



Let's Talk about Love: Providing Peer Support Around Romance Goals

Academy of Peer Services



APS is funded by OMH, and is operated by
Rutgers University.



ACADEMY
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Office of
Mental Health

Brief Presenter Bio



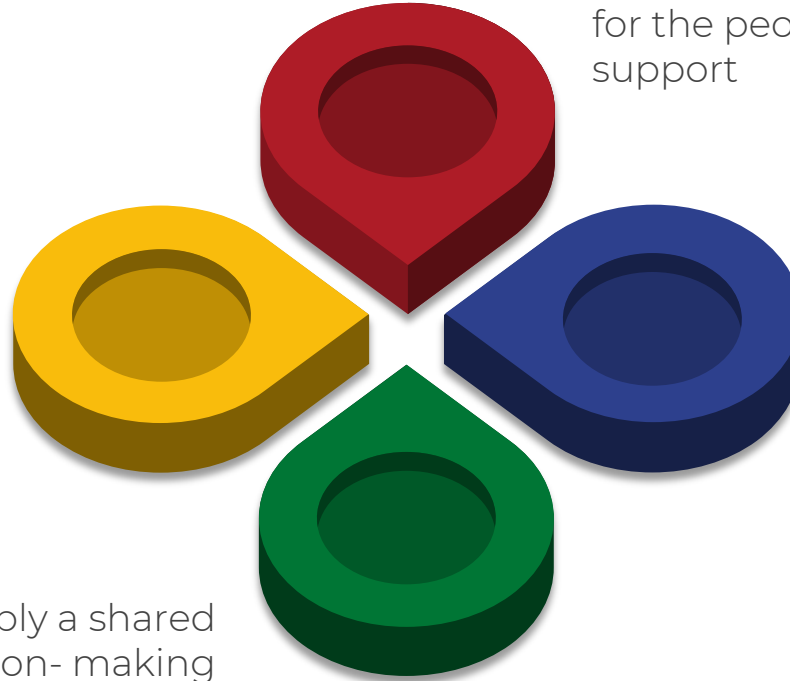
Learning Objectives

Understand what healthy dating and romance can look like for the people we support

Comprehend how to use the Ottawa Family Decision Guide as a tool to assist participants in making decisions around love and romance

Apply a shared decision- making framework to romance and dating goals

Understand duty of care vs. dignity of risk





In the chat:

Please put one or two words in the chat that come to mind when you think of your experiences with dating.



First, Some Context



Journey to Recovery

The Pre-Recovery Dating Difficulties

- Unhealthy/Abusive
- Low Self-Esteem
- Wanting to be “saved”
- Looking for happiness outside of myself
- Well-meaning therapists said I should wait until I was “healthy”

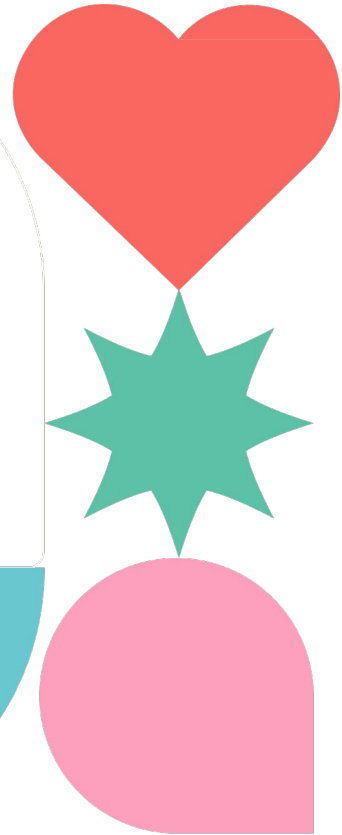


Pre-Recovery Dating: Difficult, But NECESSARY

- Getting any dating experience at all helped me to know what I didn't want
- Showed me the work I needed to do on myself
- Motivated me in my recovery
- Helped me get “practice” in dating and relationships
- Showed me the importance of knowing no matter what that I HAD to take care of myself, and COULD take care of myself

Doing “The Work”

- Therapy/ Psychiatry
- Meditation
- 12 Step Program for Food Addiction
- Cognitive Processing Therapy for Trauma
- Built my self-esteem and learned to love myself



Healthy Dating: A “Learned Behavior”

- Understanding after trial and error to NOT look for “chemistry” first
- Look for kindness as the #1 quality in a partner
- Disclosing in a healthy way
- Being proud of who I was
- Being unafraid to be alone



The Right Kind of Love (for me)

- Happiness AND peace
- Good for my nervous system
- Shared morals/ values
- No games- I knew where I stood right away



They won't listen

They won't have the skills to date when they are, in fact, ready

Often part of their struggles are from loneliness/ needing connection/ wanting to find a partner

If people served are going to date before recovery anyway, why not be there to support along the way?

The Problem With Saying “Wait to Date”

Duty of Care vs. Dignity of Risk: A Tricky Balance



Duty of care refers to the legal and ethical obligation to take reasonable steps to prevent harm to individuals in one's care.



Dignity of risk, on the other hand, refers to the right of individuals to make choices and take risks, even if there is a possibility of harm. This concept recognizes that individuals with disabilities, like everyone else, have the right to make decisions about their own lives and to take reasonable risks.



Shared Decision-Making

- When the provider/supporter and person work together to make decisions based on medical evidence (or research), while also considering preferences of the person who is being supported.
- Once you give people information and options, the person served makes the ultimate decision.

Source: <https://library.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/sma09-4371.pdf>



SDM Example: Online Dating

Online Dating

- ▶ Values clarification
- ▶ Understanding pros and cons
- ▶ Reviewing profiles for red flags



SDM Tool and Example

Ottawa Family Decision Guide

Example



Final Words

If you genuinely **love** someone, then through your relationship with [them], you can develop into a person whose **love** extends to all humanity.

~Daisaku Ikeda, Buddhist Philosopher





Questions





Websites

APS

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

Virtual Learning Community

<https://aps-community.org/>



Resources

Psychology Today Article on Dating:

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/bipolar-chronicles/202506/5-rules-for-healthy-dating-with-a-diagnosis>

Unlocked, my book:

<https://www.amazon.com/Unlocked-Recovering-Depression-Anxiety-Disorder/dp/1722506520>

Ottawa Family Decision Guide:

<https://decisionaid.ohri.ca/docs/das/OFDG.pdf>

