

Co-reflection with a team: making the most of the space together

This resource is designed to explore how to make the most of co-reflection space with a team. It is part of a series of four resources – the other resources include: ‘Getting started: some co-reflection possibilities’; ‘Making the most of informal co-reflection’; and ‘Navigating challenges and deepening co-reflection practices.’ These resources have been produced by Intentional Peer Support (IPS) and were made possible through funding from the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services’ Expanding Post-discharge Support Initiative.

Please note: This guide is intended to supplement (rather than replace) training in co-reflection (which is offered as part of the four-day Advanced Training in Intentional Peer Support), mentoring from people who have particular skills in co-reflection and/or engagement of external facilitators trained in co-reflection.

Who’s involved? Who’s in charge?

There are no hard-and-fast rules about co-reflection spaces – the ideal is to create a space that works for everyone’s learning.

For example, a team of consumer peer support workers, carer peer support workers and a clinician who supervises the team may all decide to co-reflect together. Alternatively, there may be reasons for only a sub-set of the team to co-reflect together – for example, it can be harder to co-reflect honestly if your boss is in the room; sometimes carer peer workers specifically seek out co-reflection opportunities just with other carer peer workers; some people might prefer to seek external or individual co-reflection possibilities, instead of (or in addition to) group co-reflection with their team. It can be very difficult logistically to get an entire team together, especially if people are working part-time on different days. Or a team might try coming together to co-reflect but feel unable to speak honestly (for various reasons) – this is obviously not the best use of anyone’s time!

The group may choose to have a facilitator, either someone external to the group (and trained and/or experienced in co-reflection) or someone from within the team. It is definitely useful to have some people in the group who are holding in mind the principles and tasks of Intentional Peer Support, and who are committed to working towards practicing this framework in the co-reflection space. It is also worth bearing in mind that co-reflection builds on the values and practices of peer support workers, including endeavouring to redress power imbalances, so, it is worth exploring configurations that might not conform to traditional hierarchies (e.g. rotating facilitation/asking if anyone would like to develop their skills in this area and providing mentoring arrangements/having some time within the co-reflection space when managers are not present).

It’s worth checking in regularly to see if the co-reflection space is meeting everyone’s needs, or if anything might be different. For example, the group might find that the space is overly structured, and they don’t feel like they are able to talk about what they need to talk about. Or they might find that the space is not structured enough, and that the time isn’t used as *intentionally* as they would like. **Flexibility, creativity and honest negotiation are often needed** (remember the task of mutuality?).

A possible structure for a team co-reflection:

Some structure (even a loose structure) can enable co-reflective space to be an intentional space, for reflection and mutual learning. Choosing to have a structure-less group is also an option, but at the least, it can help if group members keep the IPS principles and tasks in mind (e.g. by having these visible during the co-reflection).

One possible structure that has been found to be very useful is:

(1) Open with a poem/saying/quote

Just as in Intentional Peer Support training, begin by asking if anyone has a poem/saying/quote/interpretive dance that they would like to share with the group. This can help to create a “special,” reflective space, outside of every-day routine.

(2) Have a theme for the co-reflection (this may be chosen at the last co-reflection)

Having a theme can hone the discussion (as they say, constraints can increase creativity) – it may be worth experimenting as a group to see if a theme (or no theme) is useful. Some possible themes include:

One of the tasks or principles.

For example, participants may be asked to reflect on a good *connection* they have made lately. After each person shares, they may be asked what they think they might have done to contribute to that connection. Then participants might be asked if anyone has experienced a challenge in relation to connection. *Remember: IPS is not about problem solving! Instead, we validate, explore worldviews, explore what works for each of us, ask what we might want to move towards, and wonder about other possibilities.*

A recent experience

Each person could reflect on something they thought they did well recently, before exploring what some other possibilities might have been (e.g. “I would like to become more skillful at holding my own world-view as well as holding space for the other’s world-view” or “I would really like to be able to press the pause button sooner when I start to feel frustrated.”). Remember, we don’t want to speak about people behind their backs – if for some reason this is unavoidable, we need to keep open space for what their worldview might have been.

Other IPS topics

Some examples include: untold stories/how we have come to know what we have come to know/crisis as opportunity/sitting with multiple truths.

(3) Close with reflections – e.g. asking each person:

- Something that worked well in the co-reflection today, as well as some other possibilities; or
- Something that struck each person; or
- Something each person would like to work on (“move towards”); or
- Something each person would like from the next co-reflection gathering.