



Peer Support Specialist Times

“Recovery and healing happen in relationship.” - PSL for the 21st Century

Answer the Phone: It Might be the Universe Calling

By Chris W. Martin



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CRRS Update



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Recovery Resilience Solutions

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For the last 50 years, trauma-informed care has been evolving as an important healing practice. This specialized recovery approach includes how we provide services, interact with others, adopt new perspectives, and pay careful attention to the environment itself.

Since trauma-informed practices directly contribute to recovery outcomes, perhaps our next evolutionary opportunity is adjusting our trauma-informed lens to focus on how people can become trauma-transformed. Over the last few decades, research has shown that people can bounce back from traumatic experiences and spring forward to something greater. This phenomenon is called **post-traumatic growth**, and it reveals that a great number of people who experience trauma become better, stronger, and more fulfilled than they were before they experienced their earth-shaking event.

An empowering example of post-traumatic growth is Jerry White, who in 1984, was a young American university student studying abroad in Israel. During his trip, he lost his lower right leg after stepping onto a landmine left over from the Six-Day War. Jerry chose to stay and receive treatment at an Israeli hospital because of the peer support and understanding he received from other Israeli soldiers who had also lost limbs or eyesight.

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Answer the Phone: It Might be the Universe Calling

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Since that time, Jerry White has spoken all over the world, authored numerous books, and won several awards for his tireless work, including the Nobel Peace Prize in 1997 for his international work to ban landmines. He also co-founded Survivor Corps, created by and for victims of war. During an interview, Jerry posed a question with a reflective answer when he remarked, **“That’s the interesting thing about trauma. Is it bad? Is it good? Who knows? What are you doing with it?”**¹



What many have been doing with their trauma has been the subject of three decades worth of research by psychologists Richard Tedeschi, PhD, and Lawrence Calhoun, PhD. Tedeschi and Calhoun first coined the term post-traumatic growth in 1995. They gave a name to a phenomenon that has likely been happening since the days of old. As a result of their research, Tedeschi and Calhoun identified five outcomes or characteristics of people who experience post-traumatic growth.

Those five outcomes are:

1. A deeper appreciation for life
2. Closer relationships with others
3. Receptivity to new possibilities in life
4. Greater awareness and/or utilization of personal strengths
5. Spiritual change (gaining and/or seeking answers to existential questions such as Who am I? Why am I here? What is my purpose?). 2

Tedeschi and Calhoun also identified a five-fold process that facilitates a person’s post-traumatic growth. This process is:

1. Recovery education
2. Understanding there is room to grow amid hardship
3. Disclosure (sharing one’s story, especially in a peer support setting)
4. Narrative development (retelling or reframing one’s story from a perspective of strength)
5. Service (giving back). 2

Jerry White is a person who certainly knows about both the outcomes and process of post-traumatic growth. In the interview he also said, “I think if we look back at our lives and connect the dots of our crisis or scarring moments... in fact, the universe is trying to wake us up. Because each time, there is an opportunity to awaken spiritually, emotionally, and physically, and as a *giver* in particular.”¹ **So, if we find the universe calling as a result of a traumatic event in our life, perhaps we can one day answer by giving back.**

1. Interview with Jerry White. How we bounce back: the new science of human resilience. Retrieved on August 8, 2024 from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OGqjctJ-ubQ>

2. Tedeschi, R.G., Calhoun, Park, C.L., Calhoun, L.G. Tedeschi, R. G., Park, C. L., & Calhoun, L. G. (1998). Posttraumatic growth: Conceptual issues. In R. G. Tedeschi, C. L. Park, & L. G. Calhoun (Eds.), *Posttraumatic growth: Positive changes in the aftermath of crisis* (pp. 1–22). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers.

The Power of a Person Building Their Own Road

By Michael Zeeb



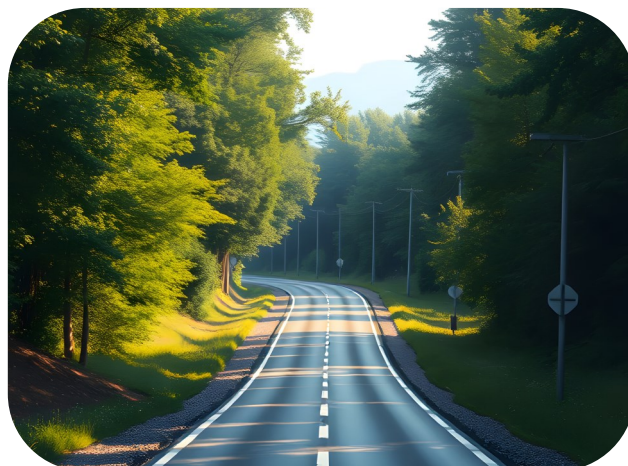
In the early 2000's, I facilitated a Peer Support Training in Anchorage, Alaska. It was an amazing and diverse class. Some of the students were from Anchorage, some had commuted from nearby communities, and some had traveled long distances from indigenous villages throughout the state. It was winter. I remember us all sitting around a big horseshoe-shaped table with our books, pencils, tea, and hot cocoa. Along the perimeter of the room, there were a bunch of extra tables piled high with sweaters, scarves, blankets, and some of the puffiest parkas I had ever seen!

There were many memorable moments in this training. One indelible recollection comes from a young man who had lived most of his life in an indigenous Alaskan village. He shared with the class that he moved to Anchorage temporarily, so he could participate in mental health and addiction recovery services.

He didn't speak often during group discussions, but when he did, it seemed to resonate deeply with others in the room.

During the second week of training, we were wrapping up a day of activities, role playing, and collaborative discussions. Our topics included trauma-informed peer support and recovery from addictions. I asked the students if they wanted to share any take-aways from the class--anything meaningful to them. **The young student raised his hand and said, "My grandfather used to say, there are many roads to the town."**

In just a few words, this young man concisely summarized much of what we learned during the previous two weeks!



Many Peer Support Specialists, myself included, admit it can be hard to step back from guiding, fixing, and advising people as they build their roads to recovery. Some of us may do this because of habits we learned or because it's hard for us to see a person hurting. In the moment of fixing, we may forget that the *big win* of peer support is not about reducing a person's problems. It's about collaborating with a person in a relationship that empowers them to "remember who they are and use their strengths to become all they were meant to be."¹

When we build a road for a person, they will travel for a season. When people learn to build their own roads, they will travel for a lifetime.

1. Ashcraft, L. and Martin, C. (2022). Peer Support Learning for the 21st Century. Sacramento, CA.

Mark Ragins is Never Bored

By Lori Ashcraft



Do you ever find your work to be boring? If not, give it some time. Boredom is inevitable, no matter how demanding your work is. At times, boredom is good at blocking us from seeing a deeper meaning of what's happening within us. **I've learned to recognize boredom as an invitation to step into the *mystery* and take a moment to introspect.** Otherwise, I'm just pacing back and forth in front of a door of opportunity that grants me access to my "next step." How many times can you pace back and forth without getting bored? Not very many.

When I'm willing to step into the *mystery*, I'm able to ask myself some solid questions: Am I being called to take my next step toward growth but am afraid to do so? Am I being called to work through some uncomfortable feelings that I have been avoiding? Am I being called to create new ways of doing *the work* but don't want to risk ridicule for having silly ideas?

Sometimes, instead of feeling bored, we choose to feel aggravated, angry, impatient, and judgmental. We look around in the hope of discovering a distraction. We try to find someone else to blame. Anything to entertain ourselves and avoid taking the next step.

If you're feeling bored and you know it, that's a really good sign. It means something is brewing that holds some excitement and energy. **It means something is waiting to be discovered inside of you.** It means you are ready to take your next step in personal and professional growth.

If you'd like a role model for avoiding boredom, I can't think of anyone better than Dr. Mark Ragins. What I appreciate most about Mark is his endless curiosity. It spurs him to look perceptively into troubling situations and find deeper meaning and profound solutions to problems that seem unsolvable. You will hear this in his approach to working with persons served, whether in innovative treatment settings or on the streets with the homeless.



Listen to one of our latest installments of ***Viva La Evolution*** for an insightful podcast interview with Mark Ragins! Mark will give you a recipe for avoiding boredom and inspire you to take your next step. This podcast episode also counts as a CE (continuing education) credit.

Watch the ***Viva La Evolution*** episode for this article: <https://youtu.be/4qKbPBD95aY?si=W6DgtwPk-WdGpf9>

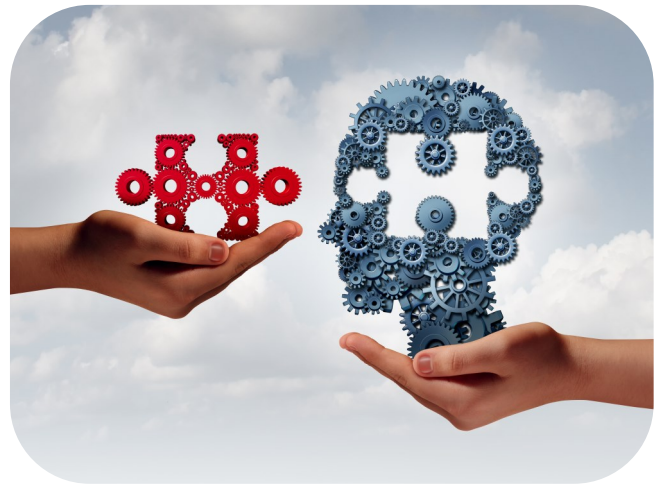
I hope you're looking forward to your next moment of boredom so you can take the magical mystery tour into deeper levels of meaning and purpose. Mark has set a good example for all of us. Thank you, Mark.

CRRS Update

Crestwood's Recovery Resilient Solutions team is excited to announce the development of new curricula specifically designed to support CMPSS re-certification with Advanced Peer Support Specialist courses. We will begin scheduling these courses quarterly for agencies and Peer Support Specialists to register, maintain, and enhance their skills in a variety of areas, including law and ethics. We will also be scheduling quarterly CalMHSA-approved CMPSS specialization courses for *Parent, Caregiver, Family Member Peers and Peer Support for Individuals Who Are Justice Involved*.



Our scheduled, online 80-hour Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist Certification (MC PSSC) training is booking up quickly! This training will be available to support our partner agencies onsite in Stanislaus County, Fresno County, and at our Peer Employment Learning Centers in San Diego, Pleasant Hill, Bakersfield, Eureka, and more. We are also increasing the number of scheduled online MC PSSC trainings for the 2025 calendar year.



In addition to providing more learning opportunities for MC PSSC, we are also looking forward to facilitating our peer supervision training (*Recovery Practices for Leaders*) in Los Angeles and Santa Barbara counties to support their recovery and resilience work.

Our CRRS team of Peer Support Specialists and professional facilitators are both humbled and excited by the many ways in which we can support the certification and integration of Peer Support Specialists across the state. Our meaning and purpose in this work is derived from the inspirational successes of the Peer Support Specialists we get to know, and the transformational change they are making in people's lives.

For more information, please be empowered to reach out to us with questions or connect with us about ways in which we can support your recovery and resilience culture-building needs.

All the best,

- Jim Ritchie, CRRS Director of Operations

Training & Continuing Education

Recovery Practices for Ethics and Law for Peer Support

6 hours [6 CES available upon request]

This fun six-hour dynamic, skill-based, and wholly interactive course will provide participants with an understanding of how the recovery movement and principles became the foundation for peer support ethical codes as well as many laws regulating behavior healthcare and psychiatric treatment.



CMPSS Specialization Training for Parent, Caregiver, Family Member Peers-Supporting Family Resilience

40 hours [32 CES available upon request]

The “Supporting Family Resilience” course is a fun, skill-based, and highly interactive workshop for individuals providing specialized peer-to-peer family member and caregiver support services. This 40-hour learning experience will prepare and equip participants with the latest generation of knowledge, skills, and tools for providing, promoting, and empowering family resilience.

CMPSS Specialization Training for Justice Involved Peers— Recovery, Resilience, and Reintegration

40 hours

This dynamic 40-hour, skill-based, and wholly interactive course will provide participants with an understanding of how to provide person-centered support to individuals with justice involvement experiences.



Viva La Evolution!

A podcast on Growth, Resilience, and Transformation



- ◆ Promote the recovery process with individuals and teams.
- ◆ Shift your organization’s culture to a recovery focus that builds resilience.
- ◆ Listen to interviews with important leaders in the recovery field and hear from people who are in recovery and how they got there.
- ◆ Discover unique ways peer support specialists can support your team and enhance recovery service outcomes.

Join The Conversation!

