

Guidelines for Behaviour – Peer Support Plus[®]



This document describes the behaviours Peers, Volunteers, Employees, Members and Trustees of Peer Support Plus must aspire to when relating with one another and with the charity's Supporters, Partners and Suppliers. These behaviours are intended to help everyone feel safe, productive, valued and equal.

Our Guidelines for Behaviour¹

- Embody our shared values and express the character of Peer Support Plus.
- Describe how we aspire to behave whenever we engage with others at, or on behalf of, Peer Support Plus.
- Can be used in our personal lives and our relationships elsewhere.
- Are intended to help us be kind to ourselves and kind to others.

Peers proposed, developed, tested, proved and steadily improved our *Guidelines for Behaviour¹* over more than 20 years, during Peer Support Groups, Workshops, Courses and meetings. Like everything else we do at Peer Support Plus they are open to suggestions for improvement in the light of experience.

We think of our *Guidelines for Behaviour¹* as aspirations, rather than expectations, because changing previously learned behaviours takes time and practice.

These aspirations underpin any additional ground rules that are negotiated and agreed by participants to meet the specific needs of those attending a Peer Support Group, Workshop, Course, or any other meeting about Peer Support Plus.

Guidelines for Behaviour - Peer Support Plus

1. I agree to be responsible for how I feel and how I behave.

Peer Support Plus is underpinned by a clear understanding that we each take personal responsibility for our own feelings and the way we behave.

2. I agree it is okay to make mistakes.

Accepting that we may not be right every time helps me take risks as part of my personal development.

3. I agree it is okay to say sorry and make amends.

If someone feels upset by my behaviour then my apology may begin to build bridges. By offering to make amends I can help resolve conflict in my relationships.

4. **I agree to share personal experience rather than giving advice².**
By talking only for myself I show respect for others. Instead of telling others what they should do I am encouraged to share my own experiences by describing what I felt in a similar situation, what I did about it and whether or not that was effective. Working in this way helps maintain equality.
5. **I agree to own my feelings using 'I' statements².**
Saying "I feel" rather than "you make me feel" helps me focus on my experience, my feelings, and expressing my needs assertively.
6. **I agree to treat myself and others with kindness.**
Being kind to me and to others are key steps in building self-esteem.
7. **I agree to keep within the room any personal information that is shared during a Peer Support Group, Workshop or Course.**
I agree not to talk outside about what others have said or done during the Support Group, Workshop or Course. If I need to talk about issues that have come up for me, I can focus on how those issues affected me and how I felt without identifying the other person concerned.
8. **I agree to respect other people's differences, experiences and life choices.**
In life and at Peer Support Plus I may meet people from a wide range of different cultures, age groups, social classes, sexual orientations, religions, experiences etc. Others make different life choices and, although I may not agree with them, I can respect their choices as I hope they will respect mine.
9. **I agree not to talk over others or interrupt them.**
Interrupting is disruptive and can distract the speaker from expressing what is in their mind.
10. **I agree it is OK to leave and OK to come back.**
This is empowering. It may help me to deal with my fears about speaking or about staying in the room if I feel distressed. I help myself by choosing my own way of dealing with my emotions. It helps others feel safe and develop trust.
11. **I agree that it's OK to ask for help.**
When I am struggling emotionally to deal with difficult feelings or situations it is my responsibility to ask for help. I cannot assume that others will automatically know what I need but can give myself permission to ask for help from those most able to give it. This is not weakness but strength.
12. **I accept full responsibility for getting my own support needs met.**
I understand that undertaking personal development may bring up difficult feelings, memories, and emotions. If this happens, I may need extra support.

Additional Guidelines for Behaviour when meeting online or by telephone

These aim to maintain safety and trust when meeting at a distance, and help us to be kind, respectful and supportive to ourselves and others.

I promise:

- A. To make sure that I am settled in a safe and confidential space.**
Somewhere I feel relaxed and comfortable, and don't expect to be disturbed for the duration of the session.
- B. To dress as I would if I were attending the meeting in person.**
- C. If I use an online background that conceals my safe and confidential space, I will choose a neutral colour or image that is calming and not controversial.**
- D. Only to have pets in my space if they help me feel relaxed and comfortable.**
I will make sure that they are not distracting for myself or others.
- E. To make sure that no other person is in the room with me – unless by prior agreement with the Facilitator(s) or Chair and accepted by everyone present³.**
If someone else enters my safe and confidential space, I will immediately leave the meeting and not re-join until they have gone.
- F. I will not record any part of the meeting.**
- G. If I need to leave my device connected but unattended for any part of the meeting, I will mute my microphone, stop my video, and silence the volume on my speakers or earphones.**
If I can use a headset or earphones, they will help maintain trust and confidentiality.
- H. Not to share my full name or contact details during the meeting.**
In Peer Support Groups, Workshops, Courses, and meetings at Peer Support Plus we only use preferred first names to help maintain equality, trust and confidentiality.
- I. I will not conduct any private chats through Zoom, or by any other means, during the session.**
- J. To accept that, to ensure a safe space for all participants, the Facilitator(s) or Chair may, at their discretion, remove from the online session any participant who is not respecting these additional Guidelines for Behaviour.**

Notes ¹ available on our website peersupportplus.org

² outside of Peer Support Groups, Workshops and Courses ('The Room'), there will be legitimate circumstances when it may be appropriate for me to advise and I may not be able to use 'I' statements. For examples: when speaking or writing on behalf of the Peer Support Plus Trustees or the Delivery Team; as an employer, supervisor, trainer, or buyer; or to advise on legal requirements, best practice, or policy.

³ for examples, a necessary: carer; language translator; sign language interpreter.

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