



Western Mass Recovery Learning Community



The Western Mass Recovery Learning Community has been developed to support individuals who have lived experience with mental health diagnoses, trauma and/or extreme states. These principles apply to the RLC Resource Connection Centers (RCCs) and to any other workshops, trainings, classes, groups or individual interactions that occur under the RLC umbrella.

Our Core Values: Safety, Respect, Optimism, Self-Determination and Personal Strength, Mutuality and Genuine Human Relationships

SAFETY

- **Confidentiality is an expectation.** Everyone is expected to keep private information learned about individuals at the RCC or in other RLC-related settings.
- **The RLC strives to make all spaces accessible to all, including aspiring to be scent free.** This means avoiding the use of scented products as much as possible when participating in RLC activities or visiting the RCC (as well as being sensitive to the need for other accommodations when avoiding wearing scents is not possible), using wheelchair accessible spaces, and scheduling interpreters and groups in other languages.
- **The RLC is trauma-sensitive and asks individuals to be aware of triggers for others including avoiding smelling of alcohol or drugs or being visibly intoxicated or high.** This also means not having alcohol, drugs or drug paraphernalia on your person at any time when at the RCC or an RLC activity.
- **The RLC expects that members of its community will validate and attempt to accommodate each individual's needs to feel safe at the RCC and other RLC spaces.** This may mean walking someone to their car when it's dark out, or making other efforts to support each person to feel safe based on their expressed needs.
- **The RLC uses non-violent conflict resolution.** It is anticipated that any individuals in the RLC community who have a conflict with one another will address the conflict directly to the relevant individuals whenever possible, and without the use of yelling, gossiping or physical aggression, and that individuals in general will be open to talking through conflicts with one another.

RESPECT

- **Above all else, the RLC expects each individual to treat others as he or she would wish to be treated.** This means treating each other and each other's belongings with respect, compassion and kindness at all times.
- **The RLC aspires to use the most inclusive and respectful language at all times.** Everyone will be encouraged to use person-first, strengths-based language and to avoid using one-word labels when referring to others in the recovery community.
- **The RLC encourages shows of gratitude and appreciation for all other members of the community.** Individuals are encouraged to go out of their way whenever possible to thank others for their contributions, including those with whom they might not always get along.
- **The RLC community will respect all differences of opinion, beliefs, culture, appearances and ways of life.** This means treating everyone with dignity, respect and as a valued individual, as well as encouraging learning, openness and conversations about different beliefs and cultures. We will not ostracize or put down any individual based on their ethnicity, sexual orientation, size or other aspect of their appearance, religious beliefs and so on.

OPTIMISM

- **The RLC believes that recovery is probable for all individuals.** This means that all individuals will be welcomed in to the RLC community and treated with the belief that they have the power and ability to achieve their hopes and dreams.
- **The RLC will treat individuals who are struggling with compassion.** This means that the RLC community recognizes that all individuals have ups and downs, and moments when they may 'relapse' or need to step away from the community, but that the community will reach out to them in times of need and always welcome them back with open arms and without judgment.

SELF-DETERMINATION & PERSONAL STRENGTH

- **All members of the RLC community will define their own path to 'recovery.'** This means that all members of the RLC community will always have the power to determine their own goals, and to define for themselves the very meaning of the word 'recovery' as it applies to their own life.
- **The RLC community will not preach any one way of getting well.** The RLC community will focus on education about options and support for each other's choices, and will never limit itself to any one model or approach.
- **The RLC Community will treat each individual as capable in his or her ability to set guidelines for him or herself.** Hence, the RLC will avoid setting too many 'rules' and micromanaging situations and relationships because we believe in each individual's strength and wisdom to make his or her own choices, express his or her own likes and dislikes and identify his or her own needs without the overuse of rules and guidelines to dictate that process.

MUTUALITY

- **There are no 'service providers' and 'service recipients' in the RLC community.** It is assumed that all individuals who come to the RLC for support will also give support to another at some point, and that each individual will not only approach the RLC with the attitude of what he or she can get but also what he or she can give.
- **We are not nor do we strive to be 'clinical' workers.** The RLC is a community of people supporting people who have been through similar struggles, all on equal ground. We will not attempt to act as therapists or clinicians. We will be 'professionals' in peer support, and above all else, in regards to the expertise that we have about ourselves.
- **We are all leaders in the RLC community.** This does not mean that each person must necessarily take turns at facilitating meetings, organizing campaigns or being the point person for a given activity. What it means is that as each of us empowers ourselves to move, question, change, act and be hopeful we thereby (intentionally or not) inspire others in our community to do the same - and then we are leaders.

GENUINE HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS

- **The RLC is founded on our 'humanness' and the importance of forming genuine connections with other human beings.** This means that individuals in the RLC community will be encouraged to form connections with each other as develops naturally, and to use the connection with this community as an opportunity to build or strengthen their natural support systems.
- **The RLC community will respect the physical, sexual and personal boundaries of each member.** This means that each member of the RLC community has the right to determine when he or she is going to be available to the RLC community, when he or she does or does not want to be hugged or touched in any way, and what sorts of relationships he or she wishes to engage in with others in the community.