



**Canadian Mental  
Health Association**  
Waterloo Wellington



**SELF HELP &  
PEER SUPPORT**

### **What to Expect from Virtual Peer Support**

As of mid-March 2020, with the COVID-19 Pandemic, we have shifted from in-person services to providing peer support through video and telephone only. This document helps you to know what to expect when you reach out for virtual support from Self Help & Peer Support services (SH&PS).

Access to virtual Self Help & Peer Support services happens in one of two ways: by e-mailing us at [selfhelpgroup@cmhaww.ca](mailto:selfhelpgroup@cmhaww.ca), or by telephoning one of our three sites, depending upon your preference. To reach us by phone, please call the site closest to where you live, and leave a message with your first name and phone number:

- Kitchener – Waterloo and Woolwich, Wellesley, Wilmot: 519-570-4595
- Cambridge and North Dumfries: 519-623-6024
- Guelph and Wellington County: 519-763-4014

There are no wait lists to access SH&PS services. A staff Facilitator will return your call or e-mail, usually within 24 hours. As someone with their own lived experience with mental health and/or addiction challenges, this staff peer supporter will answer your questions, offer you an orientation to our virtual services, connect you with virtual one-to-one peer support, and/or provide you with information around joining one of the many virtual support groups we offer each month.

Our groups are open and available, free of charge. Registration is required. You can join in any time, by telephone or video. To see what virtual groups are currently on offer, go to our website at <https://cmhawwselfhelp.ca/events/>

When you decide to attend a group, e-mail [selfhelpgroup@cmhaww.ca](mailto:selfhelpgroup@cmhaww.ca), or call one of our sites, and tell us in which group or groups you are interested in order to register. Group participation is by telephone or video, depending upon your preference, and you will be given the specific connection details for each group once you contact us.

When you join in on a group, you'll be welcomed by the group facilitator who, whether volunteer or staff, has their own lived experience with the group theme. You'll hear our group guidelines. You'll often be invited to 'check in' with your first name and how you're doing that day, but you are always welcome



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to 'pass' if you'd rather not share. You will be encouraged to participate in a way that is comfortable for you and the group.

The content of the group depends on whether it is a 'Peer Support' group or a 'Recovery Centre' group. Peer Support groups focus on sharing experiences related to the theme –for example, in Anxiety, Depression, and Hope Peer Support, participants share how they're dealing with anxiety and depression, what has or hasn't worked for them, and what they do to nurture a sense of hope. Recovery Centre groups are also peer support, but also have an educational component –for example, in Good Mindful Monday, participants read and discuss an article or excerpt from a workbook or watch a video in order to learn mindfulness skills, as well as share their experiences with mindfulness.

Towards the end of group, participants will often be invited to do a 'check out' to give feedback on how the group went, but, again, you are welcome to 'pass' if you'd rather not share. You'll be thanked for your attendance, and welcomed to return when it works for you. Most of our groups are held weekly, but you may attend as few or as many as you like. Your attendance is not tracked, unless you make a specific request to have it tracked.

Virtual one-to-one peer support is also a short-term option. In virtual one-to-one peer support, by telephone or video, conversations are focused on identification and exploration of recovery goals, as defined by you. One-to-one peer supporters are either staff or volunteers who are skilled in their own mental health and/or addiction recovery; who take a 'fellow traveller' approach to supporting you; and who will maintain confidentiality of your conversations, within legally-determined boundaries (boundaries that will be discussed with you at the start).

Depending on your situation, you may also wish to connect virtually with our Entrepreneurship Facilitator, who supports individuals in setting up their own business.

If you enjoy creativity, check out our Spark of Brilliance workshops on our current group calendar, designed to nurture recovery and self-discovery through The Arts. Registration is required, through [selfhelpgroup@cmhaww.ca](mailto:selfhelpgroup@cmhaww.ca) or by calling one of our sites.

***Self Help & Peer Support: Join in! We're ready when you are.***