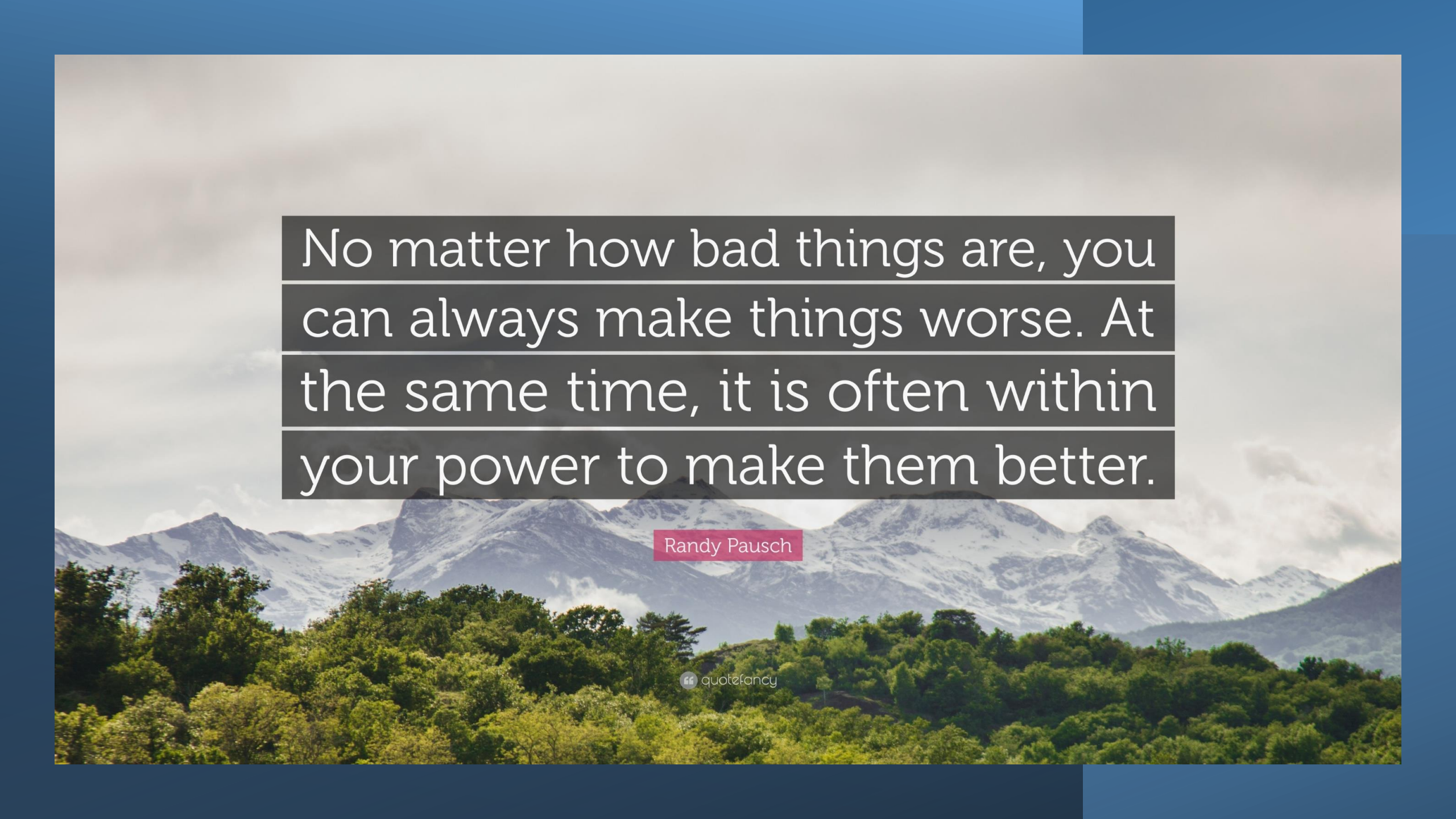
Together, we partner: Explore options together. There are almost always multiple possibilities and partnering is a better way to identify them.

The 4 D's



- Is this Distressing?
- Is this Disruptive?
- Is this Destructive?
- Is this Dangerous?

Adapted from Soteria VT – 3 D's



No matter how bad things are, you
can always make things worse. At
the same time, it is often within
your power to make them better.

Randy Pausch



Angry person

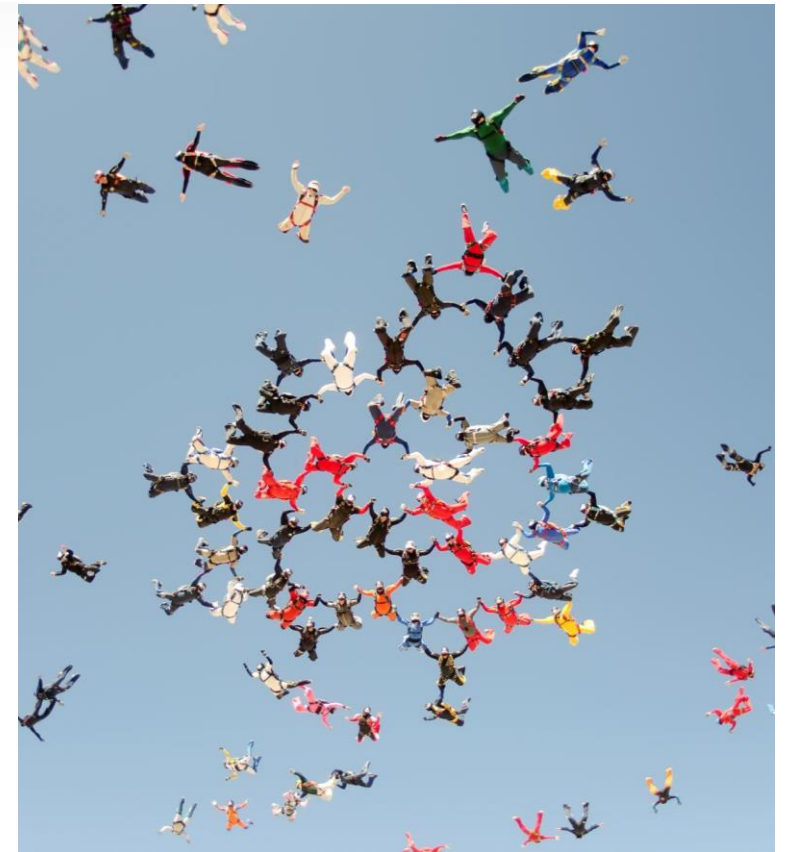
Partnering to move through fear

- **If this is dangerous – what will help to decrease the danger, what will increase the danger?**
 - Turning “f” you into “f” this.
 - Identify the feeling instead of arguing this facts.
 - Fear can be shared and so can calm.
 - Modeling calming techniques, modeling expressing feelings.
 - And consider the impact to the Relationship.
- **Build trust and be flexible about forms of communication**



Partnering versus Power Over

- **Honor Multiple Truths-** How does the person you are supporting understand their experiences? What are their fears, identifying emotions and beliefs Nothing ends a conversation quicker than “You’re wrong!”
- **Build connection** - Relate to the feelings.
- **Build on Strengths** – Instead of being deficit based.
- **Curiosity** – Asking open-ended questions keeps the lines of communication open – judgment or agenda-driven questioning can shut it down. Where do those beliefs, feelings and messages come from? What would feel supportive?
- **Support Meaning-Making-** Be willing to explore the metaphor and context of the experience.
- **Transparency, choice and information**





Much of the time we only hear the told story, the tip of the iceberg. Can we be curious about what is beneath?

Adapted from slide created by Intentional Peer Support in collaboration with Wildflower Alliance

Looking for Meaning in Metaphors

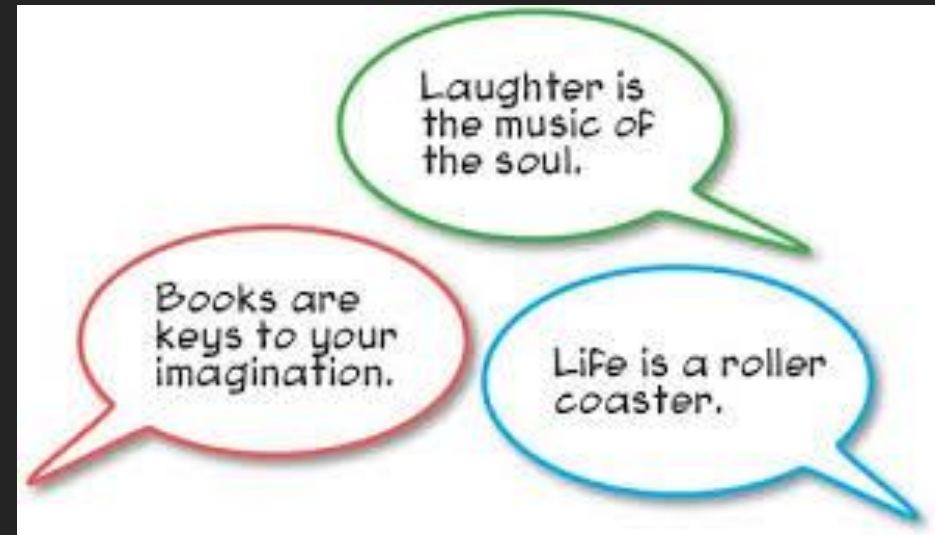
I have a voice telling me to kill
myself

The Doctor on this unit is an agent

My parents are vampires, but not
the evil kind

This is war

It is a bee



Maastricht Interview



- Developed by Marius Romme, Sandra Escher and Patsy Hage.
- A tool that supports people understanding their experience in the context of their life.
- Sometimes used in clinical settings.

When did you start hearing voice and were there any major life events that happened in the preceding year? **What do your voices say and have you heard those messages before in your life?** **Where do YOU think your voices come from?** What time of day do you hear them? **Etc...**

Common Challenges Within Families

The focus is on the identified patient versus a focus on relationships and the needs of all the family members.

Parents feeling judged, guilty, shamed, and isolated.

Their loved one feeling judged, shamed, and isolated.

Parents feeling a responsibility **for** instead of **to** their loved one

Power struggles, between family members and between family members and providers.

Fear and fear-based responses instead of curiosity and negotiation.

Grief and loss

Concern being perceived as aggression

Secrets (wrapped up in shame and guilt and fault finding)

Competing Needs and narratives

Exhaustion

Healing Relationships

Can support Feelings and experiences of:



- Finding inner strength and wisdom.
- Gaining perspective and moving through shame and guilt.
- Finding voice and meaning – ending silence.
- Finding value and purpose.
- Learning new possibilities .
- Having new kinds of relationships and building trust.

8 GENERAL SUPPORT PRINCIPLES

- 1. Develop a bigger support team whenever possible.** Sometimes you'll be the best person to offer support and other times you'll be the worst, the power imbalances are too big and having someone else step in makes the most sense. Who else does the person have or want to get on their connection list. Sometimes it is not a person, but a place, an activity, a pet. Can we support more possibility for connection.
- 2. Know your intentions but avoid strict agendas:** Care with Human Connection.
- 3. If you can't find a way to help, seek ways to minimize harm:** *"Help isn't help if it doesn't help"* (Credit: Pat Deegan). Try to take an honest look at the impact you're having on a situation and adjust accordingly. Sometimes the best we can do is seek not to make things worse, and/or envision possibilities that could help even if those possibilities aren't accessible right now.
- 4. Have faith that growth and healing are possible:** They may not look like what you think or want them to, but growth and healing are possible for everyone.
- 5. Identify and offer what's sustainable:** We all have limits and if we consistently push ourselves beyond them, there will almost certainly be a point at which we hit a breaking point. For example, if you can help financially up to a point, try to be clear about what's too much. Being real about what your limits are can actually help you to stay in relationship.
- 6. Own your own limits:** This isn't just about stating limits, but also owning that they are yours. I want to understand what you are saying, but I can not understand what you are saying when you are yelling.
- 7. Small changes are huge:** Think harm reduction. For example, suicidal thoughts may not stop, but learning to have more power over them can be life-saving. Honor how far someone has come more than how far you want them to go. Build on progress instead of measuring by deficit.
- 8. Normal isn't normal:** Rigid ideas about what is 'normal' have often done more harm in good in society. Challenging social norms and expectations are often essential parts of a healing process. Normal is relative.

PROTECTIVE FACTORS MEANING, PURPOSE AND CONNECTION

- **Future plans – something to look forward to, to work towards**
- **Accepting relationships**
- **Opportunities for belonging**
- **Opportunities to practice naming and expressing feelings**
- **Calming, soothing strategies**

MORE
PROTECTIVE
FACTORS
MEANING,
PURPOSE AND
CONNECTION

- **Choice/power**
- **Addressing feelings of shame and guilt**
- **Opportunities and support to “tell” addressing secrecy and shame.**
- **Redefining success**
- **Mirroring back strength**

THE POSITIVE POTENTIAL POWER OF FAMILY

Connection

Timeline

Awareness of the here and now

Positive messages

Calm and creative constructive imagination

Context

Model being aware of emotions and expressing them

To hold a vision of possibility

To be an advocate

ADVOCACY

- Promoting Informed Consent
- Sharing rights and information with the person receiving services.
- Amplifying the Voice of the person receiving services
- Being a witness
- Making sure the whole person is seen and is not reduced to a diagnosis
- Gathering information
- Documenting services
- Can include advocating for different options/services.

Neuro Feedback
Somatic Therapy
Internal Family Systems
And other clinical
approaches
Sports and Exercise
Acupuncture
Binaural beats
Nutritional approaches
Expressive Arts

Working animals, pets,
horses ect
Proactively releasing
Anger
Hearing Voices Groups
Dialoguing with voices
Intentional Peer Support

And more possibilities – key is the context
of a healing relationship

Spiritual and cultural
Practices for example:

- Reiki
- Prayer/chants/mantras
- meditation
- Rituals
- Singing Dancing and
Shaking a rattle

POSSIBILITIES BEYOND “WE HAVE TRIED EVERYTHING”

Transformation

If harm happens in relationships, can healing happen through **relationships**?

Finding

- ❖ Meaning
 - ❖ Purpose
 - ❖ Connection
- And
- ❖ Trust
 - ❖ Love



artist [Anđelka Jovanović](#)

Mitigating the Impact of Trauma

- Being seen heard and validated.
- Being part of my rescue.
- Locating my power.
- Resources
- Addressing shame and guilt

QUESTIONS?

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<https://wildfloweralliance.org/>

<https://www.hearingvoicesusa.org/>

<https://www.intervoiceline.org>

<https://www.intentionalpeersupport.org>

<https://www.youtube.com/@WildflowerAlliance>

Beyond Possible: How The Hearing Voices Approach Transforms Lives

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qk5juEgiloY&t=1s>

