Advocacy & Empowerment

Policy and Personal Perspectives

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Advocacy

• Telling Your Story
• The importance of YOU!
• The Importance of YOUR Voice
Advocacy

• Is the act of pleading for, supporting or recommending
• Is the act or process of supporting a cause or proposal.
  ▪ Advocacy is needed and effective at individual, family, and community levels.
Advocacy

• CONNECTS DECISION MAKERS AND THE CONSTITUENTS THEY SERVE

• RAISES AWARENESS

• HELPS INFORM PUBLIC POLICY AND PUBLIC OPINIONS
Advocacy

- The Importance of **Your** Voice
  - You speak from experience
  - Your experience matters
  - You provide credibility and a face to the issue being addressed
  - You demonstrate a level of commitment by speaking to the decision makers, the media and others
  - Your voice is a powerful tool in advocacy
# Advocacy

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<td>Express support for or concern about a public policy directly with selected and community leaders.</td>
<td>Informs and recruit friends, family, and professional relationships to join you in support of an important cause</td>
<td>Communicate your point of view through social media, print, television, or radio to build awareness on important issues.</td>
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Advocacy
Decision Maker Advocacy

- Who are your decision makers? Legislators, community leaders, etc?
- Keep their contact information on file
- Do your research. What issues are important to them?
  - Do they have a personal connection to you?
  - Who and what organizations have an influence on this decision maker?
  - What are their priorities? How will you connect your issue to their priorities?
  - Who else champions your issue?
- Set up a meeting
Advocacy Tips

Decision Maker

- Decision makers want to hear from you
- Be prepared with data and evidence to define the problem and defend your proposed solution
- Partner with others of like concern
- Introduce yourself
- Speak from the heart, be respectful
- Say what is important to you
- Ask if you can count on their support
- Thank them!
- And follow up/follow through
Advocacy

- Telling **Your** Story
  - Decision makers want to hear your story.
  - Personal stories have great impact.
Advocacy

- Stigma is shameful. Stigma is **WRONG**! Don't let it stop you.
  - This is your story.
Advocacy

WHAT'S YOUR STORY?
Advocacy

- Hi or Hello. My name is _____________________
- I want you to know that I have/am_______________
- And due to that, I have experienced at least these 3 very negative things in my life.
  1._________________________________________
  2__________________________________________
  3__________________________________________
- Although on occasion, I may experience symptoms I am able to manage with the help of proper treatment and services. Recovery is real.
- Today I am able to___________________________________________
- I am asking that you__________________________________________
- Can I count on you to________________________________________?
- Thank you and have a good day.
TIPS for telling your story

- Be prepared
- Be sincere
- Be succinct
- Time your story, don't drag it out
- Be aware of your listener's body language
- Answer questions
- Engage in the conversation if invited
- Be positive
- Smile
- Leave something
Advocacy

Your Life has PURPOSE.
Your Story is IMPORTANT.
Your Dreams COUNT.
Your Voice MATTERS.
You Were Born To Make AN IMPACT.

www.MesmerizingQuotes.com
Advocacy

EVERYONE HAS A STORY TO TELL. TELL ON.
Advocacy: The Addiction Perspective

The barriers we face as “addicts”

- Confidence & sobriety: How can I stop using when I feel this bad? How can I feel okay when my life is this unmanageable?
- Am I at a point where I trust myself?
- Credibility
- Stigma & shame
- Burned bridges: Internal & external
SOURCE: https://www.sciencenews.org/blog/scicurious/addiction-showcases-brain-flexibility
Advocacy: The Mental Illness Perspective

The barriers we face as “consumers”

- Confidence & recovery: How can I move forward when I don’t trust the people in my life? How can I trust the people in my life when my illness always seems to cause a power imbalance?
- Am I being paranoid? Am I perceiving things correctly?
- Credibility
- Stigma & shame
- Burned bridges: Internal & external
Overwhelmed, unloved, Mad, BULLIED, Anxious, Afraid, Blue, Friendless, Sleepless, SAD, Depressed, Volatile, Crier, Alone, Unhappy, Unorganized, Unacceptable, Too hard, Family, Issues, Little, Small, Worried, Unworthy.
Advocacy: The Loved One’s Perspective

The barriers we face as “normals”

- Boundaries: How can I support their recovery without hovering or doing too much? How can I make sure to take care of myself?
- When can I stop walking on eggshells?
- Trust: Have I been respectful? Have I been transparent? Have they?
- Stigma & family isolation
Advocacy, Addiction & Mental Illness

Typical challenge areas
- Emotional/relationships
- Social situations
- Legal
- Financial
- Fatigue: Tired of trying to fix areas of life shown above
Advocacy, Addiction & Mental Illness

What frame of mind creates or at least allows for solutions?

- Radical self-acceptance
- Being where my feet are and starting right here, wherever “here” is
- Letting go of the notion that I can control others’ behavior, or their reaction to me
- Letting go of my need for others’ approval
Radical self-acceptance

What skills will help me get there?

◦ Knowing what my needs are
  ◦ HELPFUL TOOLS: Meditation, journaling, tuning in to the inner voice that says, “No, that doesn’t feel right.”

◦ Communicating my needs
  ◦ I-STATEMENTS: “When you ask me several times if I really want that chocolate cake, I feel judged.”

◦ Surrounding myself with people who understand and speak my language
  ◦ FIND THEM: Peer centers, NAMI, meetup.com, church
Radical self-acceptance

What skills will help me get there?

- Navigating self disclosure: Have a “go-to statement” for difficult areas of life that tend to come up in conversation
  
  EXAMPLE: *I learned a lot working for Acme Social Services, but it was time to move on. It was a mutual decision.*

- Managing others’ expectations
  
  EXAMPLE: *I sometimes have to cancel plans after a stressful day. Once I get overstimulated, I really need down time before I feel okay again. It’s just the way my brain works.*
Today’s Challenge

Develop a personal “Go-To Statement” OR a statement designed to manage expectations. Write down the names of two people you’ll share it with on or before September 30.
Advocacy: Basic Steps

Define the problem as specifically as possible

Is it within my control?
  ◦ Can I make a change?
  ◦ Can I leave the situation?
  ◦ If I must accept the situation, can I change my perspective, for example, by focusing on gratitude?
Advocacy: Basic Steps

1. Create a plan
2. Implement the plan
3. Evaluate results
4. Refine if necessary
National & Statewide Advocacy Resources

• NAMI Ohio
  namiohio.org
• Ohio Citizen Advocates for Addiction Recovery (OCAAR)
  oca-ohio.org
• Mental Health America (MHA)
  mha.org
• Faces and Voices of Recovery
  facesandvoicesofrecovery.org
• Recovery is Beautiful
  recoveryisbeautiful.org
Questions?