

## 8 Ways to Engage in Peer Support

*Suggestion:* Research indicates that people who engage in peer support are healthier and happier. Try the daily practices described below one at a time, over a period of 8 weeks (start with ones that feel easy). Consider making those that you enjoy a lifelong habit.

- 1. Express kindness to someone every day.** How? Say hello, offer a hug, bring someone a card, a flower, a chocolate. Invite one of your peers for a cup of coffee. Write a note of encouragement to someone and slip it under their door. Every day presents an opportunity for kindness—keep an eye out for it.
- 2. Give a helping hand.** Whether it's someone having trouble getting to and from somewhere, or who might need a little extra TLC. If you don't know who needs help, ask around. There is always someone.
- 3. Express sincere appreciation.** When you think an appreciative thought of one of your peers—come on out and say it. We often think appreciative thoughts but don't voice them. Go ahead, try it once a day for a week.
- 4. Listen to others.** Do your best to listen to what others are saying to you. Practice being more present. Make a point of looking into their eyes and listening closely. Nod your head, smile—it makes a world of difference.
- 5. Mentor someone who is struggling.** Get involved in someone's life who may be lonely or socially isolated—just one person. Go visit them regularly, take them out for a walk, shopping, or out for a cup of coffee or tea.
- 6. Volunteer in some way in your community.** Choose something you care about, something that interests you. Ask around where help is needed and get involved. Then invite one of your peers to join you in the volunteer work.
- 7. Be aware of body language.** Your body language sends a strong message to others. Be aware, for example, that if you have your arms folded across your chest while you talk, you may come across as shutting others out. Smile, be sincere, be kind, be positive. It is contagious.
- 8. Take the time to talk to strangers.** Offer a handshake and introduce yourself. Especially to those that most don't talk to. Or those that sit off by themselves at events. Reach out to them—even just to say a hello. Something that is small talk to you can mean a lot to someone who is shy.