

# Empowering Peer Support: *Skills for Black Youth Mental Wellness*

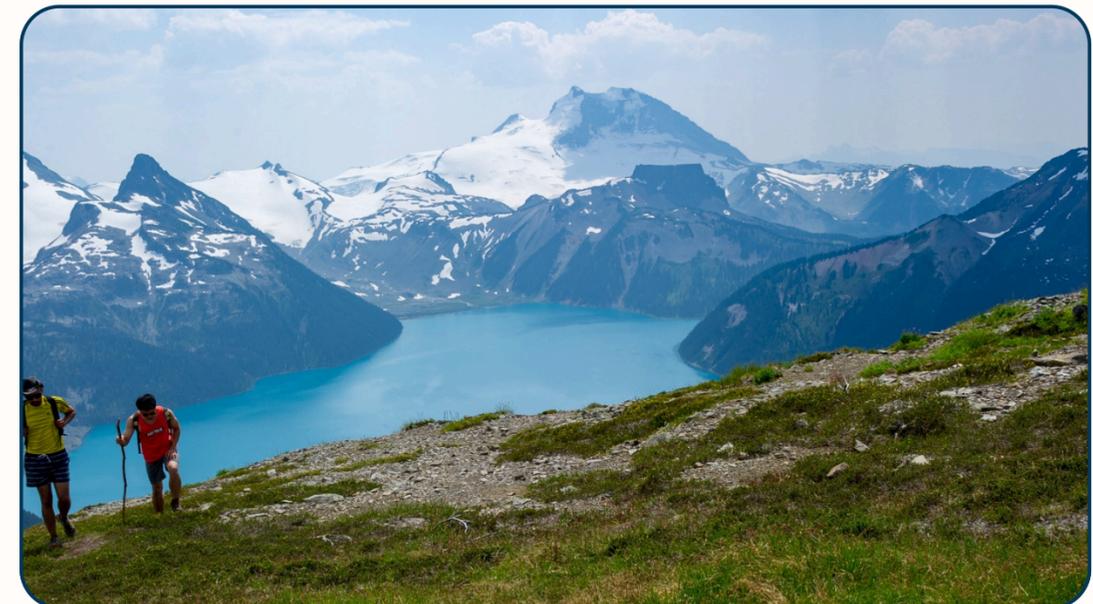
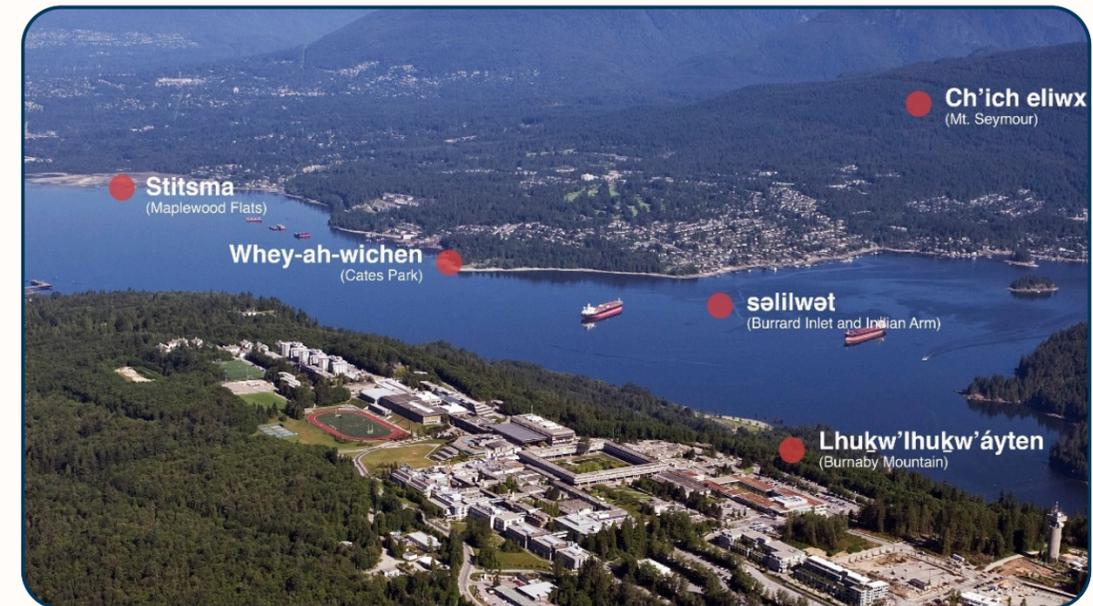


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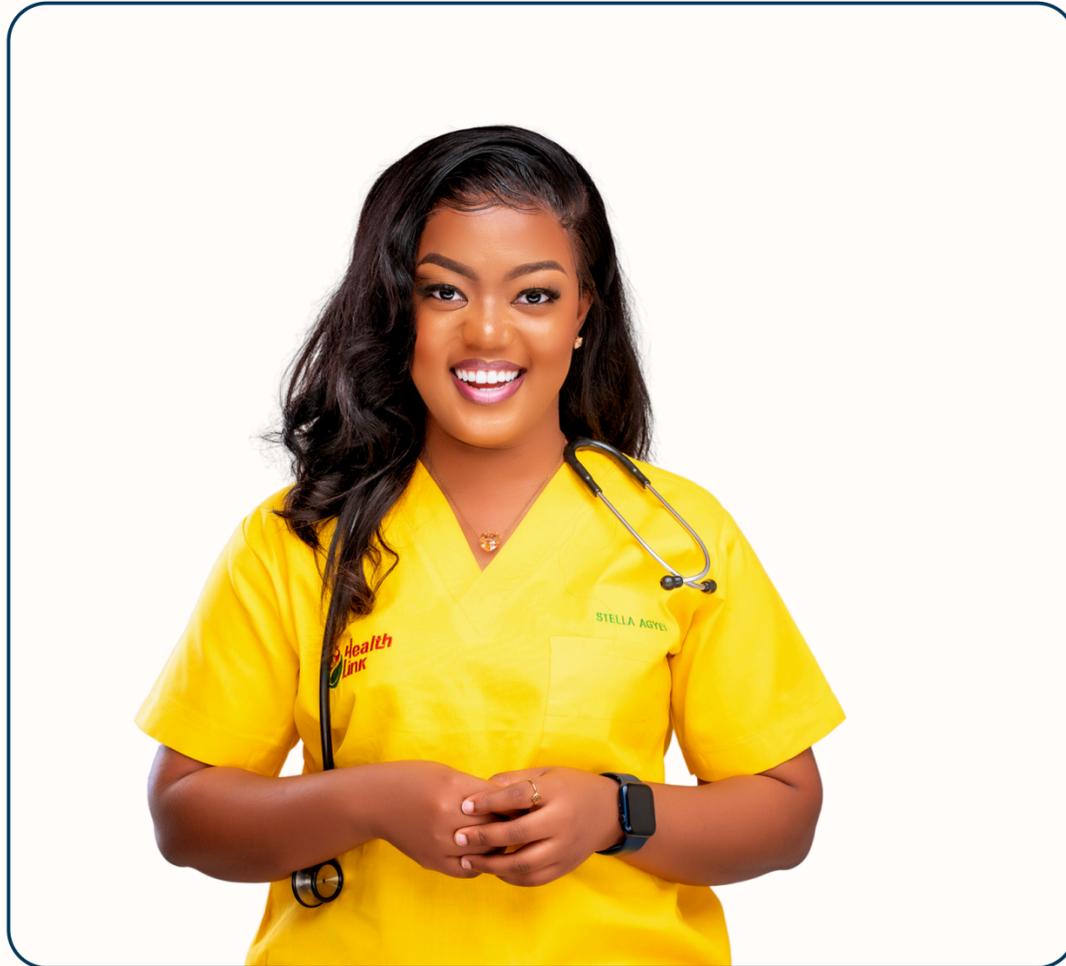
# Land Acknowledgement

With gratitude, we acknowledge that we learn and live on this beautiful space of the traditional, ancestral, and the unceded Traditional Coast Salish Lands including the Tsleil-Waututh (səlilwətaʔt), Kwikwetlem (kʷikwə́ləm), Squamish (Skw̓xwú7mesh Úxwumixw) and Musqueam (xʷməθkʷəy̓əm) Nations.





# Presenter's Positionality



**Stella Agyei** - She, her , hers

Person with mental health lived experience, First generation immigrant, Internationally educated midwife and Public Health Advocate



**Kathleen Chitombo** - She, Her, Hers

Person with lived experience, passionate mental health advocate, community supporter, and dedicated peer mentor committed to supporting youth empowerment and well-being.



# What we will cover today

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## Introduction

- Land Acknowledgement
- About the project

3

## Peer Mentoring

- What Peer Mentorship
- Why is it important
- Boundaries
- Cultural Considerations

2

## Mental health

- Mental health challenges of black youth
- Barriers

4

## Skills building

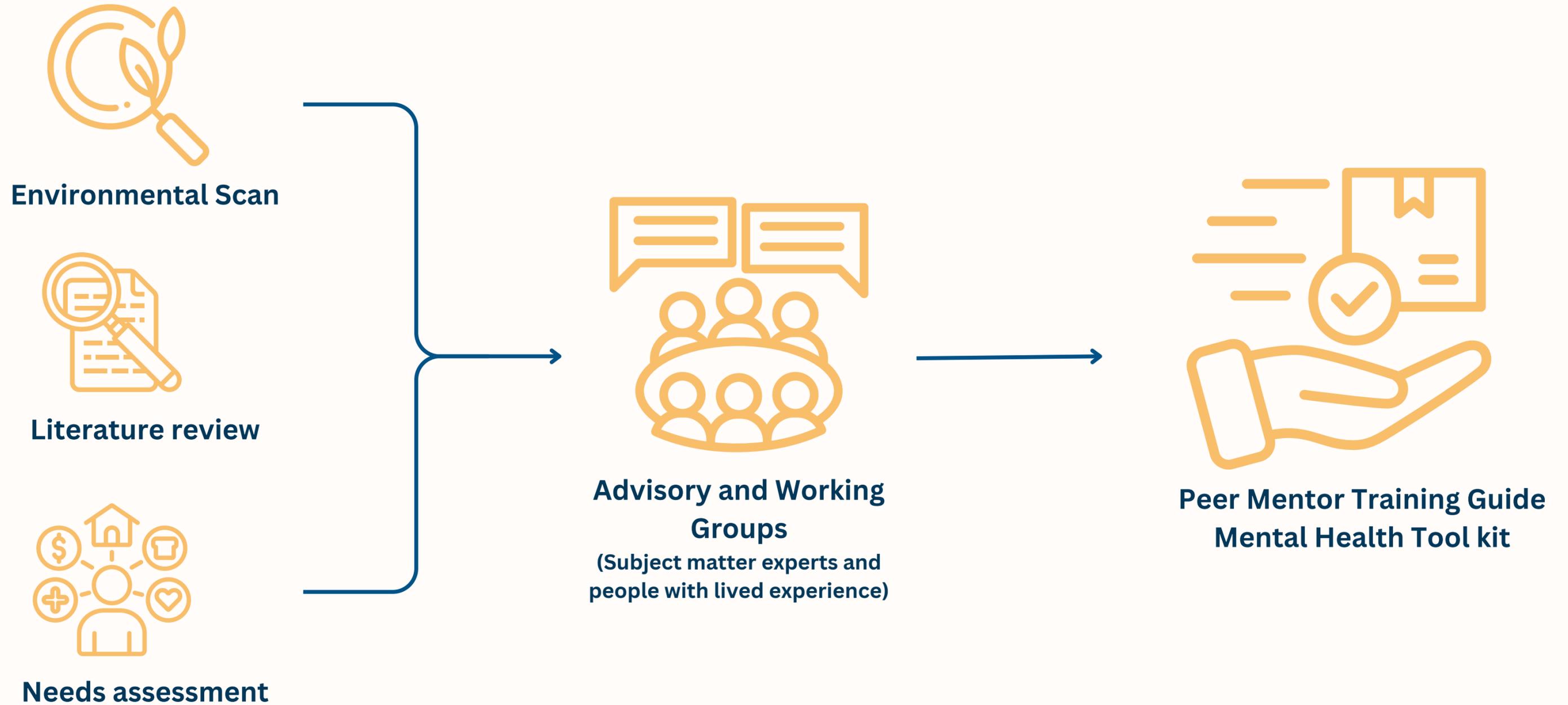
- Role Plays
- Mental health resources
- Selfcare tips for Black youth



# Pre-training knowledge assessment survey

**Take your time and answer  
thoughtfully**

# Resource Creation Process





# Guiding Principles



**Respect**



**Safety**



**Confidentiality**



# About B'YES Program

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The Black Youth Empowerment and Social Inclusion for Mental Well-being (B'YES) Program is a one-year community engagement and capacity-building initiative led by the Afro-Canadian Positive Network of BC (ACPNet).

This project is funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada through the Mental Health of Black Canadians (MHBC) Fund – Incubator Stream.

## Purpose

- Strengthen community connections
- Develop youth leadership
- Empower Black youth to promote mental well-being and social inclusion



# Glossary of Terms

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- **Systemic racism:** Happens when rules, policies, or ways of doing things in schools, workplaces, or healthcare unfairly leave out or disadvantage people because of their race.
- **Stigma:** Stigma means treating people unfairly or judging them because of their situation- like using drugs or struggling with mental health.
- **Anxiety:** Anxiety is a common emotion involving fear, tension, or worry in response to real or perceived threats.
- **Depression:** Depression is a mood disorder that causes a persistent feeling of sadness and loss of interest.
- **Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD):** PTSD is a mental health condition that's caused by an extremely stressful or terrifying event - either being part of it or witnessing it.
- **Intersectionality:** The interconnected nature of social categorisations such as race, class, and gender, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage



# Objectives of the peer mentorship training

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- Understand mental health and how it affects Black youth
- Learn how to support peers in a respectful and safe way
- Identify appropriate mental health resources and understand how to guide peers in accessing support
- Demonstrate active listening and validation techniques in a peer support scenario
- Apply principles of cultural humility in peer interactions.



**Let's Talk Mental Health**



# What is Mental Health

Mental health is about how we think, feel, and cope with life's ups and downs. It helps us:



**Handle stress**



**Learn and grow**



**Build healthy relationships**



In Canada, **1 in 5 youth** experience a mental illness by age 25



# Common mental health problems Black Youth experience

Black youth often experience:

- Anxiety, depression, and PTSD
- Racial trauma, poverty, housing insecurity, and intergenerational stress
- Other challenges like attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), autism spectrum disorder (ASD), and eating disorders

**These are exacerbated by discrimination, microaggressions and prejudice.**



## Pause and Reflect

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When things feel heavy, what do you turn to that helps you feel like yourself again?

**Use the sticky notes to write down your thoughts or experiences, and then place them on the flip chart**



## Lived Realities

# Community Voices

## Racism in Education / Structural Racism

"Racism is a big part of why we struggle. I've had teachers ignore me in class or let others talk over me just because I'm Black."

## Cultural Expectations & Emotional Suppression

"We're expected to always be strong, like showing emotions means you're weak. It's exhausting."

## Identity Struggles & Assimilation Pressure

"Sometimes I wish I didn't have dark skin or an accent. I feel like I have to change who I am just to fit in."

## Systemic Barriers & Intersectionality

"It's not just about us, it's about the systems we're in. Immigration, housing, racism... it all adds up."

## Isolation & Exclusion

"I'm usually the only Black person in my class. It makes me feel like I don't belong"



# Barriers

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## Racialized Stigma & Discrimination

"I went to a school counsellor once, but they didn't really help. It felt like they didn't care or understand me."

## Lack of Black Mental Health Practitioners

"We need Black therapists, people who actually get where we're coming from. But they're so hard to find, and when we do, they're always full or far away."

## Culturally Irrelevant Care Models

"I want help, but I honestly don't even know where to go. No one talks about where Black youth can get support."

## Intergenerational Trauma

"In our community, mental health isn't really talked about. When I opened up, my parents just told me to be strong and stop crying over small things."



**Now Let's Explore Peer Mentorship**



# Peer Mentoring

Peer mentoring means supporting others with similar lived experiences by sharing what you've learned. It's not about being an expert however, it's about listening, validating, and walking alongside.

Help youth to;



Build skills

active listening & validation,  
cultural humility, boundary  
setting and self-awareness & self-  
care



Grow confidence



Work through some  
life challenges

It can happen **one-on-one** or in a group, and it's all about learning together and lifting each other up



# What Peer Mentorship Is (and Isn't)

## What Peer Mentorship IS

-  Support by and for people with shared lived experience
-  Listening, validating, and share (not diagnosing or fixing)
-  Built on empathy, trust, respect, and non-judgment
-  Guiding, connecting, and empowering others

## What Peer Mentorship ISN'T

-  Not about authority
-  Not about providing clinical advice or solutions
-  Not therapy or carrying others' problems alone

**You are a bridge, not a lifeline!!**



# Why Peer Mentorship Matters



## Safe spaces

Creates safe spaces to talk about mental health without fear of stigma or judgment



## Trust

Builds trust and reduces isolation through shared lived experiences



## Leadership

Empowers youth to lead and advocate in their schools, families, and communities



## Confidence

Strengthens self-confidence and self-advocacy



## Pause and Reflect

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What is a moment when someone showed up for you, and it really mattered?

How have your own struggles shaped the way you support people you care about?

**Use the sticky notes to write down your thoughts or experiences, and then place them on the flip chart**



## Your Role as a Peer



# Boundaries



## Know your limits

you are not a crisis worker



## When to refer

e.g., safety concerns, suicidal thoughts



## Keep confidentiality

don't gossip



## Practice self-care

It's part of showing up for others



## Pause and Reflect

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What are your warning signs that you're running low or feeling stretched too thin?

What's something you need to say "no" to in order to protect your peace?

**Use the sticky notes to write down your thoughts or experiences, and then place them on the flip chart**



# Cultural Humility



**Honour our stories**



**Create Safe and Real Spaces**



**Respect Different Ways of Coping**



**Know What Shapes Us**



**Celebrate Who We Are**



## Pause and Reflect

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What do you do when someone's story feels different from anything you have lived?

How do you stay open and respectful, even when something feels unfamiliar or uncomfortable?

**Use the sticky notes to write down your thoughts or experiences, and then place them on the flip chart**



## Active Listening and Validation: Role Plays



# Steps for Supporting a Peer



**Active Listening**



**Reflect feelings back**



**Avoid advice-giving**



**Refer if counselling service is needed**





**Let's Practise What Peer Support Looks Like**



# Let's Practice

## Scenario 1: Feeling hopeless



*"I don't even want to be here anymore. I'm just done."*

### Reflection:

- What emotions might be behind these words?
- What would help your friend feel seen and safe in that moment?
- When should you bring in a trusted adult or mental health support?



# Let's Practice

## Scenario 2: School Stress & Racism



*"I'm so tired of being the only Black kid in my class. No one takes me seriously, not even the teacher."*

### Reflection:

- How can you show you're listening and not dismissing their experience?
- What might it sound like to validate what they're feeling?
- What support could you suggest without taking over?



# Let's Practise

## Scenario 3: Trust Issues



*"I've been feeling really alone, but I don't trust counsellors. I don't think they get me."*

### Reflection:

- How can you honour their mistrust without pushing?
- What questions could you ask to gently explore what kind of support might feel safer?
- Could you share a resource or help them find a peer-led option?
- What support could you suggest without taking over?



## Role play debrief

# What are the signs that you are overwhelmed?

Use the sticky notes to write down your thoughts or experiences, and then place them on the flip chart





# Self-Awareness & Self-Care

**Supporting others starts with you**

## **Signs You're Overwhelmed**



Feeling drained, irritable, or emotionally numb



Trouble focusing or feeling anxious before check-ins



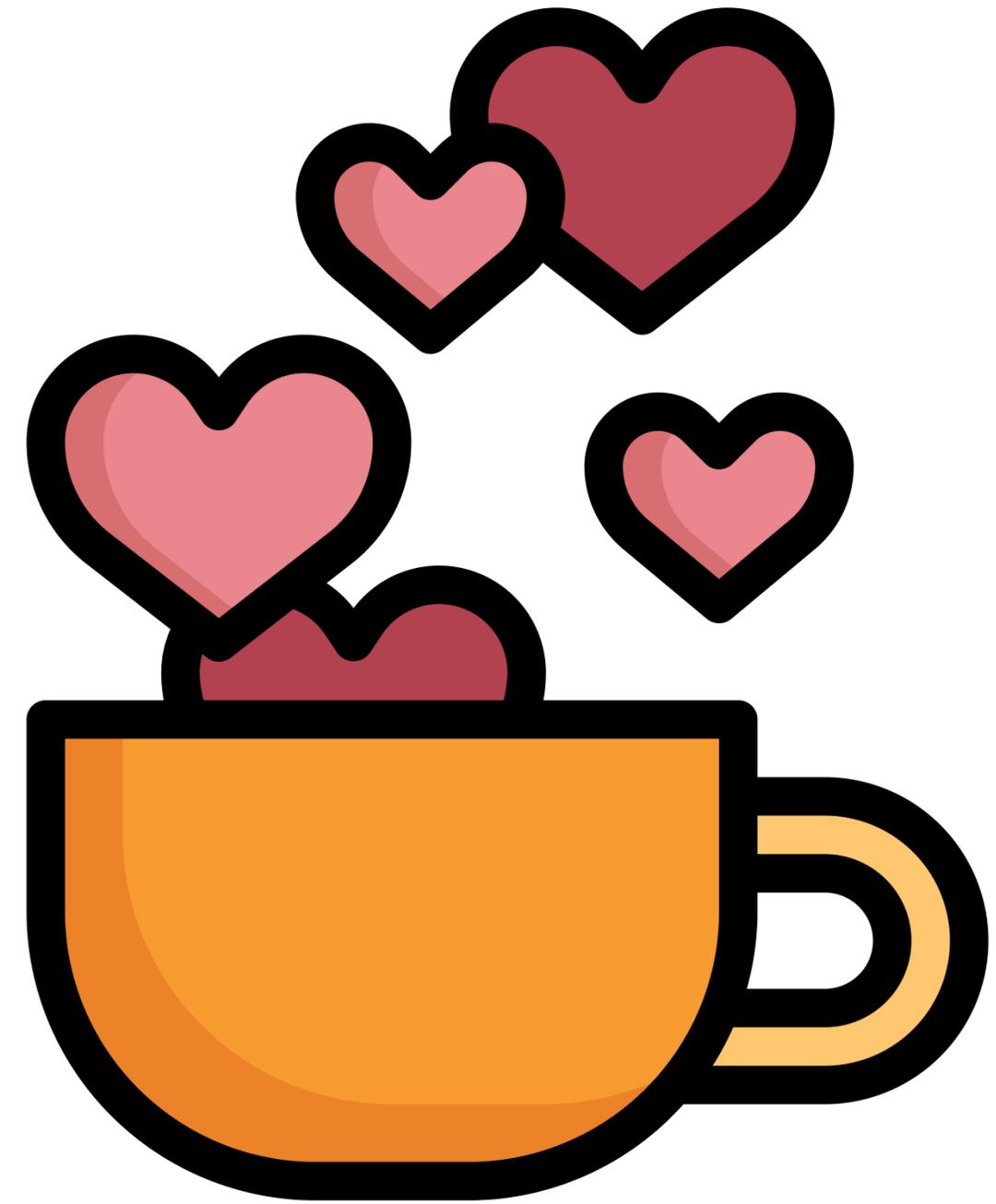
Avoiding conversations or responsibilities



Recognize these signs early.  
It's okay to step back.

*"Take breaks when needed  
and politely refer your peer to  
an appropriate support  
resource.  
You can't pour from an empty  
cup."*

**What fills your cup?**





# Self-Awareness & Self-Care

**What fills your cup?**



**Music**



**Sleep**



**Art or journaling**



**Talking to a friend**



**Going for a walk**



**Time offline**



**Spiritual practices**



**Team debriefing**

**Where can you get support  
as a peer mentor?**





# Self-Awareness & Self-Care



## ***Where can you get support as a peer mentor?***

- Your program coordinator or facilitator
- Designated peer mentor support lead
- Trusted adult or community leader
- Mental health resources (e.g., counsellor, helpline)
- Team debrief sessions



# Local Mental Health Resources





# Black Therapists

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Meta counselling - Website - <https://www.metacounselling.com/>  
Counsellor- Tricia-Kay Williams

# Post-training knowledge assessment survey

**Self- reflection- What does being a peer mentor mean to you now, after this training?**





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**Thank you**

