

How can you address bias in peer support?

1 Recognize your own bias

The first step to address bias in peer support is to acknowledge that you have it. No one is immune to bias, and it can stem from various sources, such as your upbringing, education, culture, media, or stereotypes. Bias can be conscious or unconscious, explicit or implicit, and positive or negative. To recognize your own bias, you can reflect on your assumptions, beliefs, and emotions about different groups or issues. You can also seek feedback from others, take online tests, or attend trainings that challenge your bias.

2 Respect diversity and difference

The second step to address bias in peer support is to respect the diversity and difference of the people you support and work with. Diversity can include various aspects of identity, such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, disability, religion, age, class, or education. Difference can also refer to the unique experiences, perspectives, and preferences of each individual. To respect diversity and difference, you can learn about the history, culture, and needs of different groups. You can also listen actively, ask open-ended questions, and avoid making judgments or generalizations.

3 Communicate with empathy and sensitivity

The third step to address bias in peer support is to communicate with empathy and sensitivity. Empathy is the ability to understand and share the feelings of another person. Sensitivity is the awareness and consideration of the emotions and situations of others. To communicate with empathy and sensitivity, you can use affirming and supportive language, express curiosity and interest, and validate the feelings and experiences of others. You can also avoid using offensive or harmful words, labels, or jokes, and apologize if you make a mistake.

4 Challenge bias and discrimination

The fourth step to address bias in peer support is to challenge bias and discrimination when you encounter them. Bias and discrimination are unfair or harmful actions or attitudes toward a person or group based on their identity or difference. They can occur at individual, interpersonal, institutional, or systemic levels. To challenge bias and discrimination, you can speak up, educate, or intervene when you witness or experience them. You can also support the victims, report the incidents, or advocate for change.

<https://www.linkedin.com/advice/0/how-can-you-address-bias-peer-support-skills-peer-support>

5 Seek diverse and inclusive peer support

The fifth step to address bias in peer support is to seek diverse and inclusive peer support for yourself. Diverse and inclusive peer support means that you have access to and participate in peer support that reflects and respects the diversity and difference of the peer support community. To seek diverse and inclusive peer support, you can join or create peer support groups that welcome and celebrate diversity and difference. You can also network with or mentor other peer supporters from different backgrounds or experiences.

6 Evaluate and improve your practice

The sixth step to address bias in peer support is to evaluate and improve your practice. Evaluation and improvement are ongoing processes that involve assessing your strengths and areas for growth, setting goals and action plans, and monitoring your progress and outcomes. To evaluate and improve your practice, you can collect feedback from the people you support and work with, use self-assessment tools or checklists, or seek supervision or coaching. You can also review your policies, procedures, or standards to ensure they are fair and equitable.