


The Difference

a podcast by support workers, for support workers

Stories from the heart of mental health and addiction services in Aotearoa New Zealand.

 **Episode 1:** “I didn’t go through all that for nothing”

 **Topic:** Using your lived experience in your mahi

Guest speakers: Izzy Young (Real) and James Huata (Moana House)

Hey! We hope you enjoyed this episode of *The Difference*, a podcast by support workers, for support workers. It would really help us to know if we are making content that you find valuable. If you have a few minutes, [please consider giving us some feedback via this short survey](#).

Ngā mihi!

Using your lived experience in your mahi

People who have experienced mental health challenges and / or addiction develop many skills, knowledge, talents and attributes through those experiences.

Many people working in support work roles have lived experience, either directly from their own journey, or through assisting someone else. For many people, this is why they want to do this mahi.

Can I use my lived experience in my mahi if I am not a trained peer support worker?

Yes, and no.

Yes: you will have life skills and a deeper understanding of what it can be like to try and navigate the mental health and addiction system. This knowledge may also give you more empathy.¹

No: as a peer or whānau support worker, to use and talk about your own direct or indirect experiences with the tāngata whai ora you support, you must be trained how to do so safely.

Why is this important?

“Sharing your lived experience story can inspire others in a similar situation to find a way through. It’s one of the best ways we can challenge the negative judgements and discrimination those of us with mental health challenges can face... Sharing your story is also an important personal decision, and one that should be well thought through. Without due care, sharing your story can have negative impacts on your own wellbeing, or on the wellbeing of other people reading or watching it.”²

Training for the Consumer, Peer Support and Lived Experience (CPSLE) workforce is important for a few reasons. It can reduce the risk of kaimahi experiencing isolation, high stress, anxiety and burnout.³

Participation in training can also bring other benefits such as for people’s own recovery process and in reducing self-stigma. There is strength in like-minded people coming together to learn, and of the natural peer support that occurs within peer networks.³

Tips from *The Difference* podcast

- › Every day in this work is different.
- › Try working in different spaces (in the mental health and addiction sector) and find what lights your fire.
- › Finding an organisation that reflects your values is important.
- › Peer support enables authentic connection.
- › There’s a difference between having lived experience and knowing how to use that intentionally.
- › “Although we’re there to serve someone else, it’s important we understand ourselves in order to be able to care for someone else” – James Huata (Moana House).
- › Lived experience support workers role model what is possible.
- › Support workers can bridge the communication gap between tāngata whai ora and clinicians.
- › “If you think you can’t, give it a go anyway. There’s nothing stronger than human connection” – Izzy Young (Real).

More information on this topic

- › [Strategic documents, resources, values and competencies to support consumer, peer support and lived experience workforce](#) are available on the Te Pou webpage.
- › [Training directory that includes training options for consumer, peer support and lived experience workforce](#) can be accessed on the Te Pou webpage.
- › [A guide for people with lived experience to tell their story safely](#) is available on the Mental Health Foundation webpage.
- › Rākau Roroa programme trains and supports a growing network of people who want to use their personal lived experience of mental distress and recovery to inspire others. [Learn more about Rākau Roroa training on the Changing Minds webpage.](#)
- › [Apprenticeship in Peer Support \(Level 4\) programme provides specific skills and knowledge for peer support workforce. Learn more about the apprenticeship on the Careerforce webpage.](#)
- › Foundations for Lived Experience Based Practice is a level 5 qualification for peer and lived experience workforce within Aotearoa New Zealand context. [Learn more about this programme on Auckland University of Technology webpage.](#)

If this episode has brought up some issues for you and you need someone to talk to, you can contact a range of services for more information and support:

› Your GP clinic

› [1737, Need to Talk?](#)

Free call or text **1737** anytime to connect with a trained counsellor.

› [Lifeline](#)

Call **0800 543 354** or text HELP (4357) for 24/7 confidential support.

› [Tautoko: Suicide Crisis Helpline](#)

If you or someone you know is considering suicide, call **0508 828 865 (0508 TAUTOKO)** for immediate support.

› [Depression Helpline](#)

Call **0800 111 757** or text **4202** for support with depression-related concerns.

› [Youthline](#)

Call **0800 376 633**, text **234** or email talk@youthline.co.nz for support.

› [Samaritans 24/7 Crisis Helpline](#)

Call **0800 72 66 66** to speak to a trained volunteer for confidential, non-judgemental and non-religious support.

› [Anxiety Helpline](#)

Call **0800 ANXIETY (0800 269 438)** for 24/7 help and support.

› [Alcohol and Drug Helpline](#)

Call **0800 787 797** or visit the website 24/7 for confidential advice and support on alcohol and drug-related issues.

› [The Lowdown](#)

A space created with rangatahi, for rangatahi. Visit the website for support with hauora (wellbeing) and mental health.

[1] Sunkel, C., & Sartor, C. (2022). Perspectives: Involving persons with lived experience of mental health conditions in service delivery, development and leadership. *BJPsych Bulletin*, 46(3),160-164. <https://doi.org/10.1192/bjb.2021.51>

[2] Mental Health Foundation. (2024). *How to tell your mental distress or illness story safely*. <https://mentalhealth.org.nz/resources/resource/how-to-tell-your-lived-experience-story-safely>

[3] Te Pou. (2022). *Training needs analysis for the consumer, peer support and lived experience workforce*. [Training needs analysis | Consumer, peer support and lived... | Te Pou](#)