WHAM
Whole Health Action Management

PEER SUPPORT TRAINING PARTICIPANT GUIDE

SAMHSA-HRSA Center for Integrated Health Solutions
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**SAMHSA-HRSA**

Center for Integrated Health Solutions

www.integration.samhsa.gov
SESSION 1

Welcome and Introduction
About Us

The SAMHSA-HRSA Center for Integrated Health Solutions (CIHS) promotes the development of integrated primary and behavioral health services to better address the needs of individuals with mental health and substance use conditions, whether seen in specialty behavioral health or primary care provider settings. CIHS offers technical assistance and resources for all those who are committed to addressing the complete healthcare needs of these individuals. CIHS is funded jointly by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and the Health Resources Services Administration (HRSA).

Acknowledgements

The Whole Health Action Management (WHAM) Peer Support Training Participant Guide was designed for peers, by peers. A group of peers also generously volunteered their time to review and provide feedback on the guide. CIHS is grateful to all of these peers, as well as to the following individuals for their support and contributions in developing the WHAM Participant Guide:

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Recommended Citation

About the Whole Health Action Management Peer Support Training

Welcome to the 2-day Whole Health Action Management (WHAM) Peer Support Training provided by the SAMHSA-HRSA Center for Integrated Health Solutions (CIHS). The primary goal of this training and participant guide is to teach skills to better self-manage chronic physical health conditions, and mental illnesses and addictions — known as “behavioral health” — to achieve whole health. In the context of this training, whole health is defined as having a healthy mind and body.

A foundation of self-management in this training is peer support. In the United States, peer support traces back to as early as 1772 when Native Americans began forming social support groups to help people recover from alcohol use problems. With insight into the healing power of mutual support that shares lived experiences of hope and strength, they formed the first alcoholism recovery support groups. Group participants organized and solved their own issues, a process known as “self-management.”¹

Research in the field of physical health shows the considerable impact of peer support. For example, a Stanford Medical School study on breast cancer found that women who engaged in a weekly peer support group lived on average twice as long as the women who did not.²

What is the WHAM training and how does it leverage peer support? Let’s say a person decides to go to a health center. Upon arrival, there are two entrances.

The sign over Entrance A reads — “Enter here and we will explore with you all of the unhealthy aspects of your current lifestyle. Then we will help you identify the 3-4 unhealthy habits you have developed that have the most negative impact on your overall health. Once those are identified, we will work with you to create an action plan to change or break these unhealthy habits. You will have the opportunity to meet weekly with trained health professionals who will support you in this.”

The sign over Entrance B reads — “Enter here and we will explore with you your strengths, likes, interests, and what you see as possible in regard to creating and self-managing a healthier lifestyle. Then we will help you identify the healthy habits you would like to add in your life. Once those are identified, we will work with you to create an action plan, using your strengths, to develop new healthy habits. You will have the opportunity to meet weekly in a support group with your peers who are also working to improve and self-manage their whole health.”

How would most people enter — through Entrance A or Entrance B? This training chooses Entrance B.

There are two major components to the WHAM 2-day, 10-session training. The first component follows this Participant Guide and uses a person-centered planning process in 10 health and resiliency factors to help you create a concise whole health goal to begin the self-management process. The Participant Guide also provides learning skills to enhance self-management, including 8 weeks of WHAM peer support groups and a weekly action plan to create new health habits.

The WHAM training also focuses on developing mind-body resiliency to promote self-management skills. The 10 health and resiliency factors included in the training are recommended by the Benson-Henry Institute for Mind-Body Medicine at Massachusetts General Hospital, renowned for decades of research on promoting resiliency through stress reduction using the Relaxation Response. This training teaches the Relaxation Response as an essential resiliency self-management skill with research demonstrating that it is as predictable as medication in immediately reversing the stress-induced fight-or-flight response.

Mind-body resiliency skills and engagement in the healing relationships of peer support are also essential because of the growing awareness of the impact of trauma, especially childhood trauma, on all dimensions of health.

**PARTICIPATION IN THE TRAINING MEANS YOU AGREE TO:**

- Work on a whole health and resiliency goal.
- Engage in peer support to reach your whole health and resiliency goal.
- Participate in a WHAM peer support group that meets weekly for at least 8 weeks.

For financial sustainability, this training is also designed to teach participants skills to write a whole health goal in a concise format that could be added to a treatment plan.

Let’s begin the journey through the WHAM Peer Support Training.

*Note: Much of this Peer Support Training has been adapted from SAMHSA-funded Transformation Transfer Initiative Grants awarded to New Jersey and Georgia in 2009.*
How to Use the WHAM Participant Guide

The WHAM participant guide is intended to help WHAM training participants set a concise whole health goal, learn skills for whole health self-management, and understand the “5 Keys to Success” (see page 6) for creating new health habits with a focus on facilitating a weekly WHAM peer support group. The guide is designed to engage participants in a process known as “person-centered planning.” Person-centered planning is defined, in this training, as a process to support a peer in planning a whole health goal and reaching that goal with the intent of increasing self-management and independence. The person-centered planning process looks at current patterns, interests, and strengths in each of 10 health and resiliency factors.

There are four parts to the WHAM participant guide:

1. Session 1: Welcome and Overview
2. Sessions 2-6: Person-Centered Planning Process in 10 Whole Health and Resiliency Factors
3. Session 7: Health Risk, Screening, and Shared Decision Making
4. Sessions 8-10: 5 Keys to Success

The material in sessions 2-6 is designed like a workbook and can be presented in a variety of ways based on working as a group or one-to-one. If in a group setting, participants can take turns volunteering to read the content aloud to progress through the sessions, or the major points can be “lectured” by a WHAM Peer Support Group Leader. Regardless of the presentation format, there needs to be a discussion about how each whole health and resiliency factor affects your physical and behavioral health.

Also, each area of health and resiliency outlined in this guide has a number of structured questions to help explore each area in relation to your lived experience. Those questions can be processed in a variety of ways:

- Each group member can write down their answers and then the leader can facilitate sharing those with the group.
- The group can work in pairs to share answers.
- The peer leader can practice one-to-one with a peer who may have writing challenges, asking the questions and then recording the answers for him or her.

Regardless of how the questions are processed, it is important to answer all the questions on pages 46-47.
BASIC COMPONENTS OF THE PARTICIPANT GUIDE

10 Whole Health and Resiliency Factors:
1) Stress Management
2) Healthy Eating
3) Physical Activity
4) Restful Sleep
5) Service to Others
6) Support Network
7) Optimism Based on Positive Expectations
8) Cognitive Skills to Avoid Negative Thinking
9) Spiritual Beliefs and Practices
10) A Sense of Meaning and Purpose

5 Keys to Success:
1) A Person-Centered Goal
2) A Weekly Action Plan
3) A Daily/Weekly Personal Log
4) One-to-One Peer Support
5) A Weekly WHAM Peer Support Group

The training is intended to teach the following whole health self-management skills:
- Engage in person-centered planning to identify strengths and supports in 10 science-based whole health and resiliency factors
- Write a whole health and resiliency goal based on person-centered planning
- Create and log a weekly action plan
- Participate in WHAM peer support groups to create new health behavior
- Elicit the Relaxation Response to manage stress
- Engage in cognitive skills to avoid negative thinking
- Use tools for shared decision-making
- Promote prevention health screenings

Notes:
PEER SUPPORT TRAINING SESSIONS

Session 1: Welcome and Overview
- Introduction
- 10 Whole Health and Resiliency Factors
- Person-Centered Planning Process
- 5 Keys to Success

Session 2: The Science of Stress
- The Stress Response
- The Relaxation Response
- Stress Management

Session 3: Improving Your Health
- Healthy Eating
- Physical Activity
- Restful Sleep

Session 4: The Power of Human Connections
- Support Network
- Service to Others

Session 5: The Importance of Attitude
- Optimism Based on Positive Expectations
- Cognitive Skills to Avoid Negative Thinking

Session 6: Connecting with That Which is More Than Self
- Spiritual Beliefs and Practices
- Sense of Meaning and Purpose

Session 7: Health Risk, Screening, and Shared Decision-Making
- Health Risk
- Health Screenings
- Shared Decision-Making
- Health Screening Resources
Session 8: Key to Success 1

- Review and Prioritization
- Setting a Person-Centered Goal
- Applying the IMPACT Criteria

Session 9: Keys to Success 2 & 3

- Weekly Action Plan
- Daily/Weekly Personal Log

Session 10: Keys to Success 4 & 5

- One-to-One Peer Support
- Peer Support Group

For Participants to Complete

**Three reasons why I may want to improve my health:**

1)

2)

3)

**My number one reason is:**
SESSION 2

The Science of Stress

- The Stress Response
- The Relaxation Response
- Stress Management
The Science of Stress

Stress is pervasive in American society. It is estimated that 60-80% of visits to healthcare providers in the U.S. are related to stress and its manifestations. The prevention and treatment of the harmful effects of stress is a vital feature of health integration.

The body converts psychological stress into cellular stress that adversely affects the physical makeup of cells. This cellular stress is what uncovers our disease vulnerabilities. Rosalynn Carter, in her book, *Within Our Reach*, says, “When a person is under severe stress, the brain has to work very hard to maintain normal blood pressure, heart rate, and temperature, among other things... If a person experiences multiple, continuous stressors, he starts losing the battle. If the stress remains overwhelming or persistent, it will take its toll on a person’s health — either physically, mentally, or both.” It is important to note that stressors occur in many ways across the spectrum of a person’s life, but there is growing awareness of the particular impact of trauma, especially childhood trauma, on all dimensions of whole health.

Not only does stress lead to physical illness, but prolonged stress often precipitates relapse for persons with mental illnesses and addictions. The ability to reduce and/or counter the negative impact of stress is important for relapse prevention.

How has or does stress impact your mental health, addiction, and overall health and wellness?

The Stress Response

Research has shown that prolonged stress has an adverse effect on one’s health.

In order to understand this, it is necessary to understand three things:

1) Metabolism
2) Stressors
3) The Stress Response

Metabolism is the body’s chemical process of breaking down organic matter (food) into nutrients and energy that the body can use.

Stressors are events or thoughts that communicate danger to a person’s security, threaten the sense of wellbeing, or communicate loss of control.

The Stress Response, also known as the fight-or-flight Response, is the body preparing to deal with the impending danger or stressor. As a person enters the Stress Response, the body experiences the following to get more energy to the large muscles and vital organs of the body:

- Metabolism increases
- Breathing speeds up
- Heart beats faster
- Blood pressure increases
- Blood vessels constrict
- Stress hormones like cortisol increase

If a person’s stressor is a saber-tooth tiger and that person flees to safety or fights to victory, the danger no longer exists. A person has burned most, if not all, of the energy that the body has produced and the body goes into a relaxation mode, which means:

- Metabolism decreases
- Breathing slows down
- Heartbeat slows down
- Blood pressure decreases
- Blood vessels open up
- Stress hormones like cortisol decrease
But what if the stressor is not a saber-toothed tiger? What if the stressor is workplace demands that don’t go away?

**WHAT HAPPENS THEN?**

The body continues to produce extra energy because it thinks energy is needed to survive and expects the energy to burn up.

**WHAT HAPPENS TO ALL THE ENERGY THAT IS NOT BURNED OFF BY FIGHTING OR FLEEING?**

Much of the energy is held in the stress hormone called cortisol, which deposits fat deep in the abdomen. This type of fat is known as visceral fat, or the non-pinachable “belly fat,” which is not attributable to poor diet or lack of exercise, but rather to the effect of stress hormones on the body.6

Research shows that visceral fat can be dangerous and is associated with increased risk for heart disease, diabetes, and some forms of cancer. Visceral fat also affects the function of the liver and weakens the immune system.

**IS THERE A WAY TO COUNTER OR STOP THE STRESS RESPONSE WHEN WE ARE NOT ABLE TO FIGHT OR FLEE THE DANGER?**

There is, and it is called “The Relaxation Response.”

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The Relaxation Response

The Relaxation Response is a state of deep rest that changes the physical and emotional responses to stress and decreases heart rate, blood pressure, rate of breathing, and muscle tension. When the Relaxation Response is elicited:

- Metabolism decreases
- Breathing slows down
- Heartbeat slows down
- Blood pressure decreases
- Blood vessels open up
- Stress hormones decrease

If practiced regularly, it can have lasting effects.

The founder of the Benson-Henry Institute (BHI) is Dr. Herbert Benson, a Harvard Medical School trained cardiologist. His work, started in the late 1960s, pioneered mind-body medicine by linking stress to physical health after observing that his patients had elevated blood pressure during regular check-ups. Dr. Benson’s research found that by changing thought patterns, subjects experienced decreases in their metabolism, rate of breathing and heart rate, and had slower brain waves. These changes appeared to be the opposite of the commonly known “fight-or-flight” or “stress response.” Dr. Benson labeled it the “Relaxation Response,” which is the foundation of mind-body medicine practiced at BHI.

HOW DOES ONE ELICIT THE RELAXATION RESPONSE?

To elicit the Relaxation Response, there are two essential steps:

- Repetition of a word, sound, phrase, or muscular activity.
- Passive disregard of everyday thoughts that inevitably come to mind and a return to repetition.

For Participants to Complete

**Stress Management**

☐ These are some causes of stress in my life:

☐ These are my favorite activities for relaxing or having fun:

☐ When I feel stressed out, I like to do these things to take care of myself:

☐ What are 3-5 things a person might start doing on a regular basis to reduce the impact of stress in their life?

Turn to page 46 and answer questions 1A and 1B
SESSION 3

Improve Your Health

- Healthy Eating
- Physical Activity
- Restful Sleep
Improving Your Health

Usually diet, exercise, and sleep are the first things called to mind when considering health. In the WHAM training, these are referred to as “Healthy Eating,” “Physical Activity,” and “Restful Sleep.”

Healthy Eating
Most people seem to know what foods are healthy — fruits, vegetables, chicken, fish, lean meat, whole grain breads, wild and brown rice, skim or 1% milk, etc. Baked and broiled foods are healthier than fried. People should drink a lot of water and less coffee and soft drinks. Small portions for breakfast, lunch, and dinner with a snack in the morning and afternoon are healthier than three larger meals. Stay away from processed foods. While not everyone may follow it, most know what a healthy diet looks like. The federal government has made it easier for Americans to remember — they released the “MyPlate,” which is split into four sections for fruit, vegetables, grains and protein; a smaller circle sits beside the plate for dairy products. You can access the MyPlate at www.ChooseMyPlate.gov.

Physical Activity
It seems like a new book is published every day that touts the merits of a particular exercise program. However, there are many simple ways to increase activity level during the day without having to suit up and go to the gym. For example, walking can be a great, low-impact exercise with numerous health benefits. A person could choose to walk a pet, walk around the block, or through the apartment complex when checking the mail. A person can also get involved in active and fun recreational activities like hiking, bike riding, gardening, dancing, etc. Take a walk while on the cordless phone, take the stairs instead of the elevator, get off the bus a stop early and walk the rest of the way, or park farther away in the parking lot. A pedometer can count steps and help increase the number of steps taken each week. Or go to the local community center gym — it can feel empowering and motivating to join others in a setting that promotes optimum physical health.

Restful Sleep
Restful sleep is another important health issue. While many articles and new reports point to the increased incidence of sleep deprivation, not all people know how to counteract it. It is unhealthy to go without needed sleep. Sleep deprivation significantly affects health. Long-term, untreated sleep deprivation is associated with many illnesses, including high blood pressure, heart attack, heart failure, stroke, obesity, and mental health problems.

What role has healthy eating, physical activity, and restful sleep played in your mental health, addiction, and overall health and wellness?
For Participants to Complete

**Healthy Eating**

☐ These are some foods or snacks that I tend to eat or drink on a regular basis:

☐ I think these are some healthy foods:

☐ I think these are some unhealthy foods:

☐ These are some of the healthy foods that I like:

☐ What are 3-5 things a person might start doing on a regular basis to improve their healthy eating habits?

Turn to page 46 and answer questions 2A and 2B
For Participants to Complete

Physical Activity

○ The following are, or have been, some of my favorite physical activities:

○ I currently enjoy the following physical activities with other people:

○ I currently enjoy doing the following physical activities by myself:

○ What are 3-5 things a person might start doing on a regular basis to include more physical activities in their life?

Turn to page 46 and answer questions 3A and 3B
For Participants to Complete

**Restful Sleep**

- I usually get ____ hours of sleep each night.
- I usually wake up about ____ times during the night.
- I think I need ____ hours of sleep to function well.
- I would rate the quality of my sleep on a scale of 1-5 as ... (circle the appropriate number.)

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<th>Restless</th>
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<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>Restful</th>
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- I know that I am not getting enough sleep when these things happen:

- I have learned that I sleep better when I do these things before I go to bed:

Turn to page 46 and answer questions 4A and 4B
I have learned that I usually do not sleep well if I do these things before I go to bed, or if these things happen before I go to bed:

What are 3-5 things a person might start doing on a regular basis to get more restful sleep?