

# After Stroke Peer Support Toolkit



A Guide to Develop, Deliver and  
Maintain Group-based Peer Support



**INTRODUCTION TO THE TOOLKIT**

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### **Acknowledgements**

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### **Disclaimer**

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# Introduction To Peer Support

## What Is Peer Support?

Peers are people who have similar identities, experiences, or interests. For people living with the impact of stroke, other stroke survivors or caregivers can be peers. In a peer support group, people who have had similar experiences in life (e.g., had a stroke) meet to provide hope, and support to each other.

Since they know what it is like to have a stroke, peers can understand the fears and needs of others living with the impacts of a stroke and share useful support.



## What Is The Value Of Peer Support After A Stroke?

Peer support can be valuable to stroke survivors and caregivers. For a person living with stroke or its impact, peer support can help your emotional, physical, and mental health.

**Some benefits that peer support might offer to individuals impacted by a stroke are:**

- Connect with people who have similar experiences and challenges.
- Improve functional, social and emotional outcomes.
- Manage loneliness and social isolation.
- Improve motivation and confidence.
- Support making your own decisions.
- Learn from other's experiences.
- Reduce depression and anxiety.
- Expand social networks.
- Renew hope and strength.
- Increase socialization.
- Improve resiliency.



**Tip:** Peer support is just one part of your care. It is not a replacement for professional emotional or psychological care.

# Introduction To This Toolkit

## Who Can Use This Toolkit?

Anyone interested in starting a peer support group can use this toolkit. You do not need any previous experience designing peer support groups. The toolkit was designed for people affected by a stroke. Most of the information can be used by other groups with a different focus as well.

## How Do I Use This Toolkit?

You can use this toolkit as a step-by-step guide to help you build your peer support group. You can also use it as a toolbox where you pick and choose the information and tools that you need for your group.



**Tip:** The steps described below are to guide you. What steps you follow will depend on your abilities and available resources. You can make changes to suit your group's needs.

# Where To Start

The toolkit is divided into sections based on where you are in your journey of building a peer support group. Use the questions below to help you find the right section to start with.

## **Are you thinking of starting a peer support group?**

Go to → **Section 1: Before starting a peer support group.**

It discusses things to do before you start a peer support group. This includes checking the need for a new group and finding the right partners.

## **Are you ready to start a peer support group?**

Go to → **Section 2: Build your peer support group.**

It has information about designing your peer support group, finding group members, and the resources you need to run the group.

## **Wondering what to do in peer support meetings?**

Go to → **Section 3: Prepare to run your peer support meetings.**

It talks about what to do in peer support group meetings, and how to prepare to run the meetings.

## **Do you have a peer support group and are thinking of ways to improve and grow?**

Go to → **Section 4: Evaluate and Grow your peer support group.**

It talks about how to make sure your group is running well, and what you can do to grow your group.

## **Looking for some suggestions on how to manage peer support group discussions?**

Go to → **Section 5: Facilitator's guide.**

It provides information that may be valuable to people who manage the peer support group discussions. This section shares tips to help quiet members speak up, solve disagreements, improve engagement, and more.



# Quick Overview

This roadmap describes the steps along the journey of setting up a peer support group. Your group’s journey may look a little different.





## How We Built This Toolkit

We built this toolkit using a codesign process. This means that a group of people with different backgrounds, skills, and life experiences shared ideas and made decisions about what this toolkit should include.

### **Our codesign group included people who:**

- Have experienced the impact of stroke.
- Have experienced the benefits of peer support.
- Have been involved in the delivery of peer support.
- Are researchers in stroke recovery and community programming.

By using a codesign approach we hope that the toolkit reflects the needs of people living with the effects of stroke, and scientific evidence in the field of after stroke peer support and program implementation.

## March Of Dimes Canada Is Available To Help

March of Dimes Canada welcome the opportunity to help you build your peer support group. March of Dimes Canada is a leading national charity committed to championing equality and empowering ability for people living with disability across Canada.

### **Peer support groups that are affiliated with March of Dimes Canada are part of a Canada-wide peer support network and have access to:**

- Support with designing, running, and growing their peer support group.
- March of Dimes Canada templates and forms.
- Support with fundraising and managing finances.
- Liability insurance coverage.
- Assistance with identification of resources and partners.
- Learning and development opportunities for facilitators and volunteers.
- Opportunities to connect and collaborate with other peer support groups.
- March of Dimes Canada's stroke-related resources and programs.

For more information, please contact us at [peersupport@marchofdimes.ca](mailto:peersupport@marchofdimes.ca).

