

*" Your vision will become  
clear only when you look  
into your heart.*

*Who looks outside, dreams.  
Who looks inside, awakens."*

*... Carl Jung*

# Introduction

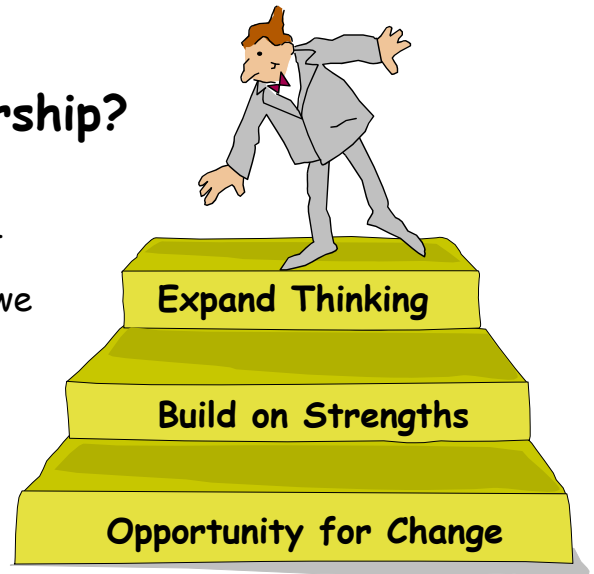
The manual you are holding in your hands right now is the result of a lot of hard work by many people. It began in 1999 when a group of consumers at Community Mental Health Services of Livingston County asked for workshops that would teach them leadership skills. Following this request, Mac Miller, Executive Director of Community Mental Health Services of Livingston County, designed a leadership model that was presented to the Consumer Action Panel of Livingston County. This group then made the model a reality by co-designing, with staff, the manual you now have.

The hope for this type of training grew out of three desires:

1. To ensure that consumers have the necessary skills to advocate for themselves in a variety of ways, and to a variety of groups, not simply to therapists or other support persons.
2. To ensure that when consumers are doing Person Centered Planning that they are truly partners in the planning process, and, in fact, leading that planning process.
3. And, lastly, that consumers have the skills necessary to pursue hopes and dreams of a future that is based on their strengths, not their symptoms.

We hope you enjoy your journey as you learn about leadership!

# What Is Personal Leadership?



Sometimes simply hearing the words ensures that we "check out " by discounting ourselves. What, we think: us, leaders? Don't you have to get on TV or in the paper for that? But I ask you: think of those folks who are in the media's eye. They are quite often celebrities who we don't want to model ourselves after, right? So for many of us, we first have to re-work our notion of what exactly a "leader" is. Leadership is not fame. In fact, fame may be a barrier to leadership! The quotation above is intended to help us expand our thinking: leaders are those people who are able to look inside themselves and build on their strengths so that they can create a new and different way of living with one another, solving problems and seeing opportunities for change in our lives and in the mental health system.

Now that we're clear on what personal leadership is, broadly speaking, let's get a bit more specific about it. Then we can identify why we are interested in becoming leaders or in expressing our leadership skills. There are general characteristics of people who are interested in developing themselves (that is, increasing their leadership skills).

These characteristics are that they're people who:

- Are aware of their communication style and build on their strengths
- Know how to communicate effectively with others
- Use conflict resolution strategies when conflict occurs
- Are continual learners
- Build on their resources of courage
- Build on their own integrity

You'll notice that the items listed above are skills, not personality traits. This chapter will help you identify your strengths and teach you techniques that will enable you to build concrete skills as you advocate for yourself, whether that advocacy is taking place when you are talking about your medication with your psychiatrist or whether you're advocating for yourself at a Person Centered Planning Meeting. In the space below, please think about some of the "leaders" you've known in your life:

<b>Leaders I've known:</b>	<b>How they've made a difference to me:</b>	<b>What I've learned from them:</b>
1. _____	_____	_____
2. _____	_____	_____
3. _____	_____	_____

In the next table, please think about skills or traits that you have that you believe have been helpful to others. This will serve as a reference point to you in the future:

<b>Leadership skills that I have:</b>	<b>How my skill have been helpful to others:</b>	<b>What I've taught others by using my skills:</b>
1. _____	_____	_____
2. _____	_____	_____
3. _____	_____	_____



**TIPS:** Some examples of leadership skills that you may have are: giving your input at your Community Mental Health's Center's Annual Public Hearing (or Town Meeting); facilitating your own Person Centered Planning Committee; talking with people about issues that are important to you (whether or not they are mental health related).

When you do any of those activities, you help others by sharing your expertise and building a stronger community. We all know that the voice of many people can get action quicker than the voice of one person! It's back to the old saying: the "squeaky wheel" gets the grease!! You are teaching others, when you take any of the actions listed here in the "tips" section, that:

1. Your voice counts
2. Your ideas are important
3. Simply trying something new is an act of leadership itself.

Which leads us to the final point: a lot has been written about leadership, from authors in the business world to inspirational messages given by clergy. Many people understand leadership as a process: it isn't presto, chango, leader! It's pressure, change, and leadership qualities emerge over time. Given that perspective, remember that advocacy and leadership are aspects of your life that you will use over the long haul, not just in one meeting next week or next month. So, let's begin!

The inventory below is given to help you assess your leadership qualities. Please take a moment to complete it now:

<b>Leadership Strengths Quiz</b>		
1. I like to handle conflicts by talking right away with the person.	YES	NO
2. I find myself often leaving a room wishing I would have said more to the people there.	YES	NO
3. I enjoy listening to other people.	YES	NO
4. I enjoy hearing from other people about their lives.	YES	NO
5. I enjoy talking to people.	YES	NO
6. I enjoy sharing stories from my life with other people.	YES	NO
7. I will tell a person who is providing me a service (cashier, restaurant server, etc) if I am dissatisfied.	YES	NO
8. I will tell my mental health worker (supports coordinator, therapist) if I am dissatisfied.	YES	NO
9. I look forward to events like a party or other group social gatherings.	YES	NO
10. I prefer to talk with friends one to one.	YES	NO
11. I like to work on one project at a time.	YES	NO
12. I like to work on several different projects at the same time.	YES	NO
13. It's really easy for me to come up with ideas for things to do.	YES	NO
14. I prefer others to make suggestions that I can then consider.	YES	NO
15. I enjoy working on a team.	YES	NO
16. I enjoy thinking about the future and coming up with ideas to solve problems.	YES	NO
17. I like to solve problems in the here and now, I'm not too interested in the future.	YES	NO
18. I tend to wait and see how things end up.	YES	NO
19. I like to imagine how things could be and persuade others.	YES	NO
20. I like to listen to all points of view and then come up with ideas of my own.	YES	NO

**Count the "yes" and "no" answers that you marked. If you have:**

***Mostly "yes" answers:***

Your leadership style is outgoing, and involves others. You are probably a person that enjoys initiating team activities and working in groups. You are action-oriented, preferring to resolve problems quickly as opposed to letting them rest. Your overall orientation, however isn't "problem-solving", it is "creating". You are creative and feel most satisfied working on new projects or efforts. Your strengths are: 1) Your ability to involve others; 2) Your expressiveness; 3) Your energy and enthusiasm.

***Mostly "no" answers:***

Your leadership style is reflective and planful. You enjoy thinking about the future, but you also believe that today's problems are here to be solved! You're a person who enjoys solving practical tasks. You're the kind of person who would enjoy working on a newsletter, for example, or on a "vote drive". Your strengths are your ability to focus on the "here and now" and get the job done in a way that is effective and efficient. People appreciate that leadership style because "stuff happens" when you're involved!!

***Balance of "yes" and "no" answers:***

If you have a lot of "yes" and "no" answers, this means that your leadership style is balanced, that you can use either style—a more outgoing, visionary approach, or a more practical, concrete style. You're one of the lucky ones! Most of us have to learn how to build on our strengths and learn additional skills from "the other" style that we're not so comfortable with!

## ***What do I do with the answers to this quiz?***

Once you've identified your strengths and growth areas in leadership, it is time to make a commitment to yourself to try and build your strengths and decrease your need for growth. Leadership muscles grow through activity, like any other muscle. As a consumer with a mental illness or a developmental disability, you have two tasks in front of you: 1) recovery; 2) building supports within your community so that you are living your life in a way that is whole and honors your true self. These tasks require significant time and effort and are draining! Each of you has felt "drained" or disempowered. Use your newfound knowledge of leadership to make an investment in yourself!

<b>What I learned about myself from the leadership quiz:</b>	<b>Strengths I will practice:</b>	<b>Date practiced:</b>	<b>What I accomplished:</b>
Example: I like to start projects	Starting a project	12/05	I talked to other consumers about approaching the newspaper to run articles on services to people with mental illness



# Leadership Role Play #1

Jenny is 40 years old and has been a consumer of Community Mental Health Services for the past year. She has been diagnosed as a person with depression. Jenny doesn't believe she has any leadership capabilities. She doesn't know how to identify her strengths. She attends a clubhouse where she is responsible for the newsletter. This means that she must get articles from members and staff. She is very quiet and shy, and accomplishes what she sets out to do on time. Jenny thinks that leaders are people you read about in People Magazine. Not her!

1. Does Jenny have any leadership skills? If so, what are they?

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2. How does it help her to know she has leadership qualities?

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3. What difference does leadership make in a person's recovery from mental illness?

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4. What can Jenny do to recognize her strengths?

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# Leadership Role Play #2

Dave is a consumer of Community Mental Health Services. He attends Community Mental Health Board Meetings , as one of two consumers on the Mental Health Board. He is a new member, having just started serving on the board 3 months ago. The board meets once a month. Although people are nice to him, he doesn't feel like he's included. He often feels that he's just there to fill a "consumer requirement" for the Department of Community Health. Dave enjoys serving on boards, he is able to speak comfortably with people, but he is unsure of his leadership skills now. In his spare time, Dave does a lot of listening to his friends, most of whom have mental illness. He has been described as a "great listener". He has been receiving services for seven years, and has seen a lot of change at Community Mental Health, both in terms of staff and consumers.

1. What are Dave's leadership strengths?

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2. What can Dave do to feel that his opinion counts?

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3. How will his actions be leadership actions?

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4. What is leadership for Dave in this situation?

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# Leadership Role Play #3

Teri has two adult daughters that she is very proud of. She sees them every chance she gets. She also works at a grocery store, in the deli department. She has worked there for five years. Teri is a consumer of services at Community Mental Health. She has attended leadership trainings but she has a really hard time figuring out what her strengths are. Teri is quite worried about how her apartment is changing with Section 8 rules. They have said that in the past they were going to have 7 apartments set aside for "Section 8" users. Now the apartment manager is saying they will only have 3. Teri is worried. Is this legal? Teri has been told before that she gets her points across really well. She has been told she is a good writer.

1. What are Teri's leadership strengths?

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2. How can her strengths make a difference in her life?

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3. How can she get others to support her?

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# How to communicate effectively with others

Most folks think they know how to communicate with others. They often think that's a skill that is just kind of "natural." But, when we think about it, who gets POSITIVE attention in the media? Good communicators! Examples of good communicators:



- *Ronald Reagan*. Democrats, Republicans and Independents are agreed: President Reagan was the "great communicator." He recuperated from major scandals (remember Iran-Contra!) with his skills.
- The late *Princess Diana*. People responded overwhelmingly to her ability to almost magically (or so it seemed) connect with them. She left people feeling that they were understood and heard.
- *Johnny Carson*, retired television talk show host. Millions of people watched the Carson show nightly. He helped ensure that his guests felt at ease and that they were able to feel comfortable talking about themselves.

So, what do these communicators have in common? They have the following skills:

- 1) **Empathy**. They can "walk in the other person's shoes."
- 2) **The ability to listen**. They listen to the other person's point of view AND make sure they understand it-before talking about their own point of view.
- 3) **They are assertive, not aggressive**. People who have good communication skills know the difference between assertiveness—speaking up for yourself—and aggression—speaking up for yourself AND putting the other person "down" while you're doing so.

## Rate your Communication Skills!

1. I understand what people are saying to me the first time they say it, and don't need to clarify it.

9 Yes      9 No

2. When people tell me a problem that they are having, I listen to them without giving suggestions or solutions until they ask or I have asked them.

9 Yes      9 No

3. If I am disagreeing with someone, I will disagree with their ideas, not them as a person.

9 Yes      9 No

4. When I am disagreeing with people, I try to find things we DO agree on first.

9 Yes      9 No

5. When I am trying to make a point, I believe it's better to make a longer point so that people really hear what I am saying.

9 Yes      9 No

6. When I disagree with someone, I tell them my concerns.

9 Yes      9 No

7. I will mention my worries or concerns when I have them to people.

9 Yes      9 No

8. I will mention my worries or concerns to my mental health worker.

9 Yes      9 No

9. I will talk about my dreams at my Person Centered Planning Meeting.

9 Yes      9 No

10. I try to ensure that I listen and give back to others.

9 Yes      9 No

## KEY

1. No. Usually, we don't understand what people tell us, specifically if it's a subject that is difficult to talk about, such as hurt feelings, disappointed expectations, etc. A good rule of thumb is to ensure you've heard it by asking: "Did I hear you right? You'd like us to do-----in the future."
2. Yes. Most people really appreciate being listened to. Listening means: understanding THEIR perspective, not offering your own.
3. Yes. Disagreeing with ideas will help you come up with solutions. Winning at someone else's expense won't.
4. Yes. Finding common ground will be helpful in communication. Agreeing on what your common values are, for example, will help you to work on those things you actually disagree about.
5. No. People listen better to short points that are clear. Longer points-more than 10 seconds of speaking-often get lost! If, however, your point includes a "story" from your own personal history, people do listen to stories and appreciate them, so go ahead and talk until your story is complete.
6. Yes! "Feeding back" what your concerns are makes sure that others KNOW them. People are not mind-readers and they appreciate the opportunity to listen.
7. Yes. Sharing who you are with people enables them to get to know you and it allows them to help you. None of us is truly ever "independent"! We are all "interdependent"; that is, connected to each other.
8. Yes. Your job is to advocate for your recovery! Telling your mental health worker is just part of that job.
9. Yes! Listen to others and you will find your recovery is easier. Recovery is best made when we have supports and when we are part of community-that means others listen and assist us and we them.
10. Yes! Your Person Centered Planning Meeting is YOUR meeting! This is the time for you to be talking about your hopes, fears, concerns and supports.

# The First Pillar of Communication: Empathy

## *Practicing Empathy.*

When we are in the midst of our own recovery, practicing empathy for others may seem especially difficult. Empathy, or deep understanding, is something that we yearn for others to give US. It is odd that if we are able to be gentle and understanding of glitches in the lives of people we know, we become more gentle with ourselves. That gentleness helps us grow! It allows us to try new ways of being and of doing! It also allows us to make mistakes and to begin again. Practicing empathy for others fundamentally changes us. Note here that I am using the word "practice": empathy isn't like a faucet to be turned off and on. It is a skill that has to be exercised.

In the spaces below, identify people who you'd like to practice your empathy skills on. These are usually people who "get on our nerves", whose side of a story is hard for us to see. Who would that be in your life?

Who would I like to be more empathetic towards: \_\_\_\_\_

What do they do that is challenging for me? \_\_\_\_\_

What can I learn from them? \_\_\_\_\_

Date I will practice empathy with them: \_\_\_\_\_

How do you become more empathic?? You show the following: kindness, sensitivity, and gentleness as you are listening to others. What do you get out of it? More kindness towards yourself, and an increased connection with others. That increased connection is extremely important for people who have mental illness or developmental disabilities. Often, we feel dis-connected as well as dis-empowered.

## The Second Pillar of Communication: Listening

### *Listening "how-to's":*

1. Provide the person with your full attention. If you don't have time to listen, say so. Use a phrase like this: "I need to finish something up but I'd like to talk with you. Can we do this tomorrow?"
2. Let the person that's talking finish what they're saying with no interruptions.
3. When the person has finished, feed-back what they have just said.
4. Watch your body language!!! Maintain steady eye contact, without staring, and keep an open body posture.



## The Third Pillar of Communication: Assertiveness

What is assertiveness? It is the ability to speak up for your needs and concerns respectfully. This is one of the hardest of skills to learn simply because people tend to UNDER "speak-up" (PASSIVE) or OVER "speak-up" (AGGRESSION). Assertiveness is particularly hard for people who have felt that their perspective HASN'T been listened to by people who have power or funding dollars. If you make your point aggressively, it is easy for people who are listening to get distracted by your anger and lose your point. If you make your point passively, people may wonder what on earth your point was! It's a difficult balance.



Examples of Assertive Statements:	Examples of Aggressive Statements:	Examples of Passive Statements:
<p>When <u>asking</u>: "I'd really like more attention paid to me when I am doing well, instead of staff talking about my symptoms." Focusing on what you want (notice the phrase "I'd really like...")</p>	<p>When <u>asking</u>: "Your staff needs to learn better skills when they're working with people with mental illness" (notice the anger in this statement and the <b>blaming</b>)</p>	<p>When <u>asking</u>: "Maybe there aren't enough staff to do this, but...." (Notice the <b>unwillingness to state the need directly</b>).</p>
<p>When <u>disagreeing</u>: "I see it differently. Here's what I think...." (See the <b>'I' statement?</b> This also looks like somebody that is genuinely open to different ideas, but still has his/her own!)</p>	<p>When <u>disagreeing</u>: "Your ideas never work for me." (Watch out for <b>NEVER's</b> and for <b>criticizing the person</b>)</p>	<p>When <u>disagreeing</u>: "I don't know, maybe, but really, what do you think about...?" (See this person's <b>hesitation?</b> The unwillingness to go "out on a limb" ?)</p>
<p>When <u>making a point</u>: "In my experience, I've seen this work..." (Notice the reference to "my" and "what works". It's <b>optimistic &amp; solution focused</b>).</p>	<p>When <u>making a point</u>: "My idea will work. We should do this." (Notice the <b>should</b> and the insistence that there is only one right answer!)</p>	<p>When <u>making a point</u>: "I'm not sure, I had an idea once...." (Feel the hesitation again? <b>The avoidance of taking responsibility of your ideas?</b>)</p>
<p>When <u>feeling anger</u>: "I'm feeling pretty angry right now. Can we talk about this later?" (Notice how this person <b>doesn't "erupt"</b> and is <b>responsible</b> enough to ask about having a conversation at a later time!</p>	<p>When <u>feeling anger</u>: "You have really made me mad." Or, talking in a very heated and intense tone at a meeting! <b>Notice the "you" in the sentence.</b></p>	<p>When <u>feeling anger</u>: "Are you mad at me?" (Notice the unwillingness to "own" anger).</p>

## Tips to Increase Assertiveness.....

1. Use "I" statements....."I would like", etc.
2. Avoid using "shoulds, oughts". Use questions such as, "What about .....instead?"
3. State what you would like to see. "Here's something I've thought about. It sounds good to me. Here it is:" Then, describe it to the group.
4. Watch your tone!!! Check it-if you sound angry, chances are you're moving from assertion to aggression.
5. One of the best ways to increase your assertiveness is to take yourself a bit more lightly and use humor. When you're speaking, don't make your issue the most important issue in the world. It's important, but people listen better when they're listening to something that's presented lightly as opposed to intense emotion.

Role Play #1

LaTanya is the mother of two children, ages 2 and 4. She has been labeled as a person with a developmental disability and as a person with schizophrenia. She receives services from a Supports Coordinator at Community Mental Health. At her Person Centered Planning Meeting, her Supports Coordinator ignores her, as does everyone else. They decide her goals for her and she is confused. Then she gets angry. She knows Person Centered Planning is the law and that she should be running this meeting. She also knows she should be talking about her goals and dreams.

*Directions: Role-play that you're LaTanya, confronting your team about this. Practice assertiveness using the tips given above!*

# Role Play #2

Dave, 37, is a consumer of Community Mental Health Services. He has been given a label of major depression. He has been on a number of medications, none of which have worked very well. Recently, he was given a new medication by his psychiatrist. This medication caused side effects that he didn't like, and he wasn't sure it was working very well. When he told his doctor his concerns, he said, "Well, Dave, that's about all there is out there. You'll just have to get used to it." Dave likes his doctor but he didn't like that remark. He felt like the doctor didn't take his concerns seriously and just wanted to rush him out of the office.

## **QUESTIONS:**

1. What are the kinds of statements Dave could make to his doctor that are assertive?

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2. What are the kinds of statements Dave could make to his doctor that are aggressive?

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3. What are the kinds of statements Dave could make that are passive?

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## A Special Note on Anger & Self-Advocacy

Earlier, the issue of the danger of sounding angry when advocating was covered: *beware, avoid it, watch-out!* Undercutting yourself is something that you just don't want to do. The difficulty here is that most people who have been consumers of Mental Health Services have PLENTY of VERY GOOD REASONS TO BE MAD. So, we have to figure out how to channel that anger into conversation with people who don't feel the same level of intensity that we do. If you simply bully people with your point, what do you gain? Getting stuff off your chest. But you probably don't gain allies or understanding. And you most likely won't see change, people will simple be polite while they're figuring out how to wind-up their meeting with you. What is particularly helpful is being aware of your "hot" buttons and thinking about ways to practice alternative and different ways of coping instead of getting angry and being less effective than you can be.

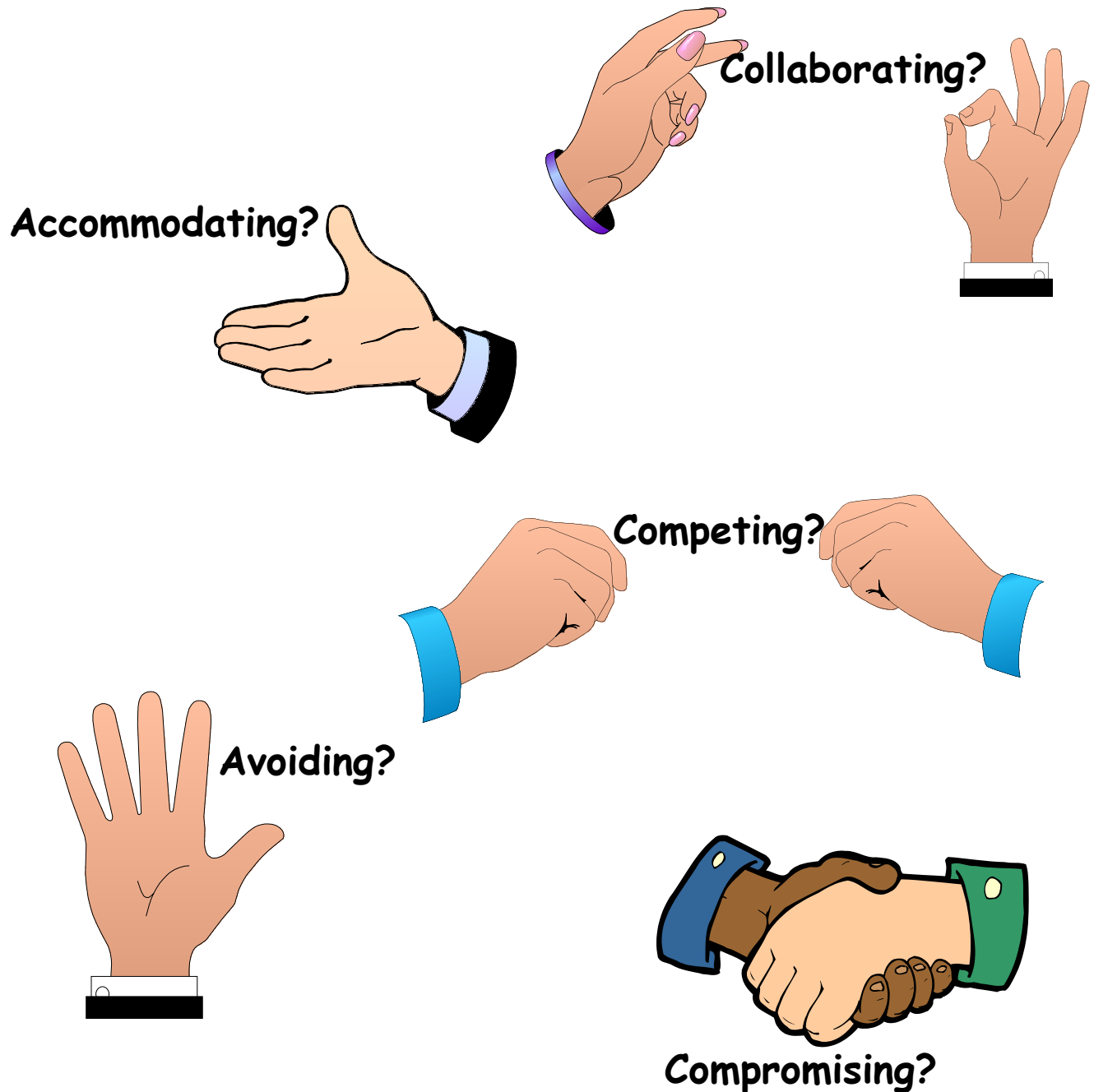
My "Hot Buttons"	Actions I take when I am angry that decrease my effectiveness:	One behavior I'd like to change:	I will practice this behavior by:
Example: <i>I get mad when I feel "talked down to"</i>	<i>"I get very quiet and don't talk with the person"</i>	<i>"I would like to make my point with the person, even though I am feeling condescended to"</i>	October 1

## Using conflict resolution strategies when conflict occurs:

**SO!** You've practiced all your good leadership communication skills and you have a conflict. Congratulations! That means you're communicating, you're representing *your* perspective. Resolving conflicts, however, is obviously what you're interested in, not simply *having* them! For this portion of your training, please take a moment and think about what happens to you physiologically when you're having a conflictual experience. Some people start feeling a rush of adrenaline. Others get the typical sweaty palms. What messages does your body send to you? What do you do with those messages? Ignore them? Have the conflict anyway?

Examples of conflicts I've had recently:	My physical reaction:	What I did:
Disagreed with Supports Coordinator	Had a hard time speaking, sweaty palms	Didn't tell her what I thought

This may give you an idea of how you feel about conflicts. The trick is, however, to simply go ahead and feel anxious and attempt to resolve a conflict anyway. In order to do that, though, you need to learn a little bit about how you approach conflict. Which is why this curriculum asks that you take the instrument now called the "Thomas Kilman Conflict Mode Instrument." Once you've completed the instrument, look at your scores and see which "type" you usually are:



The instrument will explain to you just what each one of the areas means. If you notice that you score high in "accommodating", for example, you tend to, in a situation involving conflicts, meet the needs of others at the expense of your own needs. It is VERY important to learn what your "style" is so that you can learn to build on it and "try out" different styles! So, take the instrument!

My conflict resolution style:	What I like about my style:	What I'd like improved:	Another style I'd like to try:	For what situation?:	Date I want to accomplish this by:
<i>example:</i> "Compromising"	<i>example:</i> I'm "compromising" which means that I am concerned about being fair	<i>example:</i> I'd like to ensure that I don't "give" too easily or quickly	<i>example:</i> I'd like to try "collaborating"	<i>example:</i> It seems to me that when I talk with my Supports Coordinator, I sometimes just want to stop the conversation instead of thinking of creative solutions to what we're talking about	<i>example:</i> I want to build on my skills by: Christmas, 2001.

## So you know your conflict resolution style, now what???



Now that you are aware of your style, it's very important to know solid skills. Before teaching you skills, however, please think about situations you've been in where you wished you would have known a little more about conflict resolution. For example, if you interact with a landlord, have there been times when you felt your privacy was not respected? With your employer, have you ever felt as though you were not treated with dignity or respect? With mental health workers, have you ever felt in a "one-down" position? Many of us (myself included) have been in that situation and wanted additional skills. Think of the last conflict you had, how you handled it, and what you wished you'd have known more about in the space below:

A conflict I've had:	What I liked about what I did:	What I would have liked to have done differently:	What skills would be helpful to me:
Example: I had a conflict with a family member recently over my medication	I let them know I appreciated their concern	I got angry and yelled at the end of our talk	How to control my anger



## CONFLICT RESOLUTION MODEL: "P-A-U-S-E"

Technique:	Steps & Questions to Ask:
Problem identification	Each person states an issue from his/her own point of view: <i>What are we talking (or not talking) about?</i>
Agreement about the issue	Agreement & alignment between parties about what the "issue" is: <i>What do you &amp; the person you're having the conflict with have in common? For example: if it's your physician, you both have the common hope for good health for you.</i>
Understand the other	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What is my style as I handle this conflict? Am I "accommodating, competing, collaborative, compromising or avoiding?</li> <li>2. What is the other person's style? Recognize styles.</li> <li>3. Appreciate their style</li> </ol>
System improvement	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What system needs improvement?</li> <li>2. Is there any way we can work together to improve the system?</li> </ol>
Empowering options, closure	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What agreements will help us work better?</li> <li>2. How can we generate a number so we can creatively choose among them?</li> <li>3. When shall we revisit our agreement to see if it's working?</li> </ol>

## Role Play #1

Tina has four children, all of whom have special needs. She asked for 6 hours of respite for her children each day, but her Supports Coordinator told her she is only eligible for two hours per day. She is feeling frustrated and worried. Why won't Community Mental Health provide her with what she needs? She believes that Community Mental Health has these resources but that they just are not supporting her. She has talked to her Supports Coordinator and to her Supports Coordinator's supervisor. Now, she would like to have the same talk again, with both of them in the room, using the conflict resolution process.

## Role Play #2

Veronica has a Person Centered Planning Meeting scheduled and when she goes to her meeting, only her Supports Coordinator shows up. Her mother apparently, who Veronica invited, called the Supports Coordinator at the last minute and canceled. Her other guest, her employer, also called her Supports Coordinator at the last minute and canceled. The Supports Coordinator tells Veronica that it's really important to "just go ahead with the meeting" and when Veronica says she would like to wait, the Supports Coordinator becomes more insistent. How can Veronica maintain her good relationship with her Supports Coordinator but still get her point across?

## Role Play #3

Tim recently got out of the hospital after having been very depressed. He is working at an insurance company two days per week. Recently, he had a disagreement with his supervisor about a project. Tim had an idea about how to get paperwork done quicker, and his boss said, "Oh, you people always get ideas" and then laughed. Tim thought he was making fun of his mental illness but he's not sure. He hasn't spoken to his boss, other than what's necessary, for a couple of days. How can he resolve this conflict?

## ASSUMPTIONS THAT DON'T WORK!

*Listed below are assumptions that sometimes we have when we're having a conflict. Usually, these assumptions tend to make it harder to resolve the conflict rather than easier. I've listed some of them here, as I've collected them over the years. There are lots of good reasons why people can reach the conclusions below, (and sometimes these conclusions may be accurate), so the point here is not just to poke some gentle fun at our personal "glitches". But rather remind ourselves of how our assumptions impact our actions.*

1. If I express my anger, I'll feel better and we'll get to a solution more quickly.
2. People know when their actions cause a problem, so I really don't need to discuss it with them.
3. People SHOULD: \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Talking about the problem will make it worse.
5. It really helps to talk to A LOT of people about my concern.

## ASSUMPTIONS THAT WORK!

*Listed below are assumptions that people often hold when they're resolving a conflict in a way that is successful to them and to the other person.*

1. There is missing information that probably contributed to this issue.
2. This conflict is probably about a systems issue rather than a person.
3. We will have a productive working relationship in the future.
4. We can positively impact this.
5. We can generate a number of solutions and try them out.
6. We can experiment.
7. We can disclose our assumptions to one another.
8. People generally have positive intent.

## Questions for Consideration:

1. Which assumptions do you use? What happens when you use an assumption that doesn't work?
2. Which of the assumptions that "work" do you like? How can you use that as part of your recovery?

## Person Leadership & Continual Learning

Recovery is a process and a journey, not a destination that you magically arrive at. Keeping yourself "sharp" is the best way to ensure that the "glitches" or "speed-bumps" you run into actually have meaning. What this means is that you have to learn from your setbacks as well as your successes. Below are some of the ways to be a "continual learner":

- U Keep an open mind
- U Try something new: learn about music, for example
- U Connect with people
- U Help out - share your talents
- U Do a spiritual practice such as prayer or meditation
- U Listen to your instincts and follow them: what is it *YOU* want to learn about today?
- U Make every day a day in which you learn *ONE* thing new
- U When you have a success, ask yourself: what made this successful?
- U When you have a setback, ask yourself: how can I improve next time?
- U No blaming or shaming allowed!

You've now finished with the Personal Leadership Section of this manual!  
Congratulations!

# Introduction

This section of our leadership manual addresses community leadership. In this section, you will learn many skills that will help you on your leadership journey.

## What Is Community Leadership?

After completing this section, I should be able to identify:

- L reasons to get involved in the community
- L my connection with "passions"
- L the power of volunteering
- L things to consider before getting involved
- L what I might have to offer



### ***Definitions of "community":***

There are many different views on what the word "community" means. It means different things to different people. This can be influenced by personal experiences, cultural expectations, interests, travel and many other things, such as family friends, neighbors, and anyone else who cares about you. Community can ignite hope & passion in all of us, creating support and a sense of being needed.

*The dictionary defines "community" as:*

- \*a group of people living in the same area, under the same government
- \*a group of people having common interests
- \*sharing, participating or fellowship
- \*identity

*How do you define "community"?*

- \*what does the word mean to you?
- \*what makes you feel connected to your community?
- \*how would you like to see your community improve?

However you define "community", it's important to realize that all communities are made up of people of all types. It's not just the rich and powerful that influence communities. Some influential people such as Mother Theresa, Mahatma Gandhi, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. had no official government title, were not wealthy, and were not leaders of big corporations. You can influence your community even if you don't have an official job or position - "*your community needs you!*" There are many personal reasons we all have to be more involved in our community. You can learn the skills needed to become more involved in your community.

Most of us realize we need to be a part of the community in order to be happy. While there might be times in our lives when that is difficult, the sooner we get re-connected, the better off we are. But it's important to become involved in the community for another reason. . . . .



***You are needed!***

Sometimes we don't feel needed because we look outside our windows and it appears that life is going on without us. We see people who are happy and involved, and they aren't asking for anything from us. They sure don't look like they need us. When we feel this way, we're forgetting two important truths: #1: Many people don't know how to ask for our help, or how to reach us; and #2: Many people don't realize what we can do for them, because they haven't had a chance to see what we have to offer.

***A man walked past the poor, the sick and the suffering and asked God, "why don't you do something for these people?" God responded, "I have done something, I made you." . . . Paraphrased from and ancient Sufi saying***

Take a moment to answer the questions below to help you define what community is to you and how you would like to be involved:

1. What is my community?

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2. What are my interests in my community?

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3. What would I like to be involved in in my community?

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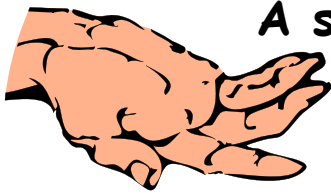
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## A special opportunity for people with mental illness:

People who are experiencing or recovering from mental illnesses are especially needed by their communities. They are the true experts about mental illness. Here are some areas where their help is needed:

### *Stigma Reduction:*

Unfortunately, the mass media has contributed to some terrible misconceptions about people with mental illness. People who live with mental illness are the experts who can help change these erroneous perceptions. We can battle these perceptions head on through public education and awareness, or we can educate people on a personal level. By working, volunteering and interacting with people in the community, they will see how valuable we are and how wrongly mental illness has been portrayed.

### *Questions on Stigma:*

What stigma has affected you? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Make an action plan for reducing stigma in your life: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

I will: \_\_\_\_\_

By: \_\_\_\_\_



**Input in the mental health system:**

Both in the U.S. and most other countries, people with mental illnesses have not had much input into the services they receive. That is changing. Some people don't think it's changing fast enough, but even if that's the case, there are certainly more chances for consumers of services to influence "the system" of service providers than ever before. In fact, the input of consumers has become a "hot commodity"! There are many agencies and organizations who are actively seeking input. The great thing about many of these groups is all they want is your opinion. You don't have to research, study or try to present all sides of a situation. Just tell them what you think. Our community needs us, even if no one's beating down our doors begging for help.

**Examples of what you can do to get involved in your community:**

Many of us feel like we don't have any special talents or skills that community organizations can use. We see those involved in the community as special people with advanced skills or talents. The truth is that everyone has something that can be useful to the community. Many community organizations need volunteers to help with jobs like these and would welcome any help they could get.

***Can you...***

Listen to someone	Answer phones	Put stamps on envelopes
Talk to someone who's lonely	Take notes	Type notes
Help clean up after meetings	Make coffee	Serve snacks
Give your opinion	Type	Cook
Wipe off tables	Take the trash out	Greet people
Make phone calls	Pass out handouts	File
Sort	Staple	Collate
Send e-mail		

These are only a few. Can you think of others? \_\_\_\_\_

***"One is not born into the world to do everything, but to do something." . . . . -Henry David Thoreau***

## ***What's in it for me?***

As we've just discussed, feeling needed can be powerful and exciting, but we need to think about ourselves also, don't we? Taking care of ourselves is our most important job. We can't help others if we don't take care of ourselves first. So how can being more involved in the community help us take care of ourselves?



### **Satisfy our need for a sense of "belonging":**

Feeling like we belong and are needed, are very important for our health and well-being. The number of friends one has, the number of people in one's family is not as important as the feeling. When we feel like we belong, it has a powerful effect on all areas of our lives. Getting more involved with our community can help increase this sense of belonging.

### **Connect, or reconnect with your passion:**

We all do many things each day that we may or may not want to do. When is the last time you did something you *really* wanted to do? Is there something you'd like to do, but don't have the experience, training, money or education to try? When you were a kid, what did you want to do when you grew up? Becoming involved in the community could be your ticket to doing more of the things you feel passionate about.

When Sidney Portier retired from acting, he was rich, successful and respected. He was hailed as one of the greatest actors ever, but when he arrived in New York City he was broke, homeless and had a thick Caribbean accent that made it difficult to get acting jobs. He had no formal acting education or training. He knew he'd need some help from his new community if he was going to make it. So, he went to the owners of a local theater and struck a deal. He volunteered as a janitor for free in exchange for acting lessons, and letting him hang out during rehearsals. He traded a little hard work for the opportunity to connect to his passion.

Here are some examples of community opportunities that could help connect, or reconnect you with your passion:

- L *Do you enjoy plays, opera, or music?* Volunteer to be an usher at a local theater.
- L *Are you fascinated by astronomy?* Volunteer at the planetarium.
- L *Have you always loved animals?* Volunteer at the Humane Society or advocate for animal rights.
- L *Did you always want to be a firefighter?* Join the volunteer fire department
- L *Do you get excited when you hear the roar of a "muscle car's" engine revving up?* Volunteer to help organize or set up for the next car show in your area.

What are some things you'd like to do if you had the time, money, training, education, or resources? List a few here:

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What people or organizations in your community do those types of things?

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Where could you find out more information about this?

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Getting involved with things you feel passionately about makes it easier to meet people, start conversations and develop social skills. It connects you to other people who share values and beliefs that are similar to yours. Volunteers are happier and more connected with their communities, have a strong sense of self-image, self-esteem, empowerment, and feel more purpose, meaning and community acceptance.



***The power of  
volunteerism:***

*One of the things I keep learning is that the  
secret of being happy is doing things for other  
people." . . .*

*Dick Gregory*

The happiest person I know is my grandmother. Despite the fact that she lives alone and has many serious health conditions, her days are filled with a joy that is clear to anyone who knows her. There are many reason she's a happy person. Some of them she has control over, and some of them are just plain good luck. But when I ask her why she's happy, the first thing she mentions is the work she does for other people. There are countless famous people and ordinary people over thousands of years who have talked about the importance of doing things for others. Almost every religion in the world is sacred text that extol the virtues of service to others. Scientists and researchers even agree about the power of volunteering. Research has indicated that people who help others may be happier, healthier, and more connected to their communities.

It seems all people can benefit from volunteering and community service, but people with mental illnesses might have additional benefits. Research studies and published anecdotal stories have concluded that it may actually help people recover from and/or cope with mental illness. Studies have shown that volunteering helps people with mental illnesses stay well, improve their self image, increase feelings of empowerment, and increase feelings of self worth. Volunteer activities have also been cited as an effective way for people with mental illnesses to gain skills and experience needed for paid employment and social situations. In addition, research have participants describe feeling more accepted by other members of society, feeling like their lives had purpose and meaning, and feeling less isolated.

In one study conducted by an Occupational Therapist and a consumer of Mental Health Services, another consumer "John" (*not his real name*), described some of the benefits of volunteering at a library:

- L "It cuts back on the auditory hallucinations to come here (volunteering at the library) . . . It's relaxing here . . . I don't feel threatened or scared here . . . I don't have schizophrenic breakdowns or relapses." "I feel good when I go home . . . fantastic, yes I did all that and the people will benefit from my work."

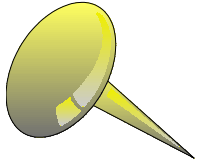
"Bob" (*not his real name*), lives in Michigan and volunteers his time to a local clubhouse. He teaches computer classes to other consumers and provides technical support to the clubhouse. He is also active in many other areas of the community, including providing free technical support to local musicians and artists. Here is what Bob says about his experiences:

- L "To spend time with others may be the highest use of our time. A volunteer gives of themselves and of their time to others. However, the volunteer often receives in return much more than they give. Volunteers are given the opportunity to look at the world from the perspective of others and also have the opportunity to get out of self."

### ***Improved social skills:***

Many people believe social skills can't be improved. Some people are popular and well liked and others aren't. Some people make friends easily and can talk to strangers with ease. Others are too shy, embarrassed or awkward to make new friends. It's just the way they're built. Fortunately, these opinions are wrong. Research and the personal experience of millions of everyday people has proven otherwise. It may be true that some people seem "born to socialize" and make friends with little effort. However, there's still hope for the rest of us! Social skills can be learned and improved. It's not easy though.

<p>What are my strengths in regards to my social skills?</p>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>What are my needs in regards to my social skills?</p>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>How can I build on my strengths?</p>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>How can I address my needs?</p>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>



## ***TIPS TO MAKE SOCIALIZING EASIER:***

### ***Having an "excuse" to socialize:***

Working with others on a project is one of the easiest ways to improve social skills. We have a reason to be in the social setting (working on the project), so we don't have to feel we don't belong.

### ***Having something to start conversations:***

Starting conversations is often tough - especially with strangers! It helps if you have something you can all relate to to talk about. That's why strangers often talk about the weather - it's something that affects all of us. Being involved in the community works the same way. You can talk about the meeting you attended, an upcoming event, something you're concerned about, etc. Or you can ask questions about the other person's involvement. *For example:* "How long have you been involved with this group (project, whatever)?" "Are you going to the rally in October?" "Why did you get involved with this group (project, whatever)?"

### ***Answers to common social situations:***

Sociologists tell us the first thing strangers ask each other is "what's your name?" The most common thing asked next is "what do you do?" People who are involved in the community can answer that questions with ease, and their answer usually earns respect. For example, if someone asked Raymond Pierce (*see "Profiles in Leadership" on page 38 & 39*), what he does, he can answer "I'm a social advocate". Sullen Hummell (*page 47*) can say "I lead an organization that trains police departments how to respond to people with mental illnesses."

### ***Practice makes perfect:***

Social skills are like any other skills. It takes practice to improve them, and the best practice is that which occurs in the "real world". Being involved in the community gives us a chance to practice, but it takes some of the stress off because we have lots to do and talk about.

Take time to complete the following exercise:

What do I say when people ask "what do you do?" \_\_\_\_\_

By what date will I practice? \_\_\_\_\_

How can I improve on that? \_\_\_\_\_

### **Profiles in Leadership: Raymond Pierce**

Raymond Pierce embodies the words "community involvement." On any given day Raymond can be found helping out at Fresh Start clubhouse, participating in a meeting of a community organization, advocating for some one else or enjoying a cultural event or local restaurant. He is known by countless people in the community and has a wide network of friends. "It's important to me that I'm a part of a community," Raymond says. He also feels it's helped with his mental illness: "It gives me the insight I need. I need to belong... it gives me strength. It improves my sense of self. It keeps me going."

Raymond exhibits community leadership in many different roles. At the clubhouse, he leads the lunch and menu-planning efforts. "I teach the other consumers how to cook, how to plan meals, how to budget... (these are) all skills they need if they want to live on their own." He often mentors new clubhouse members.

#### ***Here are few more comments Raymond made about his community involvement:***

"Being a part of the community keeps me alive! I love my community. I pay attention to the concerns of the community. I talk to people and ask what I can do. I keep my eyes and ears open and stay involved. It shows my love. It keeps me informed on different opportunities and enlightening activities. I'm informed about housing opportunities and other situations. It's opened lots of new doors. Socially, I'm a better person."



***Can it be difficult, being involved in so many things?***

"Yes... sometimes. I've learned to develop a positive attitude, to be patient. And I look and listen for directions from other people I respect."

***What advice would you have for other consumers who are thinking about getting more involved with their community?***

"Start with one or two peers. Show friendship to someone. Try to understand someone on a one-to-one basis. I try to make myself available to a person... be a friend to someone. Start there."

***You do a lot of public speaking. Does that ever make you anxious or nervous?***

Yes, some times. But I try to calm myself down. I use relaxation techniques to help stay focused. I always open myself to new approaches, listen to others for some new answers."

***What can others do to people who want to get more involved?***

"Offer support, friendship, consideration, and recognition. They need to hear, 'You're doing a good job.'"

***How do you keep from feeling burnt out?***

"I take time out to do something entertaining... go to the theater, read a book, participate in hobbies... do other things to get my mind off of it."

We could spend all day talking about the advantages of becoming more involved in our communities and we'd still leave something out. That's because the advantages are truly limitless. Let's wrap up by looking a few ideas on the following page:

*A few more reasons to get more involved in your community:*

- To meet interesting people
- To learn a new skill or talent
- As a resume builder or gain job experience
- To advocate for something you feel strongly about
- To help feel happy
- To find more people who care about you
- To be a part of the solution
- To gain respect
- To learn "how things get done"
- Some one's got to do it - why not you?
- For fun
- For a change of pace
- To keep skills sharp - "use it or loose it"
- To have something to do
- To feel needed
- To be seen as valuable to the community
- To set a good example
- To be around committed people who believe in what they're doing
- To experience the satisfying feeling of being part of a team
- To feel better about yourself
- To explore new potential careers
- For something fun and meaningful to do
- To help others
- To help advance a "cause" or idea
- To make the world a better place
- To remind yourself how valuable you are
- To learn more about your community
- To improve social skills
- For a challenge
- To have something to talk about
- To help your voice be heard
- To add structure to your life
- To share your personal experiences
- To help a friend
- To know what's going on in your area
- To learn and practice in a "safe" environment

## ***Things to consider:***



### ***How do you like to interact with people?***

We all have ways we prefer to interact with other people. For example, some would prefer to work in small groups, and others like to be around as many people as possible. Some people get really mad when they're treated like a child. There's no "right or wrong", but it's important to know, and let others know, how we like to interact. Here are a few questions to ask yourself:

### ***What do people need to know about me?***

Are there things that really get on your nerves? Are there things you don't like to do or talk about? It's important to know these things about ourselves, so we can tell others. If you know you don't like large crowds, you should look to get involved in small groups. If you hate to write, make sure the people in your group know that so they don't ask you to take notes at a meeting.

### ***What do I respect/admire in others?***

Are you impressed by people who are confident and bold, or are you drawn more to the quieter type? Teaming up with people you respect can be rewarding. This isn't the same as finding people who are most like us, though that can be rewarding also. Some times we see qualities in others that we wish were more developed in ourselves. For example, if you wish you were more outgoing, team up with someone who is and see how they do it.

### ***What do I respond well to?:***

Do you like it when people talk to you in private, or would you rather discuss things with others around? Do you like to talk on the phone or do you prefer conversations face to face? If some one disagrees with you, is there a certain way you prefer to discuss it?

**What really bugs me, or makes me feel angry or upset?**

We all have certain things that really bug us. Some hate traffic. Others don't like answering lots of questions about themselves. What bugs you? Let others know.

**Is there anything unique about me people should know?**

Within the first hour of getting up in the morning, I don't like to talk and I don't have much to say. People who don't know me well are surprised by this because I normally talk a lot. On a camping trip once, a friend thought I was made at him. He kept bugging me, asking "what's wrong?" "why are you mad?" "what did I do wrong?" As I said, I don't like conversations in the morning, so this irritated me even more! It would have been better if I warned him in advance that I don't like to talk in the morning. Is there anything about interacting with you that others should know?

***Disclosure:***

As you become more involved in the community you might have to decide whether you want to disclose that you have, or are recovering from a mental illness. This is a touch decision and there's not a right or wrong answer. You have to figure out what works best for you. It often helps to get the opinions of other people. Here are some people who might give you valuable input:

- L other consumers who are involved in the community
- L friends and family whose opinion you respect
- L members of community organizations
- L professionals who've helped you in the past
- L consumer advocates, professionals or leaders

Others can give you valuable input, but you must be the one to make the final decision.

### **Potential advantages of not disclosing your illness:**

- L people may have pre-conceived notions about mental illness and judge you accordingly.
- L people may discuss your illness or experiences outside of the confines you feel comfortable with
- L you may be seen as a "person with a mental illness" instead of just a person.

Here are some comments from "John" (*not his real name*), a person who decided not to disclose his mental illness while volunteering at a library.

*"I think it would be damaging if they were to know that I suffer from a mental illness . . . I think I'd be treated differently. I wear my (library) ID tag and it makes me feel like a staff person . . . I like it that way."*

### **Potential advantages of disclosing your illness:**

- L you can reduce stigma by helping the community see people with mental illnesses as valuable, contributing members of society.
- L you might help the people you work with get to know and understand you.
- L not having to feel like you have a secret you're trying to hide.
- L you can openly talk about what helps you feel less anxious, less depressed, etc.
- L you can openly seek assistance dealing with symptoms, if you need it.
- L other people can learn from you sharing your experiences.
- L you may be able to request additional support or services.
- L makes requesting accommodations easier, if needed.

When asked if she was glad she disclosed her mental illness, Suellen Hummell answered, *"yes, because I feel the only way to overcome stigma is to let people know I have this illness but I'm still not that different from them."*



### ***Find Collaborators:***

When we hear the word "collaborator" we often think of a criminal conspiracy. That might be because we Americans watch too many crime shows on TV! The word collaborate just means to work together. If you want to get more involved in the community, you need to work with others. Here are some ideas of how you can use the help of others.

***Support Person:***

It is very important to identify someone you can talk opening and honestly to. We all run into times and situations that make us doubt ourselves. The more involved you are, the more likely this will occur. That's okay, it's an opportunity for growth, but it's also tough to deal with alone. When you find this person, tell him or her about your plan for involvement. Ask him/her to support you and listen to you. Tell him/her the reasons you want to get more involved and ask him/her to remind you of these reasons if you get discouraged.

***Others:***

There are many other people, besides your support person that can help in a variety of ways. It's best to build a "team" of people to support you. Here are some things they can do:

- L encourage you
- L go to events and places with you
- L listen to you
- L offer advice and ideas
- L help you think through plans and ideas
- L introduce you to people who can help further
- L keep you on track
- L teach you skills that they have
- L give you a place to "vent" or "let off steam"
- L help you proofread and improve things you write

What person would I like to ask to be my support person?	
By when will I ask that person?	
What specifically will I ask of that person?	

## How to get involved with my community:



After completing this section, I should be able to identify:

- L two ways to get more involved
- L have a plan to gather information needed for community action

### ***How do people become community leaders?***

There are many ways to get more involved in our community. Sometimes we are asked. Sometimes we become involved as a natural process of something going on in our lives. For example, while attending a clubhouse, a person might be asked to help out with a project the club is working on. No way is better than another, but let's take a look at two of the ways people often become community leaders.

*"We must be the change we wish to see."*

*Mahatma Gandhi*

### ***Start with a need:***

Our country was founded by ordinary men and women who felt that things needed to change. Many were not looking to become leaders and had no leadership experience. They simply couldn't tolerate things the way they were, and realized that things would not change unless someone took action. They started with the need for change and took action.

Suellen Hummell of Ann Arbor, Michigan is one such person (See *"Profiles in Community Leadership, page 47, 48 & 49*). She wasn't looking, but she found a need. One day she witnessed an event that changed the course of her life. After observing the local police respond to a call for help at the clubhouse she was attending, she and other members felt the police in their community needed training on how to properly help people with mental illnesses in crisis situations. She had no idea what to do, or how to make that change happen, but she knew there was a need. She started very small and before she knew it she had created an important community task force that has trained police officers and other members of the community. This task force includes powerful and influential politicians, police officers, program directors, attorneys and advocates. At first, Suellen didn't have a plan, experience or special training. She only had a need, and a willingness to address that need. Things in her community had to change. That's where she started.

*Something in the community needs to change:*

*"The very essence of leadership is that you have to have a vision."*

*Theodore Hesburgh*

When starting with a need, a good place to start is by developing a vision of what needs to change. Vision simply means that you can identify how you'd like things to be. Then simply describe this, and you have a vision statement that can be shared with others. It's important to have a vision statement, because humans tend to think visually.

Have someone say the following words out loud and write down what you immediately thought of when you heard these words?

Hamburger: \_\_\_\_\_

A fast car: \_\_\_\_\_

A beautiful landscape : \_\_\_\_\_

Chances are you didn't think of the dictionary definition of a hamburger, or a story about the importance of having a fast car. Most people, when hearing these words, or any words, get a mental picture. You might have "*seen*" a hamburger, or a restaurant when you heard the word hamburger. You may have even seen the advertising logo of the McDonald's *golden arches*.

If you can visualize the change you'd like to see in your community, it will be easier to find others who will support and help you. It is also easier for people to identify ways they can help, or remember information that can be of assistance.

Change is scary, but the alternative is that life remains as it is today for the rest of our lives. *Hint: Change comes easier when you use your community supports!*



## ***Profiles in Leadership: Suellen Hummell:***

Suellen Hummell of Ann Arbor, Michigan had no intention of becoming a community leader, but one day she witnessed an event that changed the course of her life. After observing the local police respond to a call for help at the clubhouse she was attending, she and other members felt the police in their community needed training on how to properly to help people with mental illnesses in crisis situations. "I saw how the people around me reacted and I felt there had to be a better way for people with mental illness and officers to relate to each other."

Her initial idea was simple: to invite police officers to the clubhouse to get to know consumers in a non-crisis situation and to hear what it's like to live with a mental illness. "I thought it was just going to be a little project. "I thought it would be a five or ten minute talk to the officers at shift change and I'd invite them to come by (the clubhouse) at lunch."

She invited community leaders, advocates and representatives from the police and local government to a meeting to discuss her plan and get input. From there the project took on a life of its own. She now heads a city-wide task that includes a Congresswoman and a former State Representative, police representatives, the Mayor's Officer, The Director and several key administrators at Washtenaw Community Mental Health, the Clubhouse Program Coordinator, other consumers, advocates, attorneys and volunteers. The group held a two-day training for the Ann Arbor Police Department and plans to do further trainings and events.

Suellen also serves as a parent representative on the Washtenaw interagency coordinating council for infants and toddlers (an organization of agencies that help families of children with disabilities) and a Board member of Trailblazers (A non-profit community arts program). Suellen's and input was crucial in developing this training.

We asked Suellen a few questions about her community involvement:

***\*Has being involved helped you feel more connected to your community?***

"Oh yes, it makes me feel like I'm a part of the caring that is an important part of the community. It's made me feel more empowered and self-confident."

***\*How else has being involved helped you?***

"I felt like I'm making a difference. I've had to learn how to do things while leading the task force and I've noticed I'm doing these things outside of the task force. For example I'm more assertive and confident."

***\*What advice would you have for others who are thinking about getting involved?***

"Not to get discouraged when it seems like it's taking a long time for things to happen. And remember that we're all just people, even the ones who have more authority. We (consumers) have just as much wisdom to offer."

***\*How do you keep from feeling burnt out?***

"I just kept visualizing my goal - I knew what I wanted to happen and if one thing didn't work I would try something else. Part of my personality is I don't give up too easily, if it's something I'm passionate about; If I'm doing something I think will help others. If I'm doing something just for myself I give up more easily."

***\*What can others do to help people get more involved?***

"Be real positive. Point out strengths. Let them know you believe in them, that you think they can do it. Stu, my support person, was very important to my success. Before meetings he always encourages me. Then after the meeting he always has something very specific that he noticed I did really well. He also offered suggestions for improvement, like when I don't talk very loud he'll say people can't hear you very well, so next time speak up; But he doesn't offer it in a critical way - it's more of a suggestion."

***\*What would you could go back to the beginning, would you have done anything differently?***

"I could have used some advice on how to run a meeting up front. I got some help as we went along, but at first we wasted a lot of time because I didn't know how to keep us on task or set time limits or any of that. Having an action plan would have helped. It would have been nice to have a check list of steps needed to develop a project."

***\*Has your involvement yielded any surprises?***

"I have been awestruck by how many of the agency leaders have been so willing to work together and how excited they are about getting the project under way. I was expecting some of them to be resistant. I didn't expect half of them to respond to my invitation to participate."

***\*Did you disclose your mental illness?***

"Yes I did. I feel the only way to overcome stigma is to let people know I have this illness but I'm still not that different from them."

### ***Profiles in Leadership: Donna Orrin, MSW***

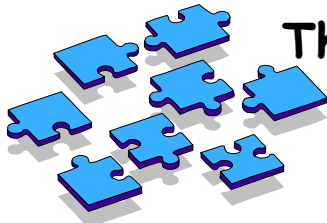
Donna Orrin, MSW, has used her wide range of personal and professional experiences to become a leader at many levels. She has been active at the local, state and national levels. Donna has used her experiences as a social worker, a mental health consumer, a family member of a person with a mental illness to help individuals and organizations. While working on her own recovery, she has helped others by developing award-winning recovery materials for consumers and providers, facilitating workshops, and influencing mental health policy.

Among her works is a manual designed to help consumers get involved in policy making and help the mental health delivery system be more responsive to customer input. She also designed, and trains people on the use of "Vision Cards." Vision Cards are an innovative tool that combines recovery concepts and fine art to encourage reflection and healing. She distributes these cards to members of the community for free and leads workshops on their use.

Donna has helped her community by increasing awareness about mental illness and working to reduce stigma.

She has presented to providers, policy makers, consumers, families, and the general community all over the country.

Donna has previously worked in state and private psychiatric hospitals, and currently works for Member Services, Washtenaw County Health Organization in Ypsilanti, MI.



## The community has a need, I have a vision . . . what now?

If you're like most people, having a need and having a vision still doesn't tell you *how* to make your vision a reality. It's time to act . . . but how? The next step is to decide if you will join others, work on your own, or start off in a whole new direction. Developing skills, helping others and improving organizations are ways to become empowered. Find a place and time where you can use your talents to improve your community.

### *Check out organizations in your community & see if you want to join forces:*

If you can find an organization already in existence that's working towards your vision, or doing something similar, you might want to get involved with them. Unfortunately it is sometimes tough to find out who's doing what in the community. Here are some ways to find out:

### *Describe your "vision" to others and ask if they know who has similar values.*

#### *Here are some people to ask:*

- L Your friends, family, neighbors, etc.
- L Members of you Person Centered Planning Team
- L The reference librarian at your local library
- L Staff at local community centers
- L National organizations that have offices in your areas (United Way, Red Cross, etc.).  
*(These groups often employ people, and have volunteers, who are well connected with the community.)*
- L Staff at the mayor's office, Chamber of Commerce or other civic groups.

When you have some ideas, there are some important things you need to get the information about in order to make your decision. You need to decide if these groups can help you realize your vision or if you'll have to go in other directions. Here are some ways to find this out.

Ask around, read the local newspaper, ask the reference librarian at the public library

- L Read any materials the group publishes (brochures, flyers, reports, etc.).
- L Talk to members of the group and its leaders.
- L Show up for a meeting (if the meetings are public) and simply observe. Even if the meetings are not normally open to the public, ask if you can attend one and observe.

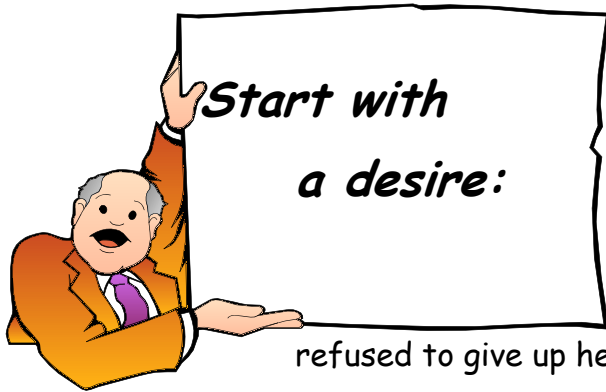
- L Ask for a tour if they have an office or building. Do they have an open house coming up any time soon?
- L Ask what type of help they are looking for.
- L Find out WHAT do they hope to accomplish. What is their vision?
- L HOW do they hope to accomplish it? The "how" is often as important as the "what." (*If you think political action is needed on an issue, you might be frustrated if you become involved with a group that only does public education.*)
- L Describe your vision to the people you talk with. Even if you don't think you'll get involved with their group, they might know someone else, or have valuable ideas.

When you talk to people, have a notebook and take notes to keep in a folder. Write down practical information like the full name and title of each person you talk to, the time and date you talk, phone numbers, name of the organization, etc. Also jot down ideas they give you, and your own thoughts and feelings about what you've discussed. Even if you don't think the person will be able to help you, take good notes. As you'll see in the next section, you'll need them later!

### ***What if my vision doesn't match anyone else's?***

If you can't find others who are working towards a vision similar to yours, or if they are working towards it in a way that doesn't interest you - you are very lucky! You are likely in a very exciting position. You have found an unmet need. You've heard the phrase "Necessity is the mother of invention" - right? People who have found a need in the community that isn't being met by others get to create, or "invent," a way to address that need. If this is you, you *are* the starting point. This is fortunate, because the start of a project or effort is exciting, stimulating, and a very special place to be.

It may sound a bit scary, too. Many people in this position feel like they don't know how to get things started. Luckily, you will have already done much of the work needed to lay the foundations of a successful effort. The work you did looking for others who share your vision will help you figure out what to do next. Once you've formulated some questions, go back to the same people you talked to earlier. It will be easier this time, because now you know each other better, and you've both had time to think and develop ideas. First figure out what you need to know. Before we explore ways to figure out what we need to know, let's look at another way to get involved.



Another way to get involved is to start with a desire. Rosa Parks is often credited for sparking the American civil rights movement when she refused to give up her seat to a white passenger and move to the back of a public bus. This is a perfect example of becoming a community leader by starting with a need as we discussed earlier. At the time of the incident, the South was suffering under cruel segregation laws, and racism was an accepted part of daily life all over the country. There was a *need* for change. Parks' simple action gave thousands of Americans the courage needed to force such a change.

Most people have heard this story, but you may be surprised to learn Rosa Parks had become a community leader years before, *by starting with a desire*. Even as a little girl, Parks had a desire to change things. She couldn't understand why blacks were treated differently than whites in her hometown of Pine Level, Alabama. She had a desire to change the fact that her and the other black children walked past a new, well-equipped school close to her house (reserved for white children) while they had to go to an old, poorly funded school miles away. When she grew up, she still didn't know what to do, but she knew she wanted to do something to change things.

She joined numerous political organizations and became one of the first women to join the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People). This was a full twelve years before the famous bus incident. She went on to serve the civil rights movement in numerous roles, and she's now a national hero. (2001, "Rosa Parks: From the back of the bus to the front of a movement", by Camilla Wilson, Scholastic Press, New York)

All this started with a simple desire to make things better. There are many desires that can inspire us: the desire to help others, the desire to improve our community or simply the desire to improve ourselves. Starting with a desire can be a powerful way to get involved.

There are many people and organizations in the community that can use you if you have the desire to help out. On the following page is a list of organizations that often need help:

American Red Cross

Local hospitals

United Way

Libraries

Religious service groups

Habitat for Humanity

Humane Society

Homeless shelters

Local chapters of Mental Health Advocacy Groups, including:

- \*NAMI (Formerly known as National Alliance for the Mentally Ill)
- \*Mental Health Association
- \*Food banks and Free Meal services
- \*"meals on wheels" and other food delivery systems
- \*Consumer Advocacy Organizations
- \*Community Mental Health Boards and committees, Including
- \*Consumer Advocacy committees
- \*Quality Assurance teams
- \*Person Centered Planning Committees
- \*Consumer Relations committees
- \*Public Relations Teams
- \*Advisory Boards
- \*Clubhouse, or other program Advisory boards
- \*Recipient Rights Advisory Board
- \*Substance Abuse Committees
- \*Support Groups

Michigan Association of Community Mental Health Boards

Michigan Association of Multi-cultural Rehabilitation Concerns

State Chapter of International Association of Psycho-social Rehabilitation Services (IAPSRs)

Michigan Rehabilitation Advisory Council in the Michigan Department of Career Development  
Protection and Advocacy

Justice in Mental Health Organization

The Association for Children's Mental Health

State Of Michigan Department of Community Health

- \*Office of Consumer Relations

Michigan Corporation for Supported Housing

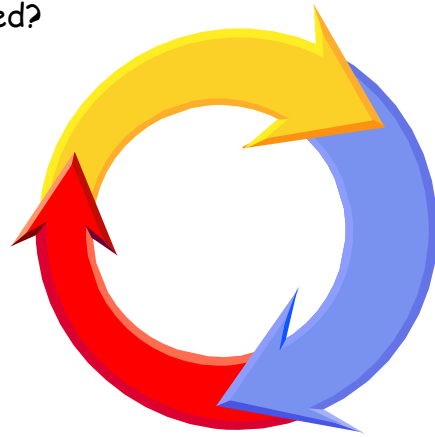
## Making the community connection:

Whether you're starting with a need, a desire, or any other reason, you're ready at this point to get more involved.

### ***Who can I get to help me?***

Go back to the people you've talked to and think of others. Start to think about who can help and how:

- L Who has similar values and beliefs?
- L Who has skills, information or resources we'll need?
- L Who owes me a favor?
- L Who enjoys helping people?
- L Who has been recommended?
- L Who has been involved in similar situations?
- L Who do I respect?
- L Who would like to see us succeed?
- L Who would like something to do?
- L Who else will this effect?



### ***Think about how your efforts will effect other people.***

- L Will other groups or organizations feel like we're competitors?
- L Will we be competing for resources with others?
- L Who might feel slighted if they're not included or informed?
- L Who else will benefit from what we do?
- L Can we collaborate with someone else?

### ***Who else has done something similar?***

- L Has anyone tried this, or something similar?
- L What can we learn from them?
- L Why did their effort work/fail?



## ***What skills, talents and resources will it take to make our vision come alive?***

Taking a need or a desire from vision to reality takes different things depending on what you hope to accomplish. Ask yourself or your group:

- L What skills and talents and information will it take to do this?
- L What skills, talents and experiences do I/we have that I/we can use to do this?

Do you or people you're working with have these skills, talents and information? If so - great. If not, or your skills could use some sharpening, you have two choices:

- L Find someone who has the abilities you need and get them to help you. They can help by teaching, doing it for you, or consulting. Consulting is where people give advice and ideas on certain topics, even if they aren't normally part of your group.
- L Learn it yourself. You can take classes, find a mentor, read books, find resources on the Internet... there are many ways to learn.

## ***Why are things the way they are now?***

- L **What are the objective facts?** There might be lots of opinions and disagreements about many issues, but there are some things that can be stated with certainty. For example: People might have differing opinions about the impact of closing state psychiatric hospitals, but there are some objective facts: one of them is that there are less hospitals open in the state today than there was 10 years ago. It helps to start conversations or action after revealing the basic facts.
- L **What are the assumptions and theories?** Whether you think you have a good idea of the possible reasons for the way things are now, it helps to list and discuss as many as possible. It even helps to list assumptions you don't agree with.

The following outline is an outline for community action. This is a general guide to help you set your course. This guide can help you if you're starting something new, getting involved with a group that's already going. You can follow these steps on your own, but it's usually more effective to go through these questions together with others who are supporting you or supportive of your ideas.

*Note:* If you or your group can't answer most of these questions, your choices are the same as if you need to sharpen or gain skills. You can learn it, find some one to do it for you, or you can find someone to consult with you. When you're ready to get started, you can use the blank guide on the following page.

**Making the Community Connection:  
Guide to Community Action**

*Who can I get to help me?*

Who has similar values and beliefs? \_\_\_\_\_

Who has skills, information or resources we'll need? \_\_\_\_\_

Who owes me a favor? \_\_\_\_\_

Who enjoys helping people? \_\_\_\_\_

Who has been recommended? \_\_\_\_\_

Who has been involved in similar situations? \_\_\_\_\_

Who do I respect? \_\_\_\_\_

Who would like to see us succeed? \_\_\_\_\_

Who would like something to do? \_\_\_\_\_

*Who else will this effect?*

- Will other groups or organizations feel like we're competitors?
- Will we be competing for resources with others?
- Who might feel slighted if they're not included or informed?
- Who else will benefit from what we do?
- Can we collaborate with someone else

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Who else has done something similar? \_\_\_\_\_

Has anyone tried this, or something similar? \_\_\_\_\_

What can we learn from them? \_\_\_\_\_

Why did their effort work/fail? \_\_\_\_\_

What skills, talents and resources will it take to make our vision come alive?

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What skills and talents and abilities will it take to do this?

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What skills, talents and experiences do I/we have that I/we can use to do this?

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How will I/we get or sharpen the skills, talents or information we need?

- 9 Find someone to do it for me/us
- 9 Find someone to teach us
- 9 Find someone to consult with us
- 9 Find someone to consult with us
- 9 Learn it ourselves

Why are things the way they are now?

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What are the objective facts?

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What are the assumptions and theories?

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Who else will this effect?

- Will other groups or organizations feel like we're competitors?
- Will we be competing for resources with others?
- Who might feel slighted if they're not included or informed?
- Who else will benefit from what we do?
- Can we collaborate with someone else?

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Who else has done something similar?

- Has anyone tried this, or something similar? \_\_\_\_\_
- What can we learn from them? \_\_\_\_\_
- Why did their effort work/fail? \_\_\_\_\_

## The "5 Ws & H"

One of the first thing journalists learn is to always find out the "5 Ws and H." This is a systematic, easy to remember format for covering all the basic facts. This can be useful in a variety of ways. Here are a few:

- \*Working on a project or event
- \*Trying to solve a problem or figure something out
- \*As a reminder of things to work on

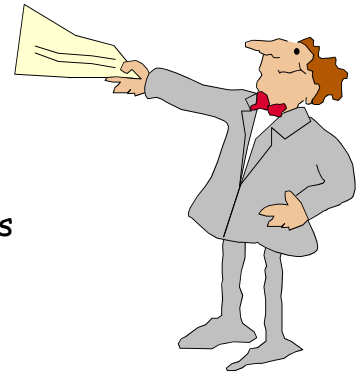
### *Here's how you can use the "5 Ws and H"*

<b>Who.</b> Who will be responsible? Who's help will they need?	
<b>What.</b> What, specifically, will each person do?	
<b>Where.</b> Where will it take place? Can every one find the location(s). Do we need maps? Directions? Labels? Signs?	
<b>When.</b> Are there deadlines? When will we meet again?	
<b>Why.</b> Don't leave this step out. We've got to constantly remind ourselves why we're doing what we're doing. This can avoid "burn out" and help foster a feeling of connection.	
<b>How.</b>	

## Action plan:

After completing this session, you will be able to identify:

- L The importance of teams and meetings
- L Ways to work effectively in teams and thrive in meetings
- L Participants will also develop an initial action plan



### ***The importance of teamwork:***

There are many things we can do to help our community that we can do alone. But at least some of the time we will have to work as a member of a team. That's fortunate, because working as part of a team is the most effective way to get many things done, and it helps us develop a sense of belonging. It's not always easy working in teams, but there are ways to develop our skills.

### ***Are you a team builder?***

A team builder is a person who helps a group move forward. This person doesn't have to be the leaders or hold a special position. All of us should work to improve our team building skills.

Take a minute to take the following quiz on the next page. You may want to take this quiz from time-to-time (at least twice a year). Try to constantly improve your team-building skills. The more questions you answer "yes" to, the more you're improving as a team-builder. No matter how you score, work for improvement and don't dwell on the negatives. These are only opportunities for growth. If you are a good team-builder, work to become even better!

### **Sharpening Team Building Skills:**

From time to time, take a few minutes to give yourself this quiz. Try to be honest, but don't "beat yourself up" by being overly critical.

**Do I . . . .**

9 Yes 9 No Listen to other members of the team even when I think I know what they're going to say?

9 Yes 9 No Explain my issues and concerns clearly?

9 Yes 9 No Stay on the topic at hand?

9 Yes 9 No Keep feelings about past issues and events out of the current conversation?

9 Yes 9 No Let my teammates know when I agree or disagree with them - to show I'm interested in what they have to say?

9 Yes 9 No Respect other team members by not ridiculing them or questioning their motives?

9 Yes 9 No Work for consensus instead of blocking actions I don't agree with?

9 Yes 9 No Compromise when necessary?

9 Yes 9 No Accept that there are times I must accept group decisions, even though I disagree with them?

9 Yes 9 No Accept that I can disagree with people and still like them?

Try to constantly improve your team-building skills. The more questions you answer "yes" to, the more you're improving as a team-builder. No matter how you score, work for improvement and don't dwell on the negatives. These are only opportunities for growth. If you are a good team-builder, work to become ***even better !!!***



## ***Meetings, meetings and more meetings!***

How many times have you heard some one say, "I hate meetings!" In fact, it's pretty rare to find people who will say (or admit!) they like meetings. Despite this, meetings are an important part of most organizations and communities. Meetings are often the place where important information is shared, ideas are discussed, and decisions are made. The more involved you become in your community, the more meetings you will likely want to attend or participate in. Here is a short guide to getting the most out of meetings.

### ***Learn to appreciate meetings***

Despite the drawbacks of meetings, they have a lot of advantages. Here are some of the great things about meetings:

- U ***Many meetings are open to the public.*** Often you don't have to be invited to meetings, or have to prove you have a "reason" to attend. You can simply observe quietly and learn. Public policy meetings give you the opportunity to provide input before decisions are made that might affect you.
- U ***Meetings are your chance to speak your mind.*** As ordinary citizens, we often feel like we don't have a voice. Attending and speaking at meetings is a great chance to find out what's going on, and let our opinions and concerns be heard.
- U ***Meetings can be effective.*** Most of us have been to many meetings that seemed a waste of time - but that's not always the case. Meetings can be a great way to share information, work on projects, make presentations, get input and accomplish many other things. It's certainly better than trying to telephone a large group of people individually and discuss the same things with each person.
- U ***Meetings can be energizing.*** Believe it or not, meetings often have an energizing effect on us. It's often very powerful to be in a room with other people who have similar beliefs and values.
- U ***Meetings can increase our understanding.*** Even when decisions in meetings are made that we don't agree with, we can often find out more about the process that went into making them. This can help us advocate for change more effectively.
- U ***Networking.*** By introducing yourself to people before or after meetings, you can discover and make contact with people who can help you.



## **Guide to surviving meetings:**

Now that we've discussed why meetings are important, let's explore how to get the most out of them:

### **The power of observation:**

The best way to get involved with an organization, or to find out about groups that might be important to you or your community is to simply observe. Many meetings are open to the public. Even if a meeting isn't advertised as "open," you can ask someone attending the meeting if it's okay for you to observe. Here are some tips on observing:

### **Take notes!**

Take plenty of paper, something stiff (like a notebook) to write on, and a couple of writing instruments to every meeting you attend. Start with the following basic information: Name of meeting, date, time, location, names of people in attendance. Then jot down everything that interests you. Don't forget to write down your own thoughts and feelings. Write down how what's being said makes you feel. Write down questions you'd like to ask and topics you need to learn more about.

### **Learn and follow the meeting rules:**

Meetings often have lots of rules about who can talk and when. Some of these rules may seem unnecessary, but it's important to follow them - especially rules regarding speaking at meetings. There are often rules about when and how you can make comments. For example, you might have to wait for the "public comments" part of the agenda, or you might have to ask the chairperson for permission to speak. If you don't know the rules, ask someone. Following the rules shows you respect the group (even if you are mad about what they are saying) and that you are a reasonable person who they should take seriously.

### **Use the buddy system:**

Ask a friend or family member to come with you. Meetings can be intimidating, especially if you have to speak. Taking someone with you can make you feel more comfortable. It's also great to have someone you're comfortable with to talk over what happened at the meetings later. You can learn a lot when you get someone else's take on what you observed. The person who comes with you can also give you feedback if you speak or participate in the meeting.

Another way to use a "Buddy" or "Support person" is to find someone with similar interests as you. This can have the added advantage of creating or strengthening a friendship and having someone to help you prepare for meetings or work on projects.

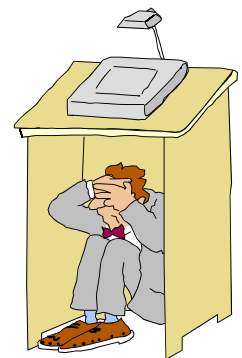
Suellen Hummell has to attend and lead a lot of meetings as the Chairperson of Ann Arbor's Crisis Relief Task Force. Here's what she had to say about using the buddy system:

*"Having a support person (with me at meetings) made a big difference. It made me feel safer. He just would go to the meetings with me at first, but he has ended up becoming a major part of the task force."*

Before the meetings Suellen and her support person, Stu, talked about what how he could help her: *"We had talked in advance; there were certain things Stu knew I would do when I was anxious like rubbing my head and playing with my hair. If he noticed I was doing those things he would watch me closer. One of my signals to him that I was getting anxious was to put my hand on his arm. It would help me, I felt like I had something to hold on to. He would put his hand on top of my hand. That helped me start calming down."*

### ***Speaking at meetings:***

Speaking at meetings can be intimidating and challenging. It can also be a great opportunity to participate and can help develop important social and business skills. People who learn to speak effectively get respect. Preparing in advance, when possible, can make the situation a lot less stressful.



Preparing comments in advance can reduce stress, help you stay on topic and help you remember to cover key ideas. Here are some ways to prepare:

U ***Talking points.*** Talking points are short sentences that describe concepts or ideas you want to cover. This is a very effective technique if you will be using statistics or figures.

U ***Reading from prepared text.*** Sometimes it helps to write out exactly what you want to say, word-for-word (like a letter) and then read your comments to the group. This is a great technique to use if you get nervous speaking in front of people or feel you might forget to say something important.

U **Note cards or outlines.** Note cards or outlines can be used to help you remember topics you want to cover, and help you stay on track. No matter what method you use, make sure you write large and clearly. Don't try to cram too much information on your cards or paper.

U **Practice.** Practicing in advance can help ease your nerves and focus what you want to say. It's usually not helpful to try to memorize a great deal of information or to try to get your presentation down "perfect." Instead, casually go through what you want to say a few times. It's important to practice "out loud" so you can get used to hearing yourself speak. Having someone watch and listen to you, or speaking in front of a mirror can also help you get used to speaking in front of others.

### ***Tips to remember when it comes time to speak:***

U **Expect to be nervous.** Even people who've done a lot of public speaking for years and years still get nervous every time they have to do it. This is natural. Don't be surprised or worried if it happens to you.

U **Mistakes are okay.** Don't worry if you make a mistake, lose your thoughts or stumble on your words. This happens to everyone from time to time.

U **Start off friendly.** Smile and thank the organization and the audience for giving you the chance to comment. Find at least one thing (even if this is tough!) to make a positive comment about to start off. Even if you're mad, or plan to be critical, starting off on a friendly note will make people more likely to listen to you and you will be seen as fair and open-minded. *Remember: if you are seen as "attacking" or unreasonable your input may not be taken seriously!*

U **Ask questions.** Asking questions shows you are interested and open-minded. Remember the old saying "The only dumb question is the one that isn't asked." If you have a question about something, others likely are wondering about the same thing!

U ***Criticize ideas, not people.*** If you disagree with something or want something changed you should certainly speak up. But it's important not to personalize your comments. For example: "Mr. Jones never listens to what we have to say" might put Mr. Jones on the defensive (especially if it's true!) and sound like a personal attack. You might get further by asking: "What procedures are in place to make sure our input is considered?"

U ***Ask for clarification when needed.*** If the group is using language, abbreviations or acronyms you don't understand, ask them to clarify. Even if you understand the language, but don't "get" what they are saying, don't be afraid to ask them to restate a point or comment.

U ***Be concise and direct.*** Meetings often last a long time and there might be a lot to cover. People will respect you if you keep your comments short, to the point, and direct.

U ***Stay on the current topic.*** It is very important to limit your comments to the topic at hand. If the group has already moved on, or if the topic you'd like to address isn't part of the group's agenda, save your comments for another time and place. Ask people in the meeting if they know when and where you should bring these points up.

U ***Keep your cool.*** It's okay to feel angry, frustrated or disappointed. However, it's very important not to lose your temper, get too loud, make personal attacks or use unprofessional language. If you do, you might be asked to leave and, more importantly, your input will probably not be taken seriously. If you feel like you're about to lose your temper, leave the room. Take a break, take a walk, get something to eat or drink, try deep breathing - whatever works for you. If think you might lose your cool, have a plan in advance of what you will do if you feel angry.

U ***Get agreement on what comes next.*** In order for there to be action taken on your input, it's important to clarify what needs to be done and who will do it. Example: "Thank you for allowing me to comment. Please allow me a moment to clarify. Mr. Jones will bring copies of the policies we discussed to the next meeting, and I should call Ms. Smith within the next few days. Is that correct?"

**Some of the ideas in this section were adapted, with permission, from "Consumer Involvement in Policy-Making" by Donna Orrin.**



## Developing an action plan:

Just as there are many ways to get involved in the community, there are also many ways to act. However one decides to act, it is important to develop a personalized plan. Here is a guide to developing such a plan:

### ***PERSONAL ACTION PLAN***

#### ***Personal Mission Statement:***

*I believe:*

---

---

---

*Because:*

---

---

---

*Here's a list of some things I don't want to do:*

---

---

---

*This is what I would like to do:*

---

---

---

*I would prefer to:*

- work alone*
- work with one or two other people*
- work in small groups*
- work with lots of people*
- just observe for now*

*Other:*

---

---

*I would like to use these skills or talents that I already have:*

---

---

---

*I would like to learn:*

---

---

---

*My availability:*

<i>Time</i>	<i>Mon.</i>	<i>Tues.</i>	<i>Wed.</i>	<i>Thurs.</i>	<i>Fri.</i>	<i>Sat.</i>	<i>Sun.</i>
<i>A.M.</i>							
<i>Afternoons</i>							
<i>Night</i>							

*This is what I need to learn or research:*

*NOW:*

---

---

---

---

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---

---

*LATER:*

---

---

---

---

*Other people involved in my plan:*

**Who will help me?**

**What they will do:**

---

---

---

---

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---

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---

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---

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*Who will I tell about my plan:* \_\_\_\_\_

*They can help me by:*

---

---

---

---

*It will be most helpful if they avoid:*

---

---

---

*What do others need to know about me?*

---

---

---

---

***Burnout prevention plan:***

*Here's how I might be able to tell when I'm in danger of getting burned out:*

---

---

---

*Here's how others might be able to tell if I'm in danger of getting burned out:*

---

---

---

*This is what I'll do if I, or others, detect burnout in me:*

---

---

---

*Self reminders:*

---

---

---

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**Revisit "The 5 W's & H" on page 59.**

***Personal mission statement:***

A Mission Statement:

- L Lets others know who you are and what you find important.
- L Lets *Yourself* know who you are and what you find important.
- L Re-energizes you when in doubt. An important initial step when developing a life plan.

Groups and organizations develop Mission Statements to help outsiders understand what they're all about, and to help remind members of the group what they're working for.



Developing a Personal Mission Statement can be an effective way to find out you really want to do. It's also a great tool to use to remind yourself of what's important. There will be times where you will doubt yourself, wonder if you're hard work is worth the effort or just plain run out of energy. Re-reading your Personal Mission Statement can help re-energize you! Some Mission Statements are wordy and lofty, but the best are simple, direct and reveal what's most important.

Here's an easy way to develop a personal mission statement:

I believe: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Therefore I will: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Because: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(Adapted from a presentation by Jill Warren at Nonprofit Enterprises at Work, Ann Arbor, MI, 2001).

Here's an *example* of a good Personal Mission Statement developed using this method:

**I believe** all people deserve a chance to learn how to read, **therefore** I will volunteer with the Adult Literacy Program, **because** many good people need my help!

***Burnout prevention plan:***

Even when we plan our activities carefully, we still have to guard against "burnout." Burnout can occur for other reasons than just doing too much. Here are some other potential sources of burnout:

- U Not feeling appreciated
- U Not knowing what's expected
- U Feeling alone when working on projects when help would be preferred
- U Feeling like we have too much responsibility
- U Not having the tools to do a job properly

- U Too much stress without relief
- U Not letting other know when we need help

Here are some things to look out for, and include in your plan

- U How I might be able to tell when I'm in danger of getting burned out
- U How others might be able to tell if I'm in danger of getting burned out
- U What I'll do if I, or others, detect burnout in me



## Guide to planning community events

<p>What is a community event that I've noticed within the past year?</p>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>Which of those events would I be interested in participating in?</p>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>Which will I do in the future?</p>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>By When?</p>	

As you develop your leadership skills and become more involved in the community, you might find yourself in a position where you must lead, or help lead an event or some other type of community action. This may seem intimidating, but here's a guide to make it easier. There are three things that are crucial to remember:

- #1 *Have a plan:*** The more organized you are the better. Use the guide above to help you develop a plan. If you're not an organized person, don't worry. Do your best, and ask for help from someone you know who is organized.
  
- #2 *Realize your plan won't go perfectly:*** No matter how good your plan is, no matter how hard you work... no matter what - things just don't go perfectly. People make mistakes, plans don't always work out as expected. Don't worry about this - just do the best you can, get help when you need to, and it will work out in the end.
  
- #3 *Ask for help effectively:*** The way you ask for help is important. Leaders are often frustrated because it seems like a few people are doing all the work. Lots of people may say they'll help, but back out when the time comes. There are a lot of reasons for this, and it can't be avoided - but you can take steps to reduce it. The most important thing is to be direct and specific when you ask for help. Here are two examples to help illustrate this point:

***Example 1: "We need people to make flyers out about the meeting."***

This is too vague and indirect. This question will not likely get the results you want.

***This question may scare people off.*** They might feel like this is too big a project. They might doubt their abilities to do what's required. People want to know what they're getting into before they volunteer.

***Example 2: "John, Susan, and Tom: could you help make the flyers about the upcoming meeting? Joe knows how to do it and will help you. It will only take about a half hour and then Andy will take them to get posted."***

***It's important to remind people of what support is available for them.*** They don't want projects "dropped in their laps." Let them know they're not alone.



## ***Sample event plan:***

This is a guide to help you plan a major community event. You do not have to follow this exactly, and all the steps outlined below might not be necessary for your event. This guide can still be used for smaller, less complicated events, just use the steps you need.

### ***Six months (or more) before an event:***

- 9 Have a written plan about what you hope to accomplish with this event. You can use "The 5 Ws" learned earlier in this section. Recheck your plan every week to see where you are! *Note: It's important to know what you want to accomplish and to develop a "vision." In other words, "Why are we doing this?"*
- 9 Reserve a location for your event. Also reserve a back-up location. Make sure you have the name and number of a contact person for each site (and the name and number of who you should talk to if that person is not available).
- 9 Make arrangements for food, entertainment, etc. if you plan to have it at your event. Make sure you have the name and number of a contact person for each site (and the name and number of who you should talk to if that person is not available).
- 9 Confirm all speakers and have back-up speakers.
- 9 Make arrangements to rent or borrow sound equipment (microphones, music equipment, etc.) and audiovisual equipment (slide projectors, etc.) if these items will be used at your event.
- 9 If your event will be outside, have a back-up plan for bad weather.
- 9 If you will have speakers, ask them to provide you the following information in writing: how they would like to be introduced, their title and what they do, and a short biography.
- 9 Make a plan for publicizing your event. How will people find out about it?
- 9 Make a list of all the resources you have available. Resources you might have are: people, money, time, equipment, etc.
- 9 Make a list of resources you still need to find.

**Tip: Have a notebook where you write down the name and phone number of everyone you talk to. Write down the date and time you talked to them and what you talked about. Write down what you said you will do and what they say they will do.**

### ***Three Months before the event***

- 9 Start working on your program, agenda, and/or any handouts.
- 9 Recheck your written plan. Remind yourself and others why you're doing this!
- 9 Check on your location and back-up locations. Make an on-site visit, noting availability and location of electrical outlets, rest rooms, lighting and climate controls, parking, loading and unloading zones, wheel chair access, etc. Note where signs will be needed. It often helps to make a sketch.
- 9 Make maps, write directions and check and recheck them! Nothing is more frustrating than inaccurate or hard-to-follow directions or maps! Make sure you note where people should park and enter the building.
- 9 Confirm food, entertainment, etc. Find out if you can accommodate special requests (religious, vegetarian, vegan, etc.) and develop a plan for attendees to notify you of their needs.
- 9 Make arrangements for printing and copying of promotional material (brochures, flyers, invitations etc.).
- 9 Check on assignments: How are people coming along on things they've committed to do? Ask if they need help or support.

### ***Two months before the event***

- 9 Recheck your written plan. Remind yourself and others why you're doing this!
- 9 Assign roles. Who will introduce speakers? Who will help set up food, etc. NOTE: Try to have at least one or two people who will help out as "runners." Runners should not have responsibilities assigned in advance - instead save them for the unexpected things that come up.
- 9 Make arrangements for printing and copying of any written material to be presented at the event.
- 9 Mail and/or post early promotional material (brochures, flyers, etc.)
- 9 Check on assignments: How are people coming along on things they've committed to do? Ask if they need help or support.

### ***One month before the event***

- 9 Recheck your written plan. Remind yourself and others why you're doing this!
- 9 Check on assignments: How are people coming along on things they've committed to do? Ask if they need help or support.
- 9 Notify media (newspapers, magazines, T.V., radio, etc.)
- 9 Send out invitations with directions and maps, R.S.V.P. instructions (if you want participants to let you know they're coming), and directions for making special requests (accommodations, dietary concerns, etc.).
- 9 Finalize program and/or agenda and send to printer.
- 9 Plan and make signs.

### ***One week before the event***

- 9 Recheck your written plan. Remind yourself and others why you're doing this!
- 9 Prepare name tags and place cards.
- 9 Finalize sign-in or registration procedures.
- 9 Remind media about your upcoming event.
- 9 Do a "walk-through" with as many of the people helping you as possible. Do this at the site the event will occur if possible.
- 9 Assemble handouts, packets, etc.
- 9 Ensure all helpers have transportation arranged.
- 9 Check on assignments: How are people coming along on things they've committed to do? Ask if they need help or support.

### ***The day before the event***

- 9 Recheck your written plan. Remind yourself and others why you're doing this!
- 9 Double check area around site to make sure there isn't any unexpected construction, road closures, etc.
- 9 Remind key media about your event.
- 9 Check the weather so you know what to expect. Still expect the unexpected!
- 9 RELAX !! Try to take the day, or at least the night, before the event off to unwind and rest.

## ***The day of the event***

- 9 Recheck your written plan. Remind yourself and others why you're doing this!
- 9 Try to get to the site as early as possible. To set up and handle last minute changes.
- 9 Make sure people know where you're going to be and when - and how to reach you.
- 9 The first thing you should do is make sure your signs are set up. That way, if you get distracted or if people arrive early, the signs will already be in place.
- 9 Check on assignments throughout the day: How are people coming along on things they've committed to do? Ask if they need help or support.

## ***Don't forget your "Events box"***

An "events box" is a box or other container that has things you might need, or items you can use to handle minor "emergencies" (e.g. signs that fall down, etc.). What you put in the box will vary depending on your event, but here are some ideas:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| Tape: clear tape and heavy-duty tape                                       | Scissors                                   |
| Extension cords  | Paper                                      |
| Cardboard  | Markers, pens, pencils                     |
| String and/or rope   | Extra copies of handouts & other materials |
| A few common tools (screwdriver, hammer, etc.)                             |  |
| Office supplies: paper clips, stapler with extra staples, hole punch, etc. |  |

## ***After the event***

- 9 GIVE YOURSELF AND THOSE WHO HELPED YOU CREDIT! Take time out to enjoy what you accomplished, even if it didn't meet all your expectations.
- 9 Send "Thank You" notes to all who helped.
- 9 Send "Thank You" notes to participants, media, attendees, etc. Use this as a key chance to reinforce the key point you were trying to make.
- 9 Clip and save media coverage.
- 9 Evaluate your event. What went well? What didn't go so well? What could be improved?
- 9 Save the following: Copies of handouts, agenda, etc.; your written plan and sketches; any media coverage; notes on what went well and what didn't; event evaluation. Keep all this in a large file or container. This can help you or others plan similar events in the future.
- 9 Arrange for payment of any bills that need to be taken care of.

*(Parts of this "Timetable" were adapted from the Eastern Michigan University Student Organization Handbook.)*

# Congratulations!

You now have the information and guides you need to become more involved in your community. Next you'll learn about a specific type of community involvement: POLITICAL

## References:

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"Consumer Advocacy and Leadership: A personal perspective" by Catherine Medernach. Psychiatric Rehabilitation Journal, Winter 2000.

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"Systems Advocacy" Technical assistance guide. National Mental Health Consumers' Self-Help Clearinghouse, 1211 Chestnut Street, Suite 1207, Philadelphia, PA 19107; 1-800-553-4539. Available on-line at: <http://www.mhselfhelp.org>

# Introduction

You now have completed two sections of this manual - personal and community leadership. You have many of the skills needed to be effective in the political arena already! This section of the manual will help you identify your skills and interests, and let you know "very concretely" what *next steps* to take. Good luck to you as you discover the excitement and meaning of *politics*!

## Political Involvement

"Never believe that a few caring people can't change the world. For, indeed, that's all who ever have."

-Margaret Mead

Political Involvement is an extension of Personal and Community Leadership. By knowing your personal style and your strengths, and knowing the resources in your Community, you will be able to get successfully get involved with the political process.



In the first section of this manual you learned a variety of skills relating to personal leadership. For example, you learned:

- L Your leadership strengths
- L Your growth areas
- L Conflict resolution skills
- L How to identify your assumptions.

As you go about influencing the political process, these skill are very important.

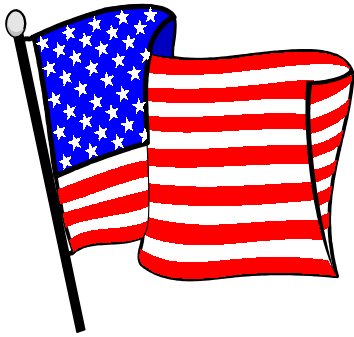
In the second section, you learned that you need your community and your community needs you. You also learned that most of the activities that happen in your community are open to you and that your help and input is needed. You learned about several ways to become more involved and you developed an initial action plan.

In this section of the manual you will learn how to get involved with the political process. We will be discussing practical tips in how to impact issues that are important to you on a National, State and Local level.

### ***How do you define "political"?***

The dictionary defines political as:

- L exercising or seeking power in the governmental or public affairs of a state, municipality, etc .
- L pertaining to, or involving the state or its government
- L having a definite policy or system of government
- L of or pertaining to citizens (*this is you!!!!*)



**WE** are the people referred to in "**WE the people...**" as "the people", it is important that we are represented in our government. It is particularly important that people who are under-represented, such as people with mental illness, are actively involved in letting their congressmen/women know what their needs are.

Many people have felt left out of the political system. They feel like the politicians don't care about them and, as a result, have a cynical view of the political system and of politicians. This view provides comedians with an endless amount of joke material.

We are often dismayed about the influence of big money by corporations and private interests ,but ultimately what politicians need are votes. Therefore, we have what they want. It is up to us to let them know what it is that we want from them in return for our vote. If we actively vote and give input to our representatives, then we have the power.

# Why you should care about politics?

## ***Controlling your own life:***

People who get involved in trying to affect the political system often do so because it helps them to feel "empowered." In other words, they want to take control of their own life by being part of a process that impacts their life and livelihood. Even if they don't impact everything they hope to, there is great satisfaction in taking initiative and getting involved.

## ***Getting your needs met:***

As in the section on community, political involvement can also begin with an individual need that you want taken care of. You may begin caring about politics if there is something bothering you that you want to see changed. The example in the community section of Suellen Hummell would fit here as well. Remember, a member of a clubhouse started a task force to help train the police in her community. This all happened because she needed things to improve in her community.

## ***Helping others:***

Springing into action can also come from feeling the need to help others. For example; many people are active with causes such as homelessness because they have seen people suffering in the streets. They contact their representatives not because they don't have a place to live, but because of others in the community who are not so fortunate.

There are many other reasons for getting involved which haven't been listed and the satisfaction of political involvement is different for everyone. The best way to determine how you will benefit from political involvement is to jump in and try it out. Most people who make the effort to get involved find that taking action increases their self-esteem. It can be an essential part of the recovery process for people who have experienced mental illness. I have heard members from a clubhouse talk about how rewarding it is to receive a letter back from a representative that they have written to. For some, the satisfaction that they receive from a response is enough to keep them involved with politics.

## Nine ways to political involvement

Once you have made the decision to jump in and get involved you need to choose your course of action. Figure out which of the following methods will work best in influencing the change you desire.



Writing Letters is a very effective way to make things happen. It is a good way to organize your thoughts in an articulate manner and share them with people who have the ability to make decisions. Letter writing can also seem more personal and, therefore, more effective in some situations.

When politicians receive a written letter it is much more likely that they will respond back in writing. This is helpful because it clarifies, in writing, where they stand on the issue. In a later section in this manual there are explicit instructions on writing letters that also helps you to easily find the addresses that you need.



E-mailing is a method of communication that has grown in popularity in the last several years. The most powerful part about e-mailing is the fact that you can reach so many people with very little effort or expense. Most public libraries and most clubhouses have free Internet access. This is especially useful in sharing information and for organizing people. The downside to e-mailing is that politicians get a lot of "cut and paste" and mass e-mails, and may be less likely to put as much "stock" into them as they would with a conventional letter. When using e-mail for political purposes make sure to use the subject heading to let people know what the content of the e-mail is.



Picketing is an old form of protest most often thought of in terms of worker strikes. It is always an attention grabber and can be both inexpensive and effective in the right circumstances. The down side is it can be very time consuming and stressful.



Making Phone Calls is a great way to communicate with legislators. It is easy and you can do it from the comfort of your home, clubhouse or drop-in center, and it can really help get the ball rolling.



*Selectively Shopping* is a political method which can be used for influence. Money is power and it can be your "vote". For instance, many people involved with environmental causes are involved with "green consumerism." This means that they make purchases based on a company's track records. This is a way for you to influence and have more control over the products you receive. For people who are receiving services from Community Mental Health, you have the ability to get a Supports Coordinator or Therapist that suits you the best.



*Going to Meetings* is a great way to become involved with the political process. In the last section on community involvement there was a section on the many benefits of attending meetings. This can be a political tool as well. For instance, a township meeting is an appropriate place to air concerns that you have. Many times politicians will hold public forums to hear from their constituent's (your) feedback. When the Department of Community Health proposed a concept paper on how Mental Health Services might be delivered, they held public meetings which many of you probably attended in Lansing. The result of this was that they heard loud and clear that people had grave concerns about their proposed ideas. As a result they went back to the drawing board and came up with a better plan based on consumer's input.



*Voting* is a powerful tool that everyone should exercise! If politicians know that people who have experienced mental illness vote in very large percentages they will be more likely to respond to the needs of this voting block because their job depends on your votes. The more local the election, the more powerful your vote becomes! In our last presidential election we saw how a small percentage of votes in one state would have led to a very different outcome. There are probably many Gore supporters in Florida who didn't vote during the election who would have if they had known how much their vote would have counted. The most powerful person in the world would have been Al Gore instead of George Bush.



Canvassing means going door to door in neighborhoods with issues and getting support, signatures and input. It is a very direct (grass roots) way of finding out what the people want. If you have petitions that need signatures, this would be an effective way to do it. It requires a significant amount of walking and going up to strangers for input but it is an effective way of getting a "pulse" on a neighborhood. If you want to start a clubhouse in a neighborhood, you may want to canvass the neighborhood to see what the prevailing attitude is to make an informed decision about setting up. It takes out some of the guess work.



Personally meeting with legislators - Don't forget to invite your representatives to your clubhouse, drop in center or organizational meetings. It is a very powerful way to influence their decision making. If your representatives have a first hand experience of the place where you want the change to occur it will have a larger impact. For example, if you wanted funding for a new drop-in center, invite them to see the bad plumbing at the current site. Also these personal meetings help politicians form a mental picture in their head about who the people are that are directly affected from the policies and laws they are writing.

The Michigan Chapter of the International Association of Psychosocial Rehabilitation Services (IAPSRs) organizes a power day every fall in Lansing where consumers are encouraged to set up meetings with their representatives to talk in person about any pertinent issues. Take advantage of this opportunity.



## *Where would you have the most impact?*

Of course you want to get the most return for your efforts, so put some thought into where you will spend your time working towards change.

The slogan, "think globally, act locally" is relevant because the most effective way to have impact is to start on a local issue, and the best way to view a problem or solution is in the "big picture."

## *role play*

Fred is a 45 year man who is managing schizophrenia. His favorite T.V. show is ER on NBC. Fred has been noticing that television often misrepresents people with mental illness by making it seem like all people with mental illness are dangerous and unproductive members of our society. He became very upset after watching last night's ER episode because it showed a man with schizophrenia shoot several innocent victims at the hospital. He knows that people with schizophrenia are not any more dangerous than anyone else, and he wants to change how television depicts people with mental illness. Now let's problem solve:

What can Fred do about this issue? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

How would he act locally? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

How can you be most effective? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



As you learned in the first section of this manual on individual leadership, knowing your leadership style is important in order to make a difference. Also remember that domination is not leadership, in fact quite the contrary.

- L Connect with others. There are “power in numbers.” Find out who is interested in the same issues that you are and work with them.
- L Discover Allies: research existing advocacy groups. “Don't reinvent the wheel.”
- L Choose which method of political involvement you are most comfortable with: Letter writing, attending meetings, phone calls etc.
- L Gathering knowledge is an important and empowering part of the process.
- L Remember that people advocating for themselves are much more powerful than professionals advocating.
- L Find out who has the authority to make the change happen.

***When is a good time to act? Right Now !!***

You don't need to have a special occasion to make your representatives aware of your needs. Ongoing dialogue and action is ideal. Timing is also very important to consider when taking action. For example: when a bill is in committee or newly introduced, the legislators are open to feedback. If you send a letter two weeks after the bill is already voted on, then there is nothing that your representative may be able to do about it. And finally, remember that when you're in charge of your own life you can be more effective elsewhere.

**A Citizen's Guide to State Government**, which is included with this manual, can be obtained at no cost from any representative's office. It is very useful in providing information on all of Michigan's Representatives including your local representatives. Please take out the Citizens Guide and look through it to find the representative in your area.

***These are my local representatives:***

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_  
Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_  
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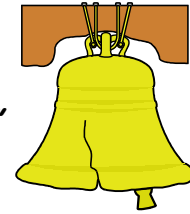
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# CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

*(\*adapted from A Citizen's Guide to State Government)*



*"An informed and active citizenry is the lifeblood of a democracy."*

It is important in a democracy that citizens help keep their legislators informed. In order to be true representatives of the people, legislators need to know the thinking of their constituents on those issues upon which decisions will be made, and the facts on which such thinking and conclusions are based. As a citizen, you can help ensure good legislation on state and national levels by communicating with your elected representatives at the proper time.

Too many people never have any contact with those who represent them in government - whose vote may decide what price they will pay for the acts of government, sometimes in terms of dollar, or in changes in standards of living, or in regulatory inconveniences.

***Is there a bill or an issue of particular concern to you? Organize!***

Forming a group to lobby for or against legislation is often more effective than individual efforts. A group is far more visible, has greater resources, and carries more political weight.

Organize a group of friends, co-workers, or neighbors around a specific issue of concern to all of you. Define your goals . . . identify tasks that part of the plan. . . divide the work. (For instance, one person can research available material, another can keep track of the bill, several can attend all committee meetings, several can personally meet with the legislator, etc.) . . .

Keep informed! It is best for the group to meet informally or socially with legislators even before the group has specific legislative requests to make. Professional lobbyists specifically suggest this kind of personalized, informal contact. Friendly, personal acquaintance, and help at campaign time, form a strong basis for personal, or group, lobbying efforts.

Learn how the system works, find out how a bill becomes a law, learn the committee structure, find out which legislators are dealing with your area of concern, find out when and how to lobby. All this information is in *A Citizen's Guide to State Government!* !

If you are interested in becoming actively involved in influencing legislation, here are some important points that will make your lobbying efforts more effective:

### **Personal Contacts:**

Personal contacts can be a meaningful way to influence a legislator.

1. Before contacting any legislators, take the time to read all available background material on the bill or issue which concerns you. Although it is obviously beneficial for you to know a great deal about the specifics of bills and issues, it is not essential that you know everything. The primary goal of your visit is to express your concern over a particular bill or issue.
2. Know when to contact a legislator. The best times to find a legislator in the office in Lansing are Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. (House sessions are normally held on Tuesdays and Wednesdays at 2:00 p.m. and Thursdays at 12:00 noon, while Senate sessions normally begin at 10:00 a. m. on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays.)

It is possible, when the House and Senate are in session, to send in a message to legislators informing them that you wish to speak with them. Check from the visitors balconies on the third floor (using the seating charts in the Citizen's Guide) to see if the legislator you wish is in the chamber. The Sergeant-at-Arms, on the second floor in front of each chamber, will send your message to the Representative or Senator. It is generally, but *not always*, possible for a legislator to come out to meet briefly with you.

Occasionally, legislators will be able to see you if you simply walk into their office, but the best approach is to call ahead and make an appointment. Let the legislator know what you wish to discuss. If you cannot get an appointment, or if the matter can't wait for an appointment, do not hesitate to go to the office anyway. You may at least be able to talk to an aide, and you will have made them aware of your concern.

Calling your own legislator at home on the weekend sometimes makes sense on an issue of great importance or urgency. *Don't abuse* this method of contact.

3. If you have genuine expert knowledge, share it with the legislator. It will be welcomed. No legislator can be an expert on everything. (All views are important, but expertise is especially valued. Remember, any lobbyist's most useful role for a legislator is as a source of information.) If you have read the bill carefully and/or understand the issues involved as a result of personal knowledge or research, you may be of great assistance to the legislator.
4. Be constructive. If a bill deals with a problem you admit exists, but you believe the bill is the wrong approach, explain what you believe is the right approach. If you want to suggest amendments to a bill that has been introduced, it is important that you have; a) a clear idea of what to be included or deleted; b) the reasons to justify the proposed change; and c) good, strong facts to back up your position before you contact your legislator. If possible, leave copies of your position and /or suggested changes with the legislator.
5. It is usually a waste of time ( for both of you) to lobby legislators who are already supporting your position, although they may be helpful in making suggestions for your lobbying efforts.
6. You do not need a crowd to lobby. One, or possibly two, well-informed lobbyists on the same subject are more effective and less confusing than a large group gathered at the same time.
7. When you introduce yourself, save time by making it clear who you are and what organization, if any, you are working with. If you are cooperating with some group from the legislator's home district, mention it, and the fact that the home district group may also be trying to reach the legislator.
8. Do not "overkill." Most legislators have many demands on their time. An elaborate sales job or long, emotional speech will not be appreciated. They do, however, want your well prepared facts and views presented in a straightforward manner. Make sure their time is well spent in a straightforward manner in talking with you. Stick to the issues that you came discuss; don't wander into other issues.

9. It is easy, particularly when dealing with legislators who disagree with you, to become angry and frustrated. If you disagree, a calm, reasonable attitude and a set of well prepared reasons for your position may change their minds on the issue. It is generally advisable not to get into arguments which may trigger prejudices. Remember, you may not have all the facts on an issue or bill.

Let legislators explain their views- listen without interrupting- they often have input from many resources to which you may not have access, such as fiscal agencies, state departments, other groups with expertise on the issue, and legislation from states.

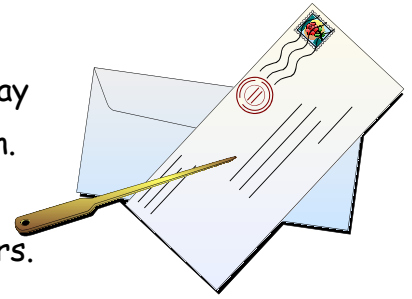
Take a few notes about their comments, noting any questions they have. Give the answers you know, and offer to get the others, if possible. Understanding their view of the facts and where they come from will help your organization develop counter arguments.

10. Don't demand a commitment before the facts are in. Give your legislator a fair chance to examine all sides of an issue.

The legislative process is very complex, and bills change their shape in committee and on the floor of both houses of the Legislature. A bill rarely becomes law in the same form it is introduced. It is possible that the bill you supported originally is so changed in the process that you would oppose its final form. A legislator may be forced to vote on the bill as a whole, weighing the good with the bad and the needs of all constituents and/or the state as a whole, rather than those of a particular group or individual.

## ***Letter Writing and E-Mail:***

A personal letter or e-mail message may be the most effective way of contacting your legislator, whether in Lansing or in Washington. Consult the House (p.31) and Senate (p.53) Directories in the Citizen's Guide to find the e-mail addresses of Michigan legislators.



If you're new at this type of letter writing, here are some suggestions on how your letters can be most effective:

1. ***Address it properly:*** Know your legislator's full name and correct spelling. For specific addresses, see individual lists. Examples:

### **U.S. SENATOR**

The honorable (full name)  
United States Senator  
Address

Dear Senator (last name):

### **U.S. REPRESENTATIVE**

The honorable (full name)  
United States Representative  
Address

Dear Congressman/woman (last name):

### **STATE SENATOR**

The Honorable (full name)  
State Senator  
State Capitol  
P.O. Box 30036  
Lansing, MI 48909-7536

Dear Senator (last name):

### **STATE REPRESENTATIVE**

The Honorable (full name)  
State Representative  
State Capital  
P.O. Box 30014  
Lansing, MI 48909-7514

Dear Representative (last name):

2. ***Always include your last name and address on the letter itself*** (printed or typed). A letter cannot be answered if there is no return address or the signature is not legible.

3. ***Use your own words.*** Avoid form letters and petitions. They tend to be identified as organized pressure campaigns and are often answered with form replies. However, a petition *does* let the legislator know that the issue is of concern to a large number of people (addresses with zip codes should be given for each signature). One thoughtful, factual, and well-reasoned letter carries more weight than 100 form letters or printed post cards.
4. ***Time the arrival of your letter.*** Try to write to your legislator, and the chairperson of the committee dealing with a bill, while a bill is still in committee and there is still time to take effective action. Sometimes a bill is out of committee, or has been passed, before a helpful, informative letter arrives which *could* have made a difference in the way the bill was written or in the final decision.
5. ***Know what you are writing about.*** Identify the bill or issue of concern to you. Thousands of bills and resolutions are introduced in each session. If you write about a bill, try to give the bill number or describe it by popular title, such as "the Whistle Blower's Act," or "the School Code."
6. ***Be reasonably brief.*** Many issues are complex, but a single page, presenting your opinions, facts, arguments, or proposals as clearly as possible, is preferred and welcomed by most legislators.
7. ***Give reasons for your position.*** Explain how the issue would affect you, your family, business or profession- or the effect on your community or our state. If you have specialized knowledge **SHARE IT WITH YOUR LEGISLATOR.** Concrete, expert arguments for or against the bill can be used by the legislator in determining the final outcome of a bill.
8. ***Be constructive.*** If a bill deals with a problem you admit exists, but you believe the bill is the wrong approach, explain what you believe to be the right approach.
9. ***Groups and individuals should determine their priority concerns*** and contact the legislator on those *specific* issues rather than on *every* issue. The "pen pal" who writes every few days on every conceivable subject tends to become a nuisance, rather than an effective voice of concern.





***Rate your political expertise:***

The following is an exercise to help you recognize what strengths you possess.

- 9 Yes 9 No Do you watch your local news?
- 9 Yes 9 No Do you ever feel a strong reaction to a story?
- 9 Yes 9 No Do you have hopes for where you live?
- 9 Yes 9 No Are you concerned about your safety?
- 9 Yes 9 No Are you interested in more Education?
- 9 Yes 9 No Are you interested in getting a job or a better job?
- 9 Yes 9 No Are you bothered by mis-perceptions that people have about mental illness?
- 9 Yes 9 No Do you feel as though you don't have enough money?
- 9 Yes 9 No Do you have concerns about pollution or clean water?
- 9 Yes 9 No Do you feel strongly that people of all abilities, race, and gender should be treated fairly?

*If you answered "Yes" to some of these than you are on your way to political involvement!!*



Brenda aged 50, is a consumer of Community Mental Health Services. She attends the clubhouse three days a week and works two days a week. Her supervisor has offered her more hours at work on the weekend, which she would really like to work but the transportation system she relies on does not run on the weekends. She has contacted the person in charge of transportation in the county who said they can't take her to work on the weekends. Brenda feels like she isn't getting anywhere. What can she do to ensure that she is able to get to her job?

Who should Brenda talk to? \_\_\_\_\_

Are letters effective?    9 yes            9 no

What can she do? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Role Play #2

Jennifer is 37 years old and is a consumer of Community Mental Health Services. She has a Therapist and a Supports Coordinator. Jennifer has been living in an apartment with a roommate for 4 years. Jennifer likes her apartment but would really like to live by herself. She has looked through the paper for a place to live, but without a roommate she cannot afford rent. Jennifer understands that the county in which she lives is very expensive.

Who should Jennifer talk to? \_\_\_\_\_

Are letters effective?    9 yes            9 no

What can she do? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What can she do to secure affordable housing? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Role Play #3

Herb, aged 61, is a consumer of Community Mental Health Services. He uses Assertive Community Treatment Services. Herb was starting to feel more symptoms from his mental illness and decided that he needed a distraction from the voices that he was hearing. Herb decided to get some fresh air and exercise by spending the afternoon walking back in forth from his apartment to the corner and back repeatedly. On one of the trips to the corner the police showed up and questioned Herb about what he was doing. Herb felt that the police were harassing him and told them off. They responded by hand cuffing Herb and taking him into the station. He did not need to be hospitalized and he did not break any laws so the police released him after 3 hours of sitting in the station. Herb is feeling better but is really upset that the police hand cuffed him and took him into the station. He would like to ensure that this does not happen again.

Who should Herb talk to? \_\_\_\_\_

Are letters effective?    9 yes            9 no

What can he do? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

***What do you want to change?***

Pick something that is very important to you. Something that affects you daily.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

***Example:*** When I lived in Chicago there were many homeless people on the streets of my neighborhood and I wondered how I could help people change their homeless situation. It was very visible to me because I would see homeless people every day. In fact, one person lived under the deck of the apartment complex that I was living in.

***Issue: Homelessness***

I decided that helping to end homelessness was something I wanted to get involved with. I was in graduate school at the time and decided to work on helping the homeless as a requirement for my degree.

The first thing I did was to find out information on existing programs and homeless services. So I started making phone calls and meeting with people who were active in helping the homeless.

***Action: Start a literacy Program***

After talking to several people and thinking about how I could contribute, I decided that I would start a literacy program for homeless people. I found a Drop-in Center for the homeless that was interested in hosting my proposed literacy program.

**Time Frame: One Year**

I set a time frame of one year that I had available for this project and I went to work recruiting volunteers.

**Goal: To help give the homeless a tool for improved life skills**

My goal was to help people experiencing homelessness gain more skills to increase their chances of employment, and also to have positive experiences working with tutors so that they might be comfortable seeking help in the future.

**Has anything changed?**

I was able to recruit several volunteers during the year to tutor people experiencing homelessness. We set up a weekly reading and writing workshop at the Drop-in Center which several people took advantage of. I am sure people learned some reading skills and had good interactions with the tutors.

**Exercise:**

\*Pick one issue that affects you that you would like to change (such as the one you wrote about above). \_\_\_\_\_

\*Come up with some "action" steps that you would do to help change the issue:

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\*Pick a time frame for yourself: \_\_\_\_\_

Write down the specific goal that you expect from your action:

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# ***Congratulations ! ! ! !***



Now you have completed this section and this entire manual. The skills you've learned will help you as you continue your journey in leadership, and in recovery.

If you have any questions about this manual contact:

Leslie Hall

Lee Kellogg

Jim Salisbury

We can be reached at Community Mental Health Services of Livingston County  
(517-546-4126)

## **About the Authors:**

*Leslie Hall* has received her Undergraduate Degree from the University of Michigan, and her Master's Degree in Social Work from Eastern Michigan University. For the past eight years, she has been the Coordinator of Quality Improvement at Community Mental Health Services of Livingston County, where she teaches the skills in this manual. Her areas of interest are : Consumer Leadership, Conflict Resolution, and Team Building. Leslie is the proud mom of Molly, a one year old "gorgeous" Golden Retriever, and three very talented cats.

*Lee Kellogg* received his Bachelor's Degree in Social Science from Michigan State University and his Master of Art's Degree in Social Ecology from Goddard College in Plainfield, Vermont. He is the Coordinator of *Genesis House* in Fowlerville, and is currently involved with the coordination of the Michigan Association of Clubhouses. Before returning to Michigan, Lee lived in Chicago for seven years. His full time work was at a clubhouse called *Thresholds South*, and he taught Social Science part time at Truman College. In his free time, Lee enjoys spending time with his new son, Charlie.

*Jim Salisbury* is a Registered Occupational Therapist, the Program Coordinator of *Fresh Start Clubhouse*, and the father of two "wonderful" daughters. He is an active member of *OTACTS* (Occupational Therapists Advocating for Community Treatment and Services) and, in the past, has created and managed programs to reduce juvenile delinquency and the stigma surrounding mental illness.

## **Resources:**

National Empowerment Center  
Self-Help Clearinghouse

Disability Network  
Green Door