

## Workshop 2

Diversity within peer support – A question of maturity

# Gregory Bateson

- Look below the surface at the similarities and differences between things
- Problems in the world largely result from the differences in how people think and perceive things
- Information is difference – difference tells you about relationships

# Questions to challenge and orientate our thinking

- What do we mean by 'diversity'?
- Can PSPs serve the needs of all the diverse groups within aviation?
- What are some constituent components of 'diversity'?
- Is this between or within PSPs?
- How do we train and select for diversity?
- What are the risks of getting this wrong?
- Are there risks in over-identification?

# Hypothesis

Diversity in PSPs improves healthcare access and lowers healthcare avoidance

# Diversity

- Demographic and individual characteristics
- Aviation context
- Mental health and wellbeing
- Delivery of PSPs
- Selection and training of peers

# Demographic and Individual Characteristics

- Language and terminology
- Age/generation
- Gender
- Beliefs
- Sexuality (LGBTQIA+)
- Race
- Religion
- Culture
- Ethnicity
- Appearance and voice
- Others...

# Aviation Context

- Airline culture
- Fleet/s
- Regulator
- Seat/role
- Roster
- SMS
- Psychologically safe(r) workplace
- Management/support/approach
- Pilot-union relationship
- Others...

# Mental Health and Wellbeing

- Do we seek help and support?
- If so, from where/whom?
- What vocabulary is used?
- What are the implications for holding up hand (or not)?
- Personal impact – Shame? Relief? Fear?
- What is a peer, in my mind?
- What can I expect from my peers?
- Others...



## Delivery of PSPs

- Match clients with peers?
- Focus on critical incidents or wellbeing?
- Face-to-face? Online? Messaging?
- Matched professionals (e.g. pilots to pilots only)?
- Within the airline or syndicated?
- Volunteers or compensated peers?
- Pictures of peers or more anonymous?
- Reactive or interventive (or blend)?
- Others...

# Selection and Training of Peers

- Representative of the airline or society?
- Specialists of all areas of diversity or generalists (or a blend)?
- Is the training in PSP competencies sufficient for diversity, or is more needed?
- Do we select in (or screen out) peers with diversity in mind?
- Do we specifically 'train' for diversity, or address through peer mentorship and supervision?
- Others...

# Pros and Cons of Diversity Alignment

## Pros:

- Compassion
- Trust
- Emotional safety
- Reduced vulnerability
- Open communication

## Cons:

- Wariness
- Fear of breaches of confidentiality
- Reduced openness
- Assumptions

# Illustrative examples where diversity may be a challenge

- Younger pilots may have generation-bound nuances – are we able to listen for perceived distress as opposed to verbally-expressed distress (e.g. I am anxious vs. I don't have the emotional resilience to deal with this life stress)
- As a male peer, how do I respond to a pilot with menopause-related issues?
- The client wants to DM me, and I am used to phone chat
- The client wants a solution from me (to tell them that they are unfit)
- How do I respond to a pilot with [diversity issue], yet I have my own beliefs and views?

# Peers question themselves about diversity

- What if the client (or I) feel uncomfortable or embarrassed/shame?
- What if I 'get it wrong' or miss something important?
- What is the 'place' of emotion in relation to the issue (tough it out or name it)?
- What do I do with my feelings about this issue?
- Do I raise the issue of 'diversity' or is that just complicating things?
- What if I have not experienced the same as what they are going through, and they ask me?

# Selection, Training, and Mitigations

- Improve awareness of diversity through training
- Improve awareness of own 'blind spots' and bias
- Representative peers can improve access to PSPs (small risk of over-identification)
- Matching peers with client demographics may/may not enhance experiences
- Familiarity with the issues may be more important than life experience
- Seek clarity as to what one is seeking to 'do' through PSP – this influences selection and training

# Competencies that align with diversity

- Non-judgemental
- Respectful and empathic
- Humility
- Validate the courage and strength to come forward
- Curiosity and questioning (client and self)
- Primarily a generalist and facilitator (more specialist with experience)
- Support, mentorship, and supervision of peers (two heads are better than one)

## Final 'Take Homes'

- One size does not fit all
- Make no assumptions (about anything)
- Barriers to accessing support are denial and fear/suppression – diversity non-alignment may be a factor in healthcare avoidance
- PSPs may either be the driver, or be underpinned by diversity
- Peers should have broad and generic skills to address issues and clients have the option to connect with another peer
- PSPs may have a role in changing culture at work