

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

**Understanding Mental Health Symptoms from
a Recovery Perspective Seminar**

Seminar Vignettes for Group Discussion

Vignette #1:

Stephanie is a 33 year-old White female OEF/OIF/OND Veteran who is receiving treatment services in the local Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Mental Health Intensive Case Management Program where you are working as a peer support specialist. Stephanie's psychiatrist referred her to your peer support group two weeks ago to gain additional support and encouragement. Your group is a drop-in peer support group that uses *The Recovery Workbook* as its structure. During today's peer support group, you notice that Stephanie is having difficulty staying on topic and periodically looks over her shoulder at the wall behind her. Your group's co-facilitator finally asks Stephanie how she is doing. Stephanie responds that she is disturbed by the voices she hears coming from the back of the room. She notes that she is trying to ignore the voices, but they keep coming back and are telling her not to trust people in the group.

Questions about Vignette #1:

1. What barriers do you believe that Stephanie is experiencing?
2. As a peer support specialist, what could you do to help you better understand what Stephanie is going through?
3. What peer support interventions might you use to help Stephanie?
4. What resources might you refer Stephanie to for additional support?

Vignette #2:

Jerome is a 63 year-old African American male Veteran who is enrolled in the local VA Domiciliary Program where you work as a peer support specialist. Jerome has attended your Wednesday afternoon peer support group for the past month. Over that time, he has shared stories about his previous experiences with crack cocaine, heroin, and alcohol. He also mentioned in passing that he has experienced many traumatic things over his lifetime. Jerome reported that, for the past few months, he has had trouble sleeping and feels unmotivated to do anything with his life. During one of your peer

support group meetings, you notice that Jerome is quieter than usual and does not make eye contact or show any emotion on his face. Another group member asks Jerome what he is looking forward to in the coming months. Jerome eventually responds, stating that he is not looking forward to anything and does not see much point in talking about it.

Questions for Vignette #2:

1. What barriers do you believe that Jerome is experiencing?
2. As a peer support specialist, what could you do to help you better understand what Jerome is going through?
3. What peer support interventions might you use to help Jerome?
4. What resources might you refer Jerome to for additional support?

Vignette #3:

Marisa is a 22 year-old bilingual Latina Veteran who is receiving services in the local VA outpatient mental health clinic. Her therapist referred her to you for individual peer support mentoring. Marisa states that she is having difficulty navigating the VA health care system and getting her needs met. During your first mentoring session with Marisa, she reports that she did not sleep at all this past weekend, but she did not feel tired either. Marisa is an artist, and she said that she was able to paint three portraits, clean her entire house, and put away her holiday decorations without feeling the least bit tired this past Saturday. Marisa is confused about why it seems like the VA health care system does not move as fast given that she is able to get all her work done without sleeping a wink.

Questions for Vignette #3:

1. What barriers do you believe that Marisa is experiencing?
2. As a peer support specialist, what could you do to help you better understand what Marisa is going through?
3. What peer support interventions might you use to help Marisa?
4. What resources might you refer Marisa to for additional support?