

THE 5 ROLES OF A PEER EDUCATOR

There are five ways that peer educators can create change. The skills specific to each of these roles will be covered in the other modules in this training.

The five roles are:

1. Friend
2. Educator
3. Activist
4. Role Model
5. Team Member

Being a friend: It is in the role as a friend that we have the opportunity to impact a person positively. There are three ways that we can do that. David mentioned them in class:

1. Be available to listen
 - Be sure people we interact with know that we are available should they need something.
 - Be available for those who want to discuss a topic privately or in more depth after an educational workshop or sessions.
 - Always listen in a non-judgmental way.

Note: in the video clip we saw on “doing too much”, you noticed that the person who was overcommitted was rushed and frantic in her speaking. The student that needed to be listened to probably felt that the peer educator was too busy and not available to listen.

Have you ever talked to someone and they are jiggling their foot, watching the clock? They are not “available to listen”. They’re not all there.

2. Be a bridge or link to people and the resources that may help them.
 - Know resources available on your campus and community. Share that information with others in the following ways:
 - Have information available to hand out to interested people who may want more information on specific topics.
 - Know the campus and community resources and offer to help link people to those resources.

- Supply hotlines or websites on a number of topics and promote these services to the campus.

Note: We will have guest speakers maybe this term and definitely during the upcoming school year to teach you about campus resources. (We want that information to be 'fresh' in your memory prior to events that you'll be hosting.)

3. Be supportive and encourage other people in their attempts to move forward.

Peer educators value others and believe in the individual's power to move forward in his/her own life. (They do not enable – a 'trap' that we talked about.) We help that happen by supporting and encouraging people to be responsible for their own health in the following ways:

- Peer educators can empower people to move forward in their lives.
- Peer educators can help people set goals and visualize the positive changes that will take place if the person starts making healthier or safer decisions.
- Peer educators can support others by offering to go with a person to an initial appointment with a helping professional (*or, to bring them to the professional or resource that you told them about*).
- Peer educators can be supportive in the creation of change by actions such as checking in with a person as to how he/she is doing in making changes.

Being an educator: Peer educators take on the role of educator by creating change in a number of different ways. You mentioned these:

- Teach people the latest health information.
- Teach people strategies to stay safe on campus.
- Teach decision-making skills that people can use to take better care of themselves.
- Increase issues about various campus health issues that affect students.
- Increase awareness of various campus activities where students can have fun, meet people, and have a positive social life.
- Provide resources that are available for students who need additional assistance.
- Correct myths and misperceptions about student behavior.

How we teach:

- create and conduct educational programs
- Create materials on health and safety
- Conduct awareness tables and displays
- Plan fun events

Being an activist: An activist is someone who has learned the skills and knowledge to create change and understands how their work can have influence and impact individuals and communities. The activist looks to apply this information and experience at the campus and community level. The activist is willing to speak out and become a leader. There are four main ways that peer educators can create positive change through leadership:

1. Focus on changing the environment, not just the individual (e.g., David's example of a 'smoke-free section on campus)
2. Create partnerships and networks that can increase your effectiveness
3. Challenge unhealthy attitudes and behaviors.
4. Refuse to be a passive bystander by confronting unhealthy attitudes and behavior.

How we create positive change

- Serve on task forces or coalitions
- Propose new campus policies
- Create partnerships with other campus and community groups

How we create partnerships and networks:

- Reach out to other groups on campus
- Co-sponsor events with other groups
- Create programs to connect students to community resources

How we refuse to be passive bystanders:

- Correct misperceptions about social norms
- Confront language or activities that take away from the dignity of people
- Change attitudes by dispelling myths, fighting stereotypes, and reducing negative stigma

We are role models:

- Lead lives that are healthy and safe
 - Balance between peer health educator duties, academics, social life, physical health
- Confront unhealthy behaviors we see within our group
- Share our own stories of struggling and asking for help

We are team members:

- **Commit to being active in the group**
- **Work with advisor to meet goals**
- **Support and encourage other team members**
- **Attend meetings, retreats and events**
- **Contribute ideas and constructive feedback**
- **Know when to ask for help from others**
- **Make healthy and safe choices**
- **Communicate interests and availability**
- **See a project through from beginning to end**
- **Recognize advisor's reasons for denying a student's idea**
- **Speak with advisor about concerns**
- **Make advisor aware of personal or academic situations that may interfere**
- **Understand that no advisor is perfect; work to resolve differences.**
- **Offer to assist others with projects**
- **Never gossip**
- **Attend events and presentations**
- **Speak with care and concern if you see a fellow peer educator making unhealthy choices**
- **Use positive means to solve disagreements**