ASAM REVIEW COURSE 2026

Psychosocial Interventions: Mutual Help and Social Support

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Theoretical Frameworks

Mechanisms of Action in Social Recovery Support

Main Effect Vs. Buffering Models

Main Effect Model

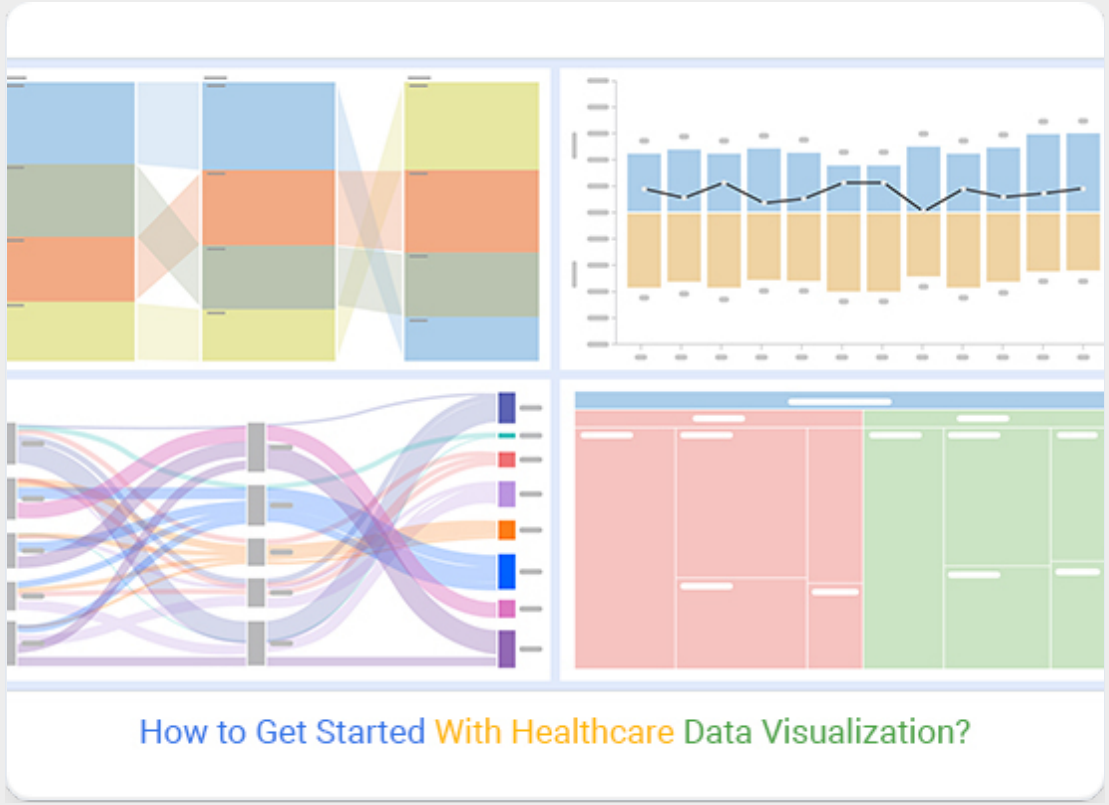
Proposes that social integration is **universally beneficial**. Participation in mutual aid provides a sense of predictability and stable social identity, regardless of stress level.(1)

Buffering Hypothesis

Social support acts as a **protective shield** specifically during stressful events. Peers "buffer" the physiological and psychological impact of high-craving states.(1)

1. Cohen S, Wills TA. Psychol Bull. 1985;98(2):310-357. PMID: 3901065

Self-efficacy & Social Learning



The Cognitive Bridge

The primary mechanism in mutual help is the restoration of **Self-Efficacy**—the patient's belief in their capability to execute a sober lifestyle.(2)

- **Vicarious Reinforcement:** Modeling success via peer storytelling.
- **Social Persuasion:** Affirmation from established members.
- **Recurrence Prevention:** Shared coping strategies for withdrawal stress, triggers, slips

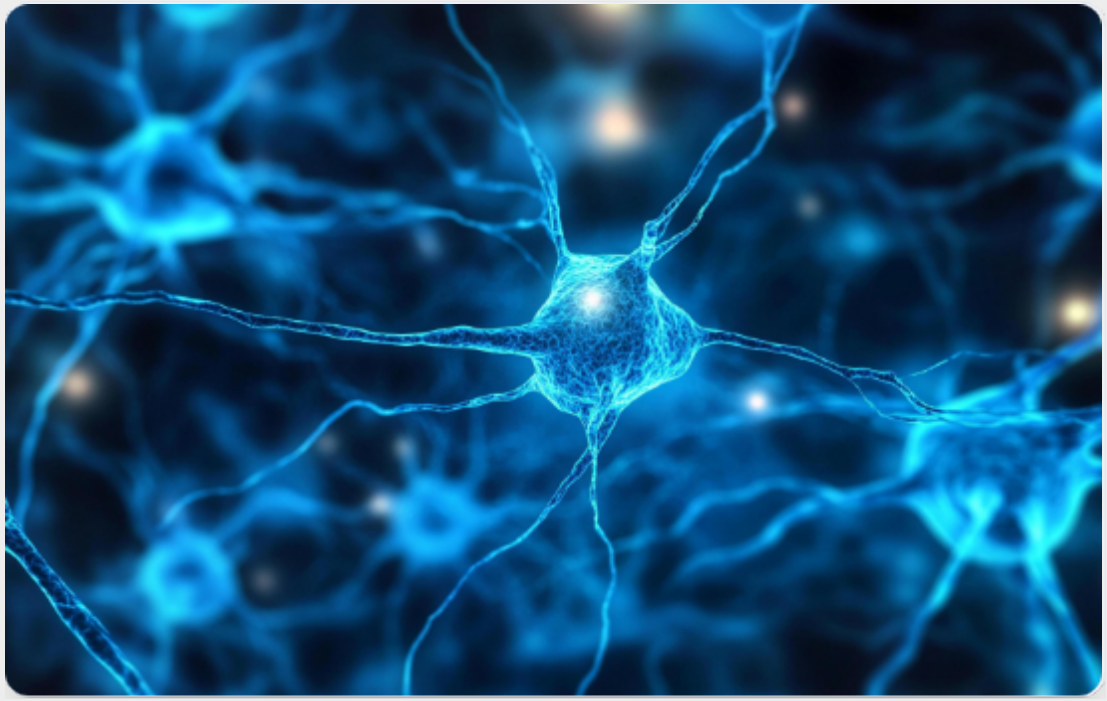
2. Bandura A. Psychol Rev. 1977;84(2):191-215. PMID: 847061

The Simor Identity Model

Identity Transition

Recovery is conceptualized as a socially negotiated transition from an identity centered on substance use to a **pro-social recovery identity**.(3)

- **Social Capital:** Access to non-financial group resources.
- **Social Influence:** Reconfiguring networks toward sober peers.
- **Stigma Neutralization:** Validation within a "spoiled identity" peer group.



3. Best D, et al. Addict Res Theory. 2016;24(2):111-123.

Clinical Evidence & Efficacy

Manualized TSF vs. Alternative Approaches

Cochrane Review: AA/TSF Efficacy

TSF interventions typically produce higher continuous abstinence rates than established treatments at 12, 24, and 36 months.(4)

4. Kelly JF, et al. Cochrane Database Syst Rev. 2020. PMID: 32159228

Non-12-Step Mutual Aid Groups

SMART Recovery

CBT-based self-empowerment. Comparable outcomes to 12-step for AUD.6

PMID: 28165272

LifeRing Secular

Focus on sober identity and personal recovery planning.7

Women for Sobriety

Gender-responsive support focusing on emotional regulation and worth.7

6. Beck AK, et al. 2017. 7. Zemore SE, et al. J Subst Abuse Treat. 2018. PMID: 29606223

Systems of Clinical Care

Integrating Peer and Digital Recovery Supports

Peer Recovery Specialists

Retention Impact

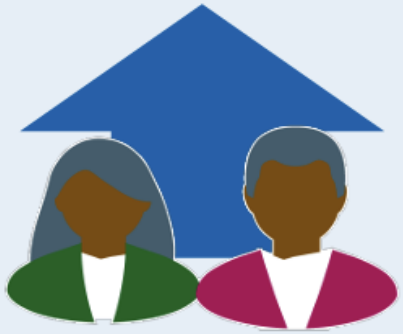
Integrated Peer Recovery Support Specialists (PSS) improve outpatient treatment retention by **2.3x**

They mitigate ER utilization and inpatient readmissions by bridging the "empathy gap" between clinician and patient.

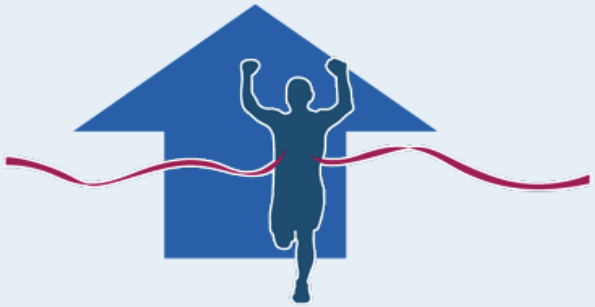
8. Eddie D, et al. Front Psychol. 2019;10:1268.

Does Peer Support Make A Difference?

Emerging research shows that peer support is effective for supporting recovery from behavioral health conditions. Benefits of peer support may include:



Increased self-esteem and confidence
(Davidson, et al., 1999; Salzer, 2002)



Increased sense of control and ability to bring about changes in their lives
(Davidson, et al., 2012)

Raised empowerment scores
(Davidson, et al., 1999; Dumont & Jones, 2002; Ochoka, Nelson, Janzen, & Trainor, 2006; Resnick & Rosenheck, 2008)

Increased sense that treatment is responsive and inclusive of needs
(Davidson, et al., 2012)

Image from SAMHSA https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/programs_campaigns/brss_tacs/value-of-peers-2017.pdf

Does Peer Support Make A Difference? cont.

Emerging research shows that peer support is effective for supporting recovery from behavioral health conditions. Benefits of peer support may include:

Increased sense of hope and inspiration
(Davidson, et al., 2006; Ratzlaff, McDiarmid, Marty, & Rapp, 2006)

Increased empathy and acceptance (camaraderie)
(Coatswortha Puspokey, Forchuk, & Warda Griffin, 2006; Davidson, et al., 1999)

Increased engagement in selfa care and wellness
(Davidson, et al., 2012)

Increased social support and social functioning
(Kurtz, 1990; Nelson, Ochocka, Janzen, & Trainor, 2006; Ochoka et al., 2006; Trainor, Shepherd, Boydell, Leff, & Crawford, 1997; Yanos, Primavera, & Knight, 2001)

Image from SAMHSA https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/programs_campaigns/brss_tacs/value-of-peers-2017.pdf

Does Peer Support Make A Difference? cont.

Emerging research shows that peer support is effective for supporting recovery from behavioral health conditions. Benefits of peer support may include:

Decreased psychotic symptoms
(Davidson, et al., 2012)

Reduced hospital admission rates and longer community tenure
(Chinman, Weingarten, Stayner, & Davidson, 2001; Davidson, et al., 2012; Forchuk, Martin, Chan, & Jenson, 2005; Min, Whitecraft, Rothbard, Salzer, 2007)

Decreased substance use and depression
(Davidson, et al., 2012)

Image from SAMHSA https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/programs_campaigns/brss_tacs/value-of-peers-2017.pdf

Family Support & Care Partners

The "Care Partner" Paradigm

Moving from "Caregiver" to **"Care Partner"** acknowledges relational reciprocity. Family involvement reduces patient relapse risk by 25%.9

- **Al-Anon:** Significant distress reduction (88%).
- **SMART F&F:** Focuses on CBT-based boundaries.

Adelman RD, Tmanova LL, Delgado D, Dion S, Lachs MS. Caregiver burden: a clinical review. JAMA. 2014;311(10):1052-1060. PMID: 24618967

Digital Recovery (D-rss)

Accessibility & Adherence

Digital Recovery Support Services (D-RSS) leverage telehealth and mobile platforms to provide 24/7 accountability.[10]

- High retention in rural/stigmatized groups.
- App engagement predicts sustained abstinence.

10. Ashford RD, et al. Hum Behav Emerg Technol. 2020;2(1):18-32. DOI: 10.1002/hbe5.143

Barriers

- “Medication Stigma” within some 12-step groups
- Concern about spirituality
- Patients feeling like groups are “other”
- Logistics

History of Mutual Help

1935

AA Foundations: Community-based mutual aid.

1990s

Manualization: Project MATCH formalizes TSF.

2013

Professionalization: PSS becomes billable.

2026+

D-RSS Hybrid: AI-integrated peer networks.

Discussion & Bibliography

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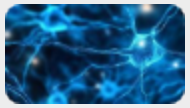
Image Sources



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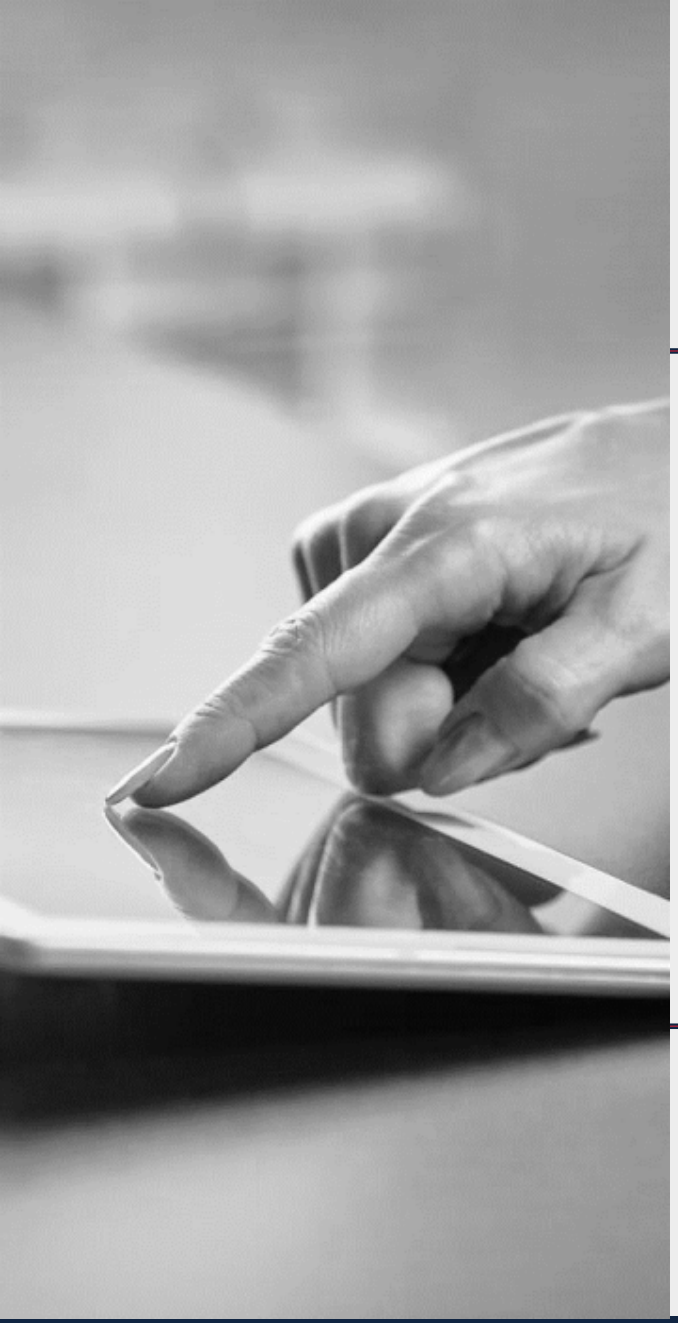
Source: Behavioral Health Tech



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