

## **ASCA Peer\* Support FAQ & Tips**

\*Please note that we have renamed Telephone Support to Peer Support as it more accurately reflects the support offered in between ASCA meetings. It can be provided via several avenues—telephone, text, or email.

### **What is the ASCA Peer (Telephone) Support Sign-Up Sheet?**

The peer support sign-up sheet is a way for ASCA members to stay in contact between meetings. Signing this list is voluntary. If you wish to participate, you may provide a phone number, text, and/or email. Names are active for only 1 week. At each ASCA meeting, a new list is sent out, and that list is active for the next week.

### **What kind of support can I expect to receive through the peer support list?**

As with ASCA support group meetings, all support is on a peer basis and not at a professional (therapist) level. The peer support list is not a replacement for a therapist. It is also not the same as “sponsors” in AA or 12-Step meetings. Contacting an ASCA member on the support list is a way to move away from isolation and begin to reach out to others for support.

### **What kind of support should I expect to provide through the ASCA peer support list?**

Focus on providing support similar to supportive feedback during ASCA meetings, e.g., listening without judgment and with empathy, encouragement, validation, affirmation, and nurturance. Stay away from offering advice, judgment, therapy, counseling, and evaluative comments.

### **What if I feel overwhelmed in my position with offering support?**

Try setting a boundary by using one of the statements in the Tips for Peer Supporters section below. If you are still having trouble, contact an ASCA co-facilitator for assistance.

## Tips for ASCA members needing Peer Support

- If you are having a panic attack, call your therapist first. If your therapist is not available, call someone in your own support circle who knows how to support you when you are having a panic attack. Most of your peers in ASCA support group meetings are not trained in providing support for panic attacks. If you feel you need to be hospitalized, call 911 and the police will take you to the nearest psychiatric emergency services.
- If you are feeling suicidal, call your therapist first. If your therapist is not available or you do not have a therapist, call the National Suicide Prevention Hotline at 988 or text “GO” to 741741.
- If you are in physical danger, call 911.
- Text or email your ASCA peer on the support list to set up a time that’s convenient, e.g.: Hi <first name>, do you have a few minutes to talk? If not now, please let me know another time that would be convenient for you. I need <validation/supportive feedback/empathy > etc. If you are OK with text or email only support, state that you are OK with a response via email or text.
- Be specific about how your ASCA peer can help you. Do you want someone to listen without saying anything? Are you looking for validation? The more specific you are regarding your support needs, the better your ASCA peer can support you.
- Be aware of your ASCA peer’s boundaries. If what you need is more than your peer can offer, respect this and consider other support resources. The Morris Center’s website ([ascasupport.org](http://ascasupport.org)) has a listing of resources under the resources section, or call 211.
- Remember, you can always reach out to ASCA co-facilitators for information about additional resources.

## Tips for ASCA Peer Supporters

- Ask if the ASCA person calling you is in a safe space. If they are not, suggest calling emergency services such as 911 or the National Suicide Prevention Hotline at 988 or texting “GO” to 741741 to reach a trained crisis counselor through the Crisis Text Line.
- Ask if they have contacted their therapist about the issue or if they could contact their therapist.
- Ask what exactly you could do for them.
- Ask yourself if you can provide that for them. If you cannot, it is perfectly OK.
- If you cannot provide the support they need, set a boundary. Examples of boundary sentences include
  - I want to support you, but I only have 10 minutes right now.
  - I want to support you but am not able to do so via phone. I am in a public place/noisy place/at work but can provide support through text or email now, or if you would like to wait, I will be available at a later time.
  - This is more than I can help you with. Who is another person you can reach out to for support?
- Validation can be extremely helpful. Examples of validating sentences are
  - I can hear you are really (sad, angry, etc.) right now.
  - That sounds like it would be really hard.
  - I can understand why you are feeling \_\_\_\_\_. I would feel that way too.
- If you do not feel safe in the peer support position, set a clear boundary
  - I am not feeling safe right now, so I am going to need to end our conversation.
- Remember, you can always reach out to your ASCA co-facilitators for assistance in being a peer supporter or any issues you are having as a peer supporter.