

# PSPG PEER SUPPORT NEWSLETTER

August 2022

Happy August Everyone! In this edition of our Peer Support Newsletter, we will be discussing an up-and-coming Resiliency Summit, meeting a peer supporter, and gaining some new coping mechanisms.



Self-talk is very important and can be quite beneficial. However, if done in a negative way, it can be damaging. Sometimes our brains don't process certain words correctly. For instance, if someone said "Don't think of a pink elephant," you probably thought of a pink elephant. "Don't" can actually be interpreted as "Do" in your brain. Therefore, instead of saying "Don't" to yourself, leave that word out and say something you wish for. If you are trying to tell yourself to not eat candy for instance, avoid "Don't eat the candy." Instead try, "Eat the fruit."

**"You don't have to do it all by yourself"**

As we reflect on the year to date, we remember those who we lost. This year has been mentally, physically, and emotionally draining not only with day-to-day duties, but with unfortunate events that have occurred. The first responder family has lost many and it is through these hard times we see Peer Support is more important than ever. It is hard to cope with sadness that impacts you from not only a work level, but personal as well. In these trying times, we encourage you to surround yourself with people you love and who support you no matter how tough the situation is. Reach out to a Peer Supporter if you feel the need to speak with someone who can relate based on job duties, environment, etc. We also encourage you to check in with people regularly. A simple, "How are you doing" can go a long way. Be there for one another always, but especially through these hard times. Be kind to yourself as you find your way through the grieving process. Reach out when you need someone to talk to.



Listen now on Spotify, Amazon Music, and iHeart Radio!

# ACTIVE LISTENING SKILLS

There are 8 different active listening skills that are key to being a successful peer supporter. These skills help you not only hear what your peer is expressing, but it builds empathy with them because you are actively listening and being engaging. The 8 skills are:

1. Minimal Encouragers
2. Open -Ended Questions
3. Reflecting/Mirroring
4. Effective Pauses
5. Paraphrasing
6. "I" Statements
7. Emotional Labeling
8. Summarizing

Let's break down what **Reflecting/Mirroring** is. This is when you take the last portion of someone's statement and turn it into a question. For example, if someone states, "Today has been awful," you can respond with "Awwful?" It invites the speaker to elaborate on what they truly mean. Or "Last night I went out and had some fun." Respond with, "Had some fun?" It's a great way to show you are truly invested by taking their words and giving them right back.

## Meet A Peer Supporter

We asked Los Lunas Firefighter  
Sammy Sierra

Why he Chose to Become a Peer Supporter:



I became a fire fighter because I wanted to be part of a team and ultimately, help people. Being part of the Los Lunas Fire Department (LLFD) allowed me to realize those goals and experience the fulfillment that comes from serving individuals in their time of need. While I didn't realize it at the time, my journey of helping others was far from over. Shortly after joining the LLFD, I was asked to attend a Metro Peer Support Team meeting. I was identified by leadership as someone who may be a good fit for the Peer Support program. In order to learn more, I was asked to attend a meeting and report back to my department. I immediately recognized the importance of peer support and enrolled in training shortly after. I was able to utilize my new skills right away, within our department to support my team after difficult calls. Word about my new role spread and I learned our local Dispatchers were also in need of support after difficult calls, so I began reaching out to them as well. Currently I have the privilege of serving local first responders and dispatchers. Even after employees leave the Village of Los Lunas, they continue to call me, when needed. I believe I am a safe place when they are feeling vulnerable. This is especially important for fire fighters who are trained to remain calm under pressure and are often expected to be strong, making it hard to show vulnerability. For that reason, Peer Support is a necessity that is often neglected or overlooked. I consider it a privilege to have the opportunity to support the heroes of our community.



# Join us October 11<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> for our first annual Public Safety Resiliency Summit!

For more information, please visit [www.pspg-nm.com/resiliency-summit](http://www.pspg-nm.com/resiliency-summit)

The last two years have been difficult for people across the country. Physical illness has been a constant issue and mental health related struggles are up 200%. Our first responders have been tasked with providing the safety net that keeps this crisis from completely overwhelming our cities, counties, and states.

- According to the nonprofit organization Blue HELP, 64 law enforcement officers in the United States have died in 2022 by suicide — this is an average of more than 10 per month. The 64 reported suicides account for 32% of the 197 officer deaths this year, higher than any category of line-of-duty deaths. In 2021, suicide accounted for about 20% of all known police officer deaths.
- According to a recent national survey 19 percent of firefighters/EMT's have experienced suicidal thoughts, 27 percent have struggled with substance abuse, and 65 percent are haunted by memories of traumatic work situations. More than 80 percent of firefighters said that asking for help would make them seem weak or unfit.
- It is estimated that 31% of corrections officers will suffer from severe depression and 34% will experience PTSD at some point in their careers. The rate of suicide by correctional staff is also 10 times higher than the officers who are killed in the line of duty.

This training event is intended to provide an opportunity for healing, growth, and personal development. This is our opportunity to take care of our caretakers. The summit will include four days of training, discussion, and experiential exercises designed to refuel the tank and empty the burdens of our always filling "backpacks."

## Quarterly Challenge

This edition's quarterly challenge is to find a person you don't personally know that has a calming effect on you. Sometimes there are people who give off a natural calming sense and we feed off it. This could be a musician whose lyrics tend to calm you, maybe a motivational speaker, or even Bob Ross! Whomever it is, use that positive calm energy they provide for you to put you in a better state of mind from time to time. Watch their show, listen to their podcast, etc. It is another tool in your belt when you need a break.



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**2022-2023**

**PSPG PEER SUPPORT CLASS SCHEDULE**

**Basic Peer Support**

**November 21<sup>st</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup>, 2022**

**Advanced Peer Support**

**November 1<sup>st</sup>-5<sup>th</sup>, 2022 (Carlsbad)**

**January 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup>, 2023**

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[WWW.PSPG-NM.COM](http://WWW.PSPG-NM.COM) OR  
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