Finding Synergy through 
Intentional Community

National Association of Peer Supporters (N.A.P.S.)
October 20, 2022

Session Format

Overview
“Chat” Interactions
Presentation
Small Group Breakouts
Large Group Debrief
Repeat...
Finding Synergy in Intentional Community, Rita Cronise

Housekeeping

Please be considerate of our presenter and other participants

Main Session
(Mute/Camera Off)
Chat to Interact
Breakout Session
(Off Mute/Camera On)
Take Notes
Large Group Report

Gallery View vs. Speaker View

Click View (icon) in the top-right corner and select:
Finding Synergy in Intentional Community, Rita Cronise

October 20, 2022

15th Annual National Peer Specialist Conference, Dallas, TX

Introductions

About Us...

Rita Cronise, MS, ALWF
Faculty, Rutgers University
Coordinator, APS Virtual Learning Community

Upstate New York
Member of MARS, NAPS, APS, WRAP Facilitators
About Us...

Maryam Husamudeen, BA, NYCPS, eCPR, ASIS, MHFA
APS User Support Specialist
Facilitator, APS Virtual Learning Community

New York Association of Psychiatric Rehabilitation Services (NYAPRS)

About You

Turn to your neighbor

Introduce Yourself

Name
Role
Location
Member of ___________
Objectives

Explore - what are **intentional communities**?

What do these communities have in **common**?

What does it mean to be **inclusive**?

How do we practice **synergy**?

Intentional Community (seeds)
Fitting in vs. Belonging

“Fitting in is about assessing a situation and becoming who you need to be to be accepted. Belonging, on the other hand, doesn’t require us to change who we are; it requires us to be who we are.”

— Brené Brown, The Gifts of Imperfection
An example of belonging

Our Group of Eight

Facilitator Group

At the start of the COVID pandemic APS held meetings to create a guide for facilitators of online peer support groups

Tips for Facilitating Online Peer Support Groups

“In times of crisis people want to know that you care, more than they care what you know.”
“Regulars” decided to have a closed meeting to keep practicing skills (both technical and techniques)

Shared Leadership

Variety of formats and exercises

Worthy women!

Breakout Session

Turn to your neighbor

Where have you found a sense of belonging?

(Name as many as you can think of)
A sense of community is a feeling that members have of **belonging**, a feeling that members **matter to one another** and to the group, and a shared faith that members’ **needs will be met** through their commitment to be together.

(McMillan 1976)
What is Community?

Four Elements
Membership
Influence
Fulfillment of needs
Shared emotional connection

(McMillan and Chavis, 1986; Wenger, 1989)

Membership

The feeling of belonging or of sharing a sense of personal relatedness.

Membership has five attributes: boundaries, emotional safety, a sense of belonging and identification, personal investment, and a common symbol system. These attributes work together and contribute to a sense of who is part of the community and who is not.

(McMillan and Chavis, 1986; Wenger, 1989)
Influence

Influence is a bidirectional concept. In one direction, there is the notion that for a member to be attracted to a group, he or she must have some influence over what the group does. On the other hand, cohesiveness is contingent on a group’s ability to influence its members.

Fulfillment of Needs

Our culture and our families teach each of us a set of personal values, which indicate our emotional and intellectual needs and the order in which we attend to them. When people with shared values come together, they find that they have similar needs, priorities, and goals, thus fostering the belief that in joining together they might be better able to satisfy these needs and obtain the reinforcement they seek.
A shared emotional connection is based, in part, on a shared history. It is not necessary that group members have participated in the history in order to share it, but they must identify with it. The interactions of members in shared events and the specific attributes of the events may facilitate or inhibit the strength of the community.

(McMillan and Chavis, 1986; Wenger, 1989)
**Geographic**

Members are from the same place - neighborhood, town, city, region, state, country and the focus is related to the location.

Example: Representatives from a particular region come together to form a regional action committee (RAC) devoted to improvements in the region.

(McMillan and Chavis, 1986; Wenger, 1989)

---

**Relational**

Members come together to share a common interest.

The interests may be professional, personal, or spiritual.

Examples include study groups or book clubs, apprenticeships, writing groups, theatre or improv groups, learning communities, and faith communities.

(McMillan and Chavis, 1986; Wenger, 1989)
Task Focus

Members come together to accomplish a specific task.

When the National Practice Guidelines were being developed, we had a Task Force that came together to review all of the existing literature related to the practice of peer support.

Other examples are groups that organize national conferences, develop an innovative product, create a newsletter, put on a comedy show.  

(McMillan and Chavis, 1986; Wenger, 1989)

How do they Evolve?

Five Stages

- Forming
- Storming
- Norming
- Performing
- Adjourning

(Tuckman, 1977)
A community of practice
Monroe Association of Recovery Specialists

Support for Peer Supporters

A group of peer supporters from the community continued to meet after an Intentional Peer Support training

Monroe Association of Recovery Specialists (MARS)
**MARS Evolution**

Met monthly to continue to develop our knowledge and skills.

- Shared Leadership
- We are the experts!
- Principles to practice

Became the first local chapter of N.A.P.S.

---

**MARS Format**

- 15 min. Check in
- 30 min. Educational Segment
- 30 min. Principles to Practice
- 15 min. Closing and Networking
New York Group Moves Toward Peer Specialist Organization

Peer specialists in several states have explored the potential for creating a peer specialist organization that would be associated with NAPS. Recently, that movement has moved forward in New York thanks to a dedicated group of peer supporters in Rochester.

It is hoped that the Rochester experience will be used to form an organizational “template” that can be used to form state organizations elsewhere. This initiative is led by Rita Cronise who explains the process the group is using to create and develop a peer specialist organization.

What follows in her explanation.

“Why are peer supporters in our community so scattered and disconnected?” The question was posed at a bagel shop where some of us were meeting after class to share ideas and discuss what we were learning in our Intentional Peer Support Training.

It was a legitimate question. There were pockets of peer support specialists working in many different places, but few opportunities for ongoing support, supervision and professional development for peer supporters across the entire community. Rather than speculate about why peer specialists had ended up so disconnected, we chose instead to answer the original question with another question (as we had learned in class) that could help us “move toward” what we wanted to create. We restated the question, “How can peer supporters in our community get together and get connected?” (Continued on page 4)

We talked about the two dozen organizations where peers were employed and the many roles peer supporters play throughout the community as (paid or volunteer) advocates, coaches, case managers, support group facilitators, therapy aides and recovery educators. We discussed the complexity of the issues peer support specialists face in the cross-fire between the needs of the individuals receiving services and the requirements of the different systems navigated.

It always came back to the main question of how to get peer support specialists together and connected throughout the entire community to receive ongoing support, supervision and training. We concluded that creating a local association open to all who are offering peer support could accomplish that mission.

We recognized that forming “yet another” group could be perceived as competition for scarce resources. A number of organizations and self-help groups were already doing good work with the people receiving services within their organizations, but none were attempting to be inclusive of the peer support specialists in all the other organizations – particularly those who were independent consultants or volunteers in the community.

Several of us liked the inclusive principles of the National Association of Peer Specialists, so we asked Director, Steve Harrington about creating a local chapter. Because other communities had been asking NAPS about creating local chapters, Steve thought it would be worthwhile for us to start a chapter and write the process we followed so other groups could adapt it to start up local chapters in their own communities.

Some questions we considered to get started:
- How do we define peer support specialists in our community?
- What are their needs?
- What are our [collective] strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats?
- What is our mission?
- What are our goals?
- What benefits can we reasonably offer?
- What are our next steps?
Organizational development activities (in process):

Business Planning
- Create a business plan
- Identify 3-5 founding members
- Seek start up funds (possibly through “lifetime memberships”)
- Submit the by-laws and articles of incorporation
- Apply for tax ID and 501(c)3 non-profit status
- Schedule ongoing business meetings

Program Planning
- Create the website, newsletter, and online forums
- Invite individuals to join the association
- Plan events (create a calendar of association events)
- Schedule ongoing program meetings

Collaborative Planning
- Create marketing / community outreach plan
- Invite organizations to join the association
- Plan collaborative events (create a master calendar inclusive of all events related to peer specialists and the people they serve)
- Schedule ongoing collaborative planning meetings

We plan to be operational and holding regular program meetings and educational events by the fall of 2009.

Breakout Session

Turn to your neighbor

Describe a community where you feel like you belong and can contribute.
Chat

What do Intentional Communities have in common

Intentional Communities

Common Elements
Dream or vision
Shared mission or purpose
Dedicated core group
Coordination

(McMillan and Chavis, 1986; Wenger, 1989)
Finding Synergy in Intentional Community, Rita Cronise

October 20, 2022

15th Annual National Peer Specialist Conference, Dallas, TX

Do you Recall the Four Elements?
- Membership
- Influence
- Fulfillment of needs
- Shared emotional connection

(McMillan and Chavis, 1986; Wenger, 1989)
Finding Synergy in Intentional Community, Rita Cronise

What does Inclusion Mean?

Four Elements
What is the group for?
Who belongs in the group?
Who is missing from the group?
How do we reach them?

Synergy
Chat

To me, synergy means...

Synergy

The interaction or cooperation of two or more organizations, substances, or other agents to produce a combined effect greater than the sum of their separate effects.
A task focused workgroup

N.A.P.S. Workforce & Supervision Workgroup

N.A.P.S. Workforce & Supervision Workgroup

A workgroup that came together to revisit the National Practice Guidelines to add new guidelines for Supervisor
**Workgroup Evolution**

Met weekly to write guidelines for supervisors

- Shared Leadership
- Different areas of expertise!
- Took on more projects

Went on to edit a book!

---

**Workforce Workgroup**

1 hr. every Monday (other times as needed for individual tasks)

- 1 person, completed doctoral work
- Supervision Learning Collaborative
- Book edited as a fundraiser for N.A.P.S.
Finding Synergy in Intentional Community, Rita Cronise

Synergy

**Stages Revisited**
- Forming
- Storming
- Norming
- Performing
- Adjourning

(Tuckman, 1977)

Sense of Belonging
Learning to set, hold, and respect boundaries. The challenge is letting go of being liked and the fear of disappointing people.
Reliability

Learning how to say what we mean and mean what we say. The challenge is not overcommitting and overpromising to please others or prove ourselves.  

(Accountability, Brene Brown, 2017)

Accountability

Learning how to step up, be accountable, take responsibility, and issue meaningful apologies when we’re wrong. The challenge is letting go of blame and staying out of shame.

(Accountability, Brene Brown, 2017)
Vault

Learning how to keep confidences, to recognize what’s ours to share and what’s not. The challenge is to stop using gossip, common enemy intimacy, and over-sharing as a way to hotwire connection.

(Brene Brown, 2017)

Integrity

Learning how to practice our values even when it's uncomfortable and hard. The challenge is choosing courage over comfort in those moments.

(Brene Brown, 2017)
Non-Judgment

Learning how to give and received help. The challenge is letting go of “helper” and “fixer” as our identity and source of self-worth. (Brene Brown, 2017)

Generosity

Learning how to set boundaries that allow us to be generous in our assumptions about others. The challenge is being honest and clear with others about what’s okay and not okay. (Brene Brown, 2017)
Breakout Session

How might I use what I’ve learned here to find or create an Intentional Community?

Break out

Choose someone to take notes

Share your ideas about finding or creating a community where you feel like you belong

Return to the large group to share the highlights of your discussion
Having a community that provide safety and comfort and acceptance is key to our continued growth and development. It provides us with others who we can rub shoulders with, and in the process, softening our rough edges. It's a place where we know people have our back; it's a place where we can take risks and be creative and not worry too much about rejection.

(Lori Ashcraft, 2022)
**True Belonging**

True Belonging is the practice of believing in and belonging to yourself so deeply that you can share your most authentic self with the world and find sacredness in both being a part of something and standing alone in the wilderness. True belonging doesn’t require you to change who you are; it requires you to be who you are.

— Brené Brown, *Braving the Wilderness*

---

**Chat**

**Closing**

In a word or phrase, what does “Intentional Community” mean to you?
Looking for Community?

N.A.P.S.
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF PEER SUPPORTERS

Become a member.
https://www.peersupportworks.org/membership

Recommended Reading

Brene Brown, 2017: Braving the Wilderness: The Quest for True Belonging and the Courage to Stand Alone
Margaret Wheatley, 2009: Turning to One Another: Simple Conversations to Restore Hope to the Future
Seth Godin, 2008: Tribes, We Need You to Lead Us
Wenger & McDermott, 2002: Cultivating Communities of Practice
McMillan & Chavis, 1986: Sense of Community: A definition and a theory
Bruce Tuckman, 1977: Stages of Small Group Development Revisited
Contact information

A separate handout with resources and presenter information will be coming to you by email. In the meantime, you can contact me by email at:

rita.cronise@rutgers.edu

References

APS Virtual Community (2020). Tips for Facilitating Online Peer Support Groups
References (continued)


References (continued)


Buy our Book!

This is a fundraiser for N.A.P.S. developed by our N.A.P.S. Workforce and Supervision Workgroup

You can preorder online.

Thanks!

Special thanks to the National Association of Peer Supporters (N.A.P.S.), our sponsors, and you!