

**New England MIRECC Peer Education Center  
Edith Nourse Rogers Memorial Veterans Hospital  
200 Springs Road, Bedford, MA 01730**

**Making Effective Use of Your Recovery Story in Peer Support Relationships**

**Activity #3: Recovery Story Group Role Play—  
When and What to Keep In/Leave Out of Your Recovery Story**

*The role play will use Vignette #3 from the previous group discussion activity.*

John and Stacey are VA peer support specialists who work in the inpatient substance abuse treatment program at their local VA medical center. They have agreed to co-facilitate a “Life Changes” group in the program. As part of their role, it is expected that John and Stacey will share part of their personal recovery stories with the Veterans in the group. During the first group meeting, John tells the group members about his history of addiction and how years of physical and emotional abuse took their toll, leaving him feeling hopeless for much of his life. After John finishes, Stacey tells the group members about the many ways her life has changed since entering treatment and starting her own recovery. Trying to be a positive example for the group, Stacey shares details about the new apartment she recently obtained with the help of the VA Supported Housing Program and the service connection rating she was awarded. She also tells the group members that she will be going back to school to study to become a social worker, thanks to the assistance she received from the medical center’s vocational rehabilitation services program. As Stacey continues to share the details of her recovery and recent life changes, some of the group members grow restless. One group member walks out of the room.

**Instructions for Training Presenter(s):**

*Inform the training participants that they are going to act out the “Life Changes” peer support group in Vignette #3. Afterward, they will have the opportunity to discuss the vignette further. Have all of the training participants sit in a circle. Select two volunteers to play the roles of “John” and “Stacey.” The rest of the training participants will act as members of the “Life Changes” group. Use the vignette above to guide what “John,” “Stacey,” and the group members do during the role play. After the role play ends, use the questions below to facilitate a group discussion.*

**Questions for Group Discussion:**

1. What may have been reasons for some of the group members' reactions (ex. restlessness; one group member leaving the room) during the meeting? For example, was the apparent agitation of the group members due to John sharing how he still feels somewhat hopeless about his life and electing to share “war stories” with his fellow Veterans? Was the group members' agitation due to Stacey sharing her list of positive things that have recently been happening in her life?
2. What are some of the potential risks and benefits regarding what John and Stacey chose to share about themselves and how they chose to share it with the group?
3. What could John and Stacey do differently at future meetings to better meet the needs and interests of their group members?

Points to Remember:

- It is important for peer support providers to recognize the needs and interests of the Veterans they are assisting.
- Peer support providers should only use the parts of their personal recovery stories that are relevant and relatable to the Veteran(s) the peer support providers are assisting. The part(s) of the recovery stories that are shared should meet the needs and interests of the Veteran(s).