

## Peer Support Specialist Times

*"Recovery and healing happen in relationship."* - PSL for the 21st Century

### Our Heroes' Journeys

By Lori Ashcraft



Here we are, at the beginning of a new year, so it seems like a good time to talk about the journey ahead of us. If you take a look at the past [Viva La Evolution](#) podcasts, you'll listen to the journey of one hero after another. **You'll hear some of them describe devastating experiences that seemed insurmountable, yet they thrived.** You'll hear of *lessons learned* that opened new doors of creativity and innovation. You'll also be introduced to barriers, obstacles, and many iterations of pain and suffering, that ultimately opened new pathways for better recovery services.

What makes our podcast heroes unique, is their dissimilarity from the classic heroes. Our heroes did not volunteer for their journey. They were enlisted into it by circumstances like mental health challenges, addiction, and often physical pain. When considering this, I think our heroes should get double points for their tenacity. They've had to travel the external path of stigma, exclusion, and low expectation from others, while also navigating through internal confusion, mental agony, stolen confidence, and marginalization. None-the-less, as you will hear in the podcasts, our heroes emerge from crisis with a new sense of purpose and strength that often inspires them to give back through peer support.

*(Continued on page 2)*

### Inside

#### Page 3

The Principle of Positivity in  
Peer Support  
- *Theresa Sorensen*

#### Page 4

Changing the Channel for  
2025  
- *Chris W. Martin*

#### Page 5

CRRS Update  
- *Jim Ritchie*



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## Our Heroes' Journeys

(Continued from page 1)

Before we go any further, let's unpack the concept of the *Hero's Journey*. American author and mythological researcher, Joseph Campbell, is credited with discovering the concept of the *Hero's Journey*. Campbell was strongly influenced by Dr. Carl Jung, who tells the hero story a little differently (we'll dive into Dr. Jung's ideas next month when we add the *Shadow* to our journey work).

Joseph Campbell noticed that most heroes go through a similar set of stages which he calls, *Departure*, *Initiation*, and *Return*. This pattern is obvious in films like *Star Wars: A New Hope* and *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*. However, Richard Rohr, a modern day thought leader on spirituality, simplifies Campbell's hero journey in his book, *Falling Upward*. Rohr describes the journey in four key phases:

**The Call:** The journey begins with a call to adventure; a disruption of ordinary life. This can be a major life event, a spiritual awakening, or a simple realization of dissatisfaction.

**The Descent:** The hero must descend into the underworld, face their fears, doubts, and limitations. This can be a painful process but it's necessary for growth.

**The Transformation:** Through trials and challenges, the hero undergoes a transformation. They develop new strengths, insights, and a deeper understanding of themselves and the world.

**The Return:** The hero returns to the ordinary world, but they are changed. They bring back the wisdom and power gained on their journey and they use it to benefit others.

Rohr probably didn't set out to write about peer support but listen to this, Rohr says, **“the true goal of the hero's journey is not just personal transformation but also transformation of the world.”** Like peer support specialists, the hero must integrate their newfound wisdom and compassion into their daily life and share it with others.



Yes! That's why we at CRRS focus on employment as a path to healing oneself and others.

If you'd like some recommendations for where you can hear more about extreme courage and determination, check out our [Viva La Evolution](#) podcast and listen to Douglas in podcast 30; Chris in podcast 17; Shanel in podcast 33; Cherene in podcast 39; and Tonie in podcast 46. These individuals and our other heroes have much to teach about the recovery journey, including how to bounce back with strength and grit. I stand in awe of all of them.

**“Follow your bliss and the universe will open doors for you where there were only walls. The cave you fear to enter holds the treasure you seek.”**



# The Principle of Positivity in Peer Support

By Theresa Sorensen



Peer Support Specialists play such a sacred role in supporting people on their recovery journeys! Central to the effectiveness of what we do lies one of our Peer Support Competencies: **Positivity**.

I know in my own life, positivity has played a significant role in helping me harness belief in my own strengths. At first, positivity was modeled by others and then I carried it on my own. Now, positivity is like the light from a torch that continues to guide me to this day. **It's such a small word, isn't it? "Positivity." But wow! The power that it brings to recovery and resilience is remarkable!**

Let's look at a few elements where Positivity really comes into play in our peer support roles:

**Building Trust:** Positivity fosters a sense of authenticity and trust. When people sense genuine positivity, they are more likely to share their experiences with us.

**Resilience:** Positivity can inspire hope. Peer Support Specialists who embody positivity can support people to believe in themselves and their strengths, recovery, and resilience.

**Modeling:** As we model Positivity, we empower the people we serve and help them adopt new mindsets and habits that leads to improved outcomes. These positive changes include things like a growing sense of gratitude, reframing deficits as strengths, and supporting solution planning.

**Recovery Culture:** A positive attitude leads to a positive atmosphere that enhances the overall recovery culture. It also encourages collaboration, reduces stigma, and promotes a sense of community.

**Personal Wellness:** Positivity not only benefits our colleagues and the people we serve, but it also benefits our own health too! When we make the choice to focus on the positive, we can maintain a passion for the work we do and support our own life in the process.

What a wonderful gift we bring through our Positivity! It's the gift that keeps on giving and fosters an uplifting environment for recovery and resilience.

## Changing the Channel in 2025

By Chris W. Martin

If your family is like mine, then misplacing the TV remote is a common occurrence. This only becomes a challenge when we want to change the channel and turn the TV on or off. As a matter of fact, I don't even really know where the channel controls, or the power button are located on our TV. This is because using the remote has become very important to us.

The function of the remote made me think about how in these days of bad news, sad news, and rarely any glad news, we need to have our mental remote handy to change the channel. Static like fear, grief, loss of what was, and worrying about what might be, can interrupt our ability to connect with ourselves and others.



**The good news is that we have a remote that is as near to us as our heart and mind.** With this mental remote, we can simply tune out the static and change the channel to get a better picture.

Truly, it would be great self-service to hook ourselves up with 100 plus channels. So, here's a guide for the first ten to get us started.



### Channel Guide

- 1** = Think of **one** loving thing you can do for yourself today.
- 2** = Reach out to **two** people who live alone either by phone, email, or in person and let them know you care.
- 3** = Ponder on **three** positive things about your life throughout the day.
- 4** = Do **four** random acts of kindness today.
- 5** = Call **five** people who have been mentors in your life and tell them how much they mean to you.
- 6** = Take **six** deep cleansing breaths as you think about all the people who loved you into existence.
- 7** = Spend seven minutes watching the sunset as you recall **seven** great things that happened today.
- 8** = List **eight** things you always wanted to do around your home and do at least one of them.
- 9** = Spend **nine** minutes listening to two of your favorite songs.
- 10** = Walk or wheel at least **ten** blocks today and wave to neighbors and people passing by.



## CRRS Update



### A Herculean Effort

CRRS is pleased to announce that we have been selected to support CalMHSA's herculean effort to train 1,050 new Peer Support Specialists this year. This training will take place within the first couple months of 2025. As we await the final details of this process, we are still committed to supporting all of our grant-partnered agencies across the state, who train, support, certify and place their Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialists through our ongoing training and support program.

### Training Opportunities

This year, CRRS has scheduled 40-hour specialization courses each quarter for Parent, Caregiver, Family Member Peers, and for Individuals Who Are Justice Involved. Please check out the [Training and Products](#) tab on our website for more information about any of the learning opportunities mentioned in this newsletter.

We have scheduled the 6-hour **Law and Ethics** one day, online training needed for **MC PSS re-certification**. It will be available March 12, May 28, July 16, and November 12 from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm. This Law and Ethics training is for 6 CEs. To pre-register, please visit the following link:

- <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/CMPSSLawEthics2025>

Additionally, CRRS will be offering a **CMPSS Specialization for PSS working with Individuals who are Justice Involved (“Recovery, Resilience, and Reconciliation”)**.

This online training will take place in the spring from March 24 through April 4, (M-F, 8:30 am to 12:30 pm), and in the fall from October 13-24 (M-F, 8:30 am to 12:30 pm).

To pre-register for this spring or fall online training, please visit the following link:

- [https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/CMPSS\\_JusticeInvolved2025](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/CMPSS_JusticeInvolved2025)

We will also have an online **CMPSS Specialization training for Parent, Caregiver, Family Member Peers (“Supporting Family Resilience”)** available in the spring from May 5-16 (M-F, 8:30 am to 12:30 pm), and in the fall from August 11-22 (M-F, 8:30 am to 12:30 pm).

To pre-register for this spring or fall online training, please visit the following link:

- [https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/CMPSS\\_ParentCaregiverFamilyMember2025](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/CMPSS_ParentCaregiverFamilyMember2025)

### Looking Ahead

As we head into 2025, we are eager to build momentum as we support our communities' needs. We look forward to growing their workforce's capacity with well-trained professional Peer Support Specialists, who will support and enhance recovery outcomes throughout all levels and systems of care.

We will also continue working to train and support a broader understanding of the complementary, recovery-focused role of peer support. In doing so, our Peer Support Specialists will be equipped and positioned to consistently help the people we serve achieve their recovery outcomes.

We have much work to do in 2025 and we remain hopeful and steadfast in our efforts. Please feel free to reach out to us for any brainstorming and/or consultation ideas. We all work best when we work together. We wish you all the best in 2025!

- **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!**

