

## Peer Support Specialist Times

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

### Powering Up Our Meaning and Purpose: Vision Statements

By Theresa Mast (Sorensen), ITE, CMPSS



As a facilitator for *Peer Support Learning for the 21st Century*, one very important part that I enjoy in the course is when each participant in class creates their individual vision statements.

I love this part of the training because it sets the stage for how we talk about the sacred career of Peer Support. **When we think about Peer Support, the role is sacred because it comes from a place that connects us to our meaning and purpose.** As peers, we use our lived recovery experience to connect to another person on their recovery journey. This process, which is literally one of giving back, engages our empathic response, and taps directly into our meaning and purpose.

**A vision statement shines a light on our path of meaning and purpose and reflects our hopes and dreams for our work as Peer Support Specialists.** It is meant for us, and it also is meant to be shared. It is something that we can create and then change. It, like us, evolves along the journey!

So go big with your vision! Here are some helpful ways to formulate your statement:

1. **Reflect on Your Purpose:** Why did you choose to become a Peer Support Specialist? Reflect on your own lived recovery experiences and how they help you connect to others.

Then you can answer: What do you want to achieve in one year as a Peer Support Specialist?

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## Powering Up Our Meaning and Purpose: Vision Statements

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2. **Consider your core values:** What values are important to you, in your life and work (e.g. empathy, empowerment, respect, etc.) and how do they connect to who you are and how you live? Then you can answer: How do you want your life to impact the people you serve?

3. **Honor your journey and aim to empower others:** Choose words that resonate with and inspire both you and those you support. Then you can answer: What do you want to include about recovery and/or wellness?



Your vision statement is a living document that evolves over time. You can update it to reflect new experiences and insights in your role as a Peer Support Specialist. Think of ways you can share your inspiring vision. **By sharing our vision, we not only clarify our own purpose, but also inspire those around us (people receiving services, colleagues, and our organization) to engage in a journey of recovery and resilience!**

Here is a sample vision statement (it is also mine, and I'm honored to share it with you):

*"As my work is one aspect of who I am, and directly relates to my meaning and purpose, I strive to integrate myself and my passions into what I do and to model enthusiasm. In each interaction I leave, I want to have given the person(s) a direct experience of my values in action. I will continue to model my own recovery and resilience through my life experiences and relationships and will do my part to make my community a more loving place to be."*

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

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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.



# I Used to be a Fixer as a Steer Support Specialist

Page 3

By Chris W. Martin

I used to be a fixer because I was fixed so much myself.

I learned to be the expert, giving advice right off the shelf.

Being the expert was real easy - it was so very clear,  
After all I'd been there, done that – from experience as a peer.

I'd paraphrase what they said - with an agenda in my mind.  
My goal was to help and fix it - in the shortest amount of time.

I used closed-ended questions- to hint at my solution.  
My goal was to save them - from their pain and their confusion.

I knew I had the answers - the problems were clear to see,  
I suggested they try **this** - because **this** always worked for me.  
I empathized with their feelings – to steer them toward my plan,  
And keep their problems from reeling - and getting out of hand.



Then one day I remembered - my ethics from PSL, 1.

Peer is not steer! - We empower; we do not tell.

We are not their advising experts – we are not their guiding star.  
We are here to support and empower them ... to remember who they are.



People don't have "problems" – they seek solutions for discovering.  
When we stop being answer givers - then they do the uncovering.  
They begin to remember - they've had this wisdom from the start.  
And often in those moments - recovery sparks healing in their heart.

1. Martin, C.W., Ashcraft, L. Peer Support Learning for the 21st Century.  
Crestwood Behavioral Health, Inc. 2025

## 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.





# A Brief History of Resistance to Change in the Behavioral Health World

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By Lori Ashcraft



Well, there is certainly a lot of change trying to happen right now in our world, leaving us all wondering what things will look like when the dust settles. This is not a new experience for those of us in the behavioral health world. The recovery movement that emerged in the 1980s gave us plenty of opportunities to navigate disruptive and productive changes.

**Over the past 40 years, the recovery movement has changed so many elements of our work for the better:**

policies, programs, approaches and practices, and yes, the hearts and minds of both people being served and people providing services. Yet, as we look back over the process, we see a lot of resistance to the changes that were so necessary in order to develop more effective programs with better outcomes.

Some of us have no patience when it comes to resistance. We don't like it. It makes us cranky. However, at times change is necessary. **As we encourage everyone to jump at the opportunity to put their shoulder to the wheel, we can help push toward transformation.** In essence, we begin to resist the resisters.



You may be wondering if we are speaking from experience. Well, yes, we are. But as we worked through our reactions, we've learned more productive approaches for dealing with resistance and that's what we want to share with you.

Let's step into the past for a moment and take a look at how our perspective has changed. Before we understood the dynamics of recovery, we didn't like it when people we provided services to resisted what we thought was best for them. We called them non-compliant, unmotivated, treatment resistant, uncooperative and downright difficult.

Then, when seen through the eyes of recovery, we realized that their resistance to what we wanted them to do was usually a good sign. They had some ideas of their own. We learned to listen to them and to help them move ahead with plans they could resonate with. **WE had to stop resisting what they wanted to do.**

While we were getting over ourselves, we noticed another form of resistance emerging. Oh no! it's was coming from our own ranks! Our own teammates resisted this new way of being with people. As we listened, we heard the voices of employee resistance coming in many creative forms. Here's what they often sounded like:

- "The people in our programs are much sicker than yours. They won't be able to recover."
- "We already do all this recovery stuff. We've done it for years. (Look at the outcomes)"
- "Develop healing relationships? We don't have time for that. We have to get the paperwork done. We don't have any extra funds to do this recovery approach."
- "Our doctors will never agree to this." (actually, Doctors are usually not resistant to recovery practices)

If these voices of resistance sound all too familiar and you're exhausted just from reviewing them, take heart! **There are ways to harness the energy of resistance and to use it to help you move beyond sticking points.** Below are some ideas you can use to get started.

- Ask resisters to participate in plans to become more recovery oriented. The more they participate the more likely they are to own it.
- Hire well trained peers to work alongside other staff and be living examples of hope and recovery.
- Ask peers to be co-trainers. This way you are elevating their role and using them as expert witnesses to recovery.
- At weekly or monthly staff meetings, peers give awards to staff who have helped them recover. Call in the bosses for these events so it becomes an organizational value supported from the top down.

We hope we've given you some good ideas on how to use the energy of resistance to catapult you into the next evolutionary space.

## CRRS Update



### Crestwood Recovery Resilience Solutions: Exciting Updates & Milestones

We're excited to share the latest accomplishments and ongoing initiatives from Crestwood Recovery Resilience Solutions (CRRS)!

### Expanding Peer Support Training with CalMHSA

CRRS successfully completed our work with the CalMHSA grant opportunity to train additional Peer Support Specialists. Over an intensive 6.5 weeks, we facilitated three individual cohorts, equipping more individuals with the skills to support recovery and resilience.

### Collaborating with the Department of State Hospitals

Our work with the Department of State Hospitals (DSH) is well underway, thanks to the instrumental support of DSH staff. In March, we provided training in Coalinga and Napa, and we will complete our training efforts in Atascadero and Metro in early April. This marks the successful completion of training at all five DSH campuses, and we look forward to continuing to build sustained recovery and resilience efforts within the department.

### Justice-Involved Specialization Training Launch

March 24 marked the launch of our first CMPSS specialization training focused on justice-involved individuals: Recovery, Resilience, and Re-Integration. This 40-hour approved training will conclude on April 4 with a new cohort of graduates ready to make an impact.

### Upcoming Medi-Cal Peer Support Certification Training Dates

We've added additional training dates for the 2025 Medi-Cal Peer Support Certification (MC PSSC) Training! Interested participants can pre-register here: [www.surveymonkey.com/r/CBHI-MC-PSSC-TrainingRegistration](http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/CBHI-MC-PSSC-TrainingRegistration).

### Training Successes in the First Quarter of 2025

So far in 2025, CRRS has celebrated the graduation of 91 participants from the MC PSSC Training! Additionally, we've expanded training support to non-PSS staff in Santa Barbara and Los Angeles and presented at the Southern Counties Regional Partnership annual conference in Pomona.

### Celebrating Our Peer Employment Learning Center Graduates

We are proud to announce the successful completion and graduation of our 4th Peer Employment Learning Center rollout—this time at Pleasant Hill. Graduates were honored in a formal celebration hosted by Crestwood, joined by their families and friends.

We are incredibly grateful for the opportunity to continue fostering resilience and recovery across California. Thank you to everyone who has supported and participated in our programs—your dedication is what makes this work possible!

Stay tuned for more updates, and as always, we look forward to continuing this journey together.

**- Jim Ritchie, CRRS Director of Operations**

## Viva La Evolution!

A podcast on Growth, Resilience, and Transformation

Join The Conversation!

