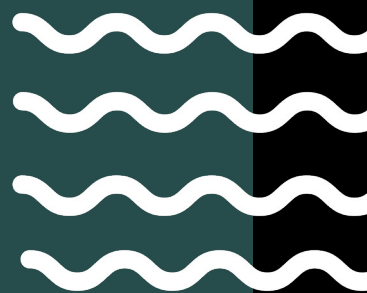


S2S

Student2Student

Peer Support Handbook 2023/24



Trinity College Dublin
Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath
The University of Dublin



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Welcome to S2S!

A message of welcome from the Director of Student Services, Breda Walls.

"Dear Peer Support Team,

I am thrilled to welcome each of you to our newly reintroduced Peer Support Service. Your dedication to becoming Peer Supporters exemplifies a commitment to fostering a supportive community within our College.

Peer Support is a cornerstone of our student support system, emphasizing the power of one student listening to another, offering guidance without judgment. Your role as volunteers is crucial, providing a confidential and empathetic ear to your peers. Your willingness to undergo 35 hours of training really showcases your dedication to making a positive difference!

As you embark on this journey, embody honesty, openness, and approachability. And mind yourselves and your studies too. Never hesitate to reach out to each other or to Shauna and Ralph if you need help.

With your help we can create a campus where everyone feels heard and supported.

Thank you!"



Breda

Breda Walls
Director of Student Services



Welcome to S2S!

A message of welcome from the Student Counselling Service Director, Patricia Murphy.

"Welcome to the S2S Peer Support handbook. This programme is an essential part of the overall Student Counselling offering, and you are a crucial part of our stepped-care model.

Students will benefit from your presence, listening ear, and focused attention that can be availed of for as long as required. This allows students to select the support that suits them, when they need it and in a place that works for them – this is unique and acts as a wonderful addition to the supports students can avail of.

The Peer Support programme is a leader in Ireland, and we are very proud of its existence and development. The whole team in Student Counselling is grateful for your involvement and for the important role you play in the college's approach to student mental health.

We salute you!"



Patricia Murphy

Patricia Murphy
Student Counselling Service Director



Who we are

S2S Staff

Putting a friendly face to the names behind all those emails you'll be getting!



Ralph Armstrong-Astley

S2S Coordinator
Pronouns: She/Her

Role: Ralph leads the S2S team and is responsible for the strategic development of the service. As part of the Student Counselling Services Management team, she represents S2S volunteers and the students they support in steering and advisory groups across Trinity College, and within the National Consortium for Peer-led Transition.



Shauna O'Connor

S2S Programme Officer
Pronouns: She/Her

Role: Shauna looks after the daily function of the S2S volunteer programmes. She assists with volunteer engagement and provides support to S2S volunteers. She assists in the strategic development of the service and helps provide volunteer training.



Gauri Mishra

S2S Graduate Intern
Pronouns: She/Her

Role: Gauri assists with the day to day running of S2S. She helps deliver volunteer training and is responsible for S2S social media.

Email: student2student@tcd.ie

Ralph's mobile (For Emergencies): 085 7833 548

In an emergency, please use the after hours services

information: http://www.tcd.ie/Student_Counselling/support-services/after-hours/

Mission Statement

Mission of the Trinity Counselling, Learning Development and Student 2 Student Services:

Support through collaboration, connection and compassion.

Vision of the Trinity Counselling, Learning Development and Student 2 Student Services:

To be an internationally accredited service, delivering accessible social, academic, mental health and emotional wellbeing services across the Trinity community, keeping students at the centre of everything we do.

All staff and volunteers in the S2S Programme are expected to uphold, and can expect to be treated according to:

[The S2S Volunteer Policy](#)

[TCD's volunteer charter](#)

[TCD's Dignity & Respect policy](#)

[TCD's Diversity & Inclusion statement](#)

What is Peer Support?

Peer Support is based on mutuality; using lived experience to help people in a similar circumstance and/or with a similar issue. A Peer Supporter needs to be enough of a contemporary that someone seeking a listening ear doesn't feel intimidated or inferior.

Your S2S Peer Support training is not designed to turn you into a counsellor, or any kind of professional expert. It's designed to help you hear and understand the issues people come to you with, to give you the space to have compassion, without it having a negative impact on you.

Ultimately, the S2S programme is designed not only to provide on the ground, easily accessible support to students in need; it also aims to help you to develop your own resilience strategies and support mechanisms, and to impart that knowledge to your fellow students as you learn and cultivate it yourself.

Support For You



There are a number of supports available to you in your role and you can avail of them depending on what you need.

You can always [book an S2S staff member](#) for a debrief or a chat.

We're available online or onsite:

House 47
Trinity College Dublin
Dublin 2
Ireland

Peer Supporter Role Description

What is a Peer Supporter?



A Peer Supporter is a volunteer available throughout the year to meet with students one-to-one as requested. You must be willing to listen confidentially and without judgement to any student who requests support. Having your own experience of significant difficulties in no way stops you from being a Peer Supporter, so long as you are currently in a safe and resilient place.

What is involved?

Peer Supporters have to be available for an intensive 35 hr in person training from 12th-16th June 2023.



Once trained, Peer Supporters have to be available over email to take requests, and to arrange in-person meetups with students. They must also attend:

- Refresher training every term (approx. 3 hours)
- Monthly group supervisions with Student Counselling
- Regular debriefing with S2S staff



Alongside one-to-one meet-ups, Peer Supporters may also be requested to:

- Provide emergency accompaniment to students referred to A&E
- Participate in programme strategy meetings
- Participate in service promotion activities

What do you get?

You will receive:



- Extensive training in support work, active listening, challenging personal values, exploration skills, referral, managing significant distress and self-care
- Substantial student and staff support frameworks
- The opportunity to do something really positive and rewarding
- Guaranteed references based on involvement
- Strong social network within S2S Society

What is expected?

You will be expected to



- Attend a full week of in-person training (12th-16th June inclusive)
- Undergo Garda Vetting
- Be available to take casework as of September 2023
- To regularly check and respond to your TCD emails
- Attend regular debrief sessions with S2S staff

N.B. Training places are limited and will be subject to selection based on application forms and interviews

Core Conditions for Peer Support

There are three core conditions of effective peer support: **acceptance, genuineness, and empathy**. These conditions encourage a sense of equality and co-operation; we all feel more comfortable approaching someone with our difficulties when we see them as equals.

The ability to listen is probably the most valuable skill in communication. People often just need somebody to listen and hear them.

Active listening involves the ability to take in the whole message, accepting what is said without judging, and understanding not only the words spoken, but also the feelings that underlie the words. Everyone can listen, but active listening is a life-long skill to be cultivated.

Acceptance



When helping others, demonstrate that you accept and respect them for who and what they are. This helps them to feel safe to share and explore problems without the threat of embarrassment or ridicule.

Genuineness



To effectively help others, be genuine as a person and as a peer supporter. Being “real” builds a foundation of trust for the helping relationship.

Empathy



People often confuse empathy with sympathy. If you sympathise with someone you think of how you would feel in their situation. If you empathise with them you understand how it feels for them.

The Ideal Helper

Let's do an exercise and think about a person who you have reached out to for support. When you have that person in mind answer these questions

? **What was it about them that made you choose them to reach out to?**

? **What specific aspects of their personality or behaviour did you find helpful?**

? **What did they say or do which may have helped you to relax and encourage you to confide in them?**

Honest

Open

Let me make my own decisions

Reassure me that it is not unusual to find some decisions difficult

They respect me

They listen to what I have to say

Patient

Approachable

Observe your behaviour with others over the next week and note any useful attributes and behaviours as you practice your skills.

Valuing Diversity

The world is full of people with different beliefs, views and values. They come from different backgrounds, places and speak different languages. They may follow different religions, have different sexualities or gender expressions. This means we may be confronted with opposing feelings and beliefs to our own.

Becoming aware of our own thoughts and feelings is the first step in the process of becoming an effective Peer Supporter. It is important to tease out what prejudices exist in our society, college community, and ourselves. Unfortunately, personal prejudices can and do colour our individual ways of being and we may be unaware of how they might affect how we engage with someone.

As Irish third level institutions become more diverse, it is helpful to think about the different experience's students may have in college. While minority members of college have similar needs to those of other students, many of them may face additional hurdles.

As a peer supporter, it is important to suspend our own world view as we try to be objective and non-judgemental and to gain some understanding of the others position.

Reflect and consider the following:

What would you find difficult to hear from a peer?

What would prevent you from remaining impartial?

What is different between beliefs and values versus prejudices?



Active Listening

Listening is probably the most important skill required when helping another person. Being truly listened to can have a powerful impact on someone; it can help them to feel that what they say matters, and that they are not alone.

It can often be more valuable to listen to a problem than to find a solution for it. But how do we make sure we are listening and also that a person feels heard?

Feeling Unheard

Not feeling heard can lead to anger, frustration, a sense that no one understands you and sometimes a feeling that you don't matter or don't count.

Body Language

Non-verbal communication is extremely important for listening. It is estimated that facial expressions and body language account for 80% of the communication that occurs in a conversation.

How to listen well

- Ask questions and summarise what was said
- Make appropriate and encouraging remarks
- Allow long silences
- Use appropriate eye contact
- Use encouraging facial expressions
- Be relaxed
- Avoid being distracted or daydreaming
- Be aware of your responses
- Listen and concentrate, rather than think about how to respond
- Be careful not to assume and guess at details to “fill in” parts of the conversation

Signs of not listening

- Lack of eye contact
- Looking elsewhere – out the window
- Negative body language
- Facial expression - bored/switched off
- Tone of voice is poor/disinterested
- Fidgeting or otherwise preoccupied
- General lack of interest
- Changing the subject of conversation
- Making jokes
- Checking a watch/clock/phone
- Offering solutions too soon
- Rushing a conversation



Verbal & Nonverbal Messages

There are two important aspects of any conversation, **Verbal** and **Nonverbal** messages

Verbal Messages

It is important to accurately hear and understand a person's core verbal messages and communicate that understanding. There are three parts to verbal messages. People may be describing:

- **Experiences** – what has happened to them
- **Behaviour** – what they choose to do or not do
- **Feelings** – what are the emotions that come up

A situation can become much clearer once it is spelled out in terms of these three aspects.

While the student is speaking try not to formulate responses. Instead, listen and identify the three parts of a verbal message.

If somebody is only speaking about experiences, you might want to ask about the person's behaviour and feelings. Exploring all three areas of a verbal message may shed light on the situation.

When listening, it is useful to stay in touch with what is being communicated. Try to keep the following questions in mind:

- **What are the core themes here?**
- **What is the person's point of view?**
- **What is most important to the person?**
- **What does the person want me to understand?**

Listening is a very active process. To be an effective listener, it is important to check in with yourself, truly understand a person's situation and communicating this back to them.

Verbal & Nonverbal Messages

Nonverbal Messages

Nonverbal behaviour can change (e.g. deny, strengthen, confuse) what is being said and it is mainly through practice and experience that you can learn to read its meaning in a situation.

Similarly, just as we need to be aware of our peers' body language, it is also important to be aware of our own. In a helping relationship, we might change the verbal messages that we are sharing through nonverbal signs.

Nonverbal indicators that are important in accurately listening to a person's message include:

- Body behaviour, such as posture, body movements, gestures
- Facial expressions, such as smiles, frowns, raised eyebrows, twisted lips, grimaces
- Voice-related behaviour, such as tone of voice, pitch, voice level, intensity
- Observable autonomic physiological responses, such as quickened breathing, blushing, paleness, pupil dilation, tearfulness
- General appearance, such as grooming and dress

It is important to recognise these messages without making too little or too much of them.

Can you provide any examples of how communication might be modified through our nonverbal behaviours and cues?

Active Listening Skills

Without even realising it, you are probably already using active listening skills. These skills are reflecting, paraphrasing and summarising.

Reflecting

Reflecting is a very important tool used to mirror the meaning and feelings of what someone has said. This communicates an understanding of a speaker's point of view.

Example:

A peer is very anxious about doing an oral presentation in front of everyone in the class. She says to you, "I won't be able to do it. I'll just get up there and freeze!"

Possible reflection:

"...You'll get up and freeze?"

Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing is the skill of restating what someone just said in your own words. It combines thoughts, feelings, or actions to provide a clearer picture. It also helps the person feel more comfortable that what they said was heard and encourages them to explore further.

Example:

A student describes a heated argument between himself and his father over the father's refusal to lend him money. As he talks of his anger, his eyes fill with tears.

Possible paraphrase:

"So you are cross with your father for not giving you the loan, and at the same time you are feeling upset."

Active Listening Skills



Accuracy is important when paraphrasing, but if you are unsure of what was just said, attempting to paraphrase gives an opportunity for the other person to correct you and elaborate more.

You can start paraphrasing using:

"I hear you saying that..."

"If I understand correctly, you..."

"It sounds like you..."



NOT:



"You're not making yourself clear. Did you mean..."

"You've not expressed that very well..."

Example:

"I'm so confused. I just don't know whether to transfer to that other course or carry on as I am."

Paraphrasing response:

"I hear you say that you are unsure if you want to change course."

Things to keep in mind

- Be tentative and offer your impression of what someone else has said.
- Avoid telling, informing or defining the other person.
- Be respectful: don't judge, dismiss or use sarcasm.
- Use your own words. Repeating what was said is not paraphrasing.
- Try to tune into the other person's language and use exact words when characterising an event or situation.
- Listen to the depth of feeling expressed in the person's voice and reflect accordingly in your response.
- Do not add to what the person has said, avoid interpretations and evaluations.
- Be genuine and don't pretend.

Active Listening Skills



Summarising

Summarising pulls together the main points of a discussion and organises them so that they can be reviewed, confirmed or corrected.

Summaries can serve a variety of purposes, including to:

- Prioritise and focus scattered thoughts and feelings.
- Close the discussion of a particular theme.
- Begin a further discussion.
- Check understanding of the conversation.
- Prompt exploration of an idea more.
- Focus a conversation that seems to be going nowhere.
- Begin to consider ways forward.

Guidelines

- Put together the key ideas and feelings into broad statements, capturing the main details.
- Attend to the student's various themes and emotional overtones.
- Be brief and direct.
- Do not add to what the person has said, and avoid interpretations and evaluations.

Example

In the following response, the listener summarises what a peer has said and adds a question to help the peer move forward.

"May I just check that I have understood this correctly? You've told me of a few choices open to you. You could try to deal with procrastination yourself and make an appointment to meet with your tutor, or enrol in a study skills group and none of the options feel like a perfect solution.

What do you see as the advantages and disadvantages of each of these possibilities?"



Active listening

Tips for good listening



Stop talking.

You can't listen while you are talking.



Don't interrupt.

Give them time to say what they have to say.



Smile.

Respond appropriately, don't overdo it.



Look at them.

Their face, mouth, eyes, hands, it will all help them to communicate with you. They also help you to concentrate, too. Make them feel that you are listening.



Work with them.

Only part of the responsibility rests with the speaker; you as the listener have an important part. Try to understand and, if you don't, ask for clarification.



Pause your emotion.

Try to push your worries, your fears, your problems, outside the meeting room. They may prevent you from listening well.



Avoid distraction.

Find a quiet place where you can sit with your back towards most of what is going on.



Concentrate.

Actively focus your attention on their words, ideas, and feelings related to the subject.



How is it said?

We concentrate so hard on what is said that we miss the importance of the emotional reactions and attitudes related to what is said. A person's attitudes and emotional reactions may be more important than what they say.



Allow space to think.

The temptation is to fill silence with questions or comments, which may not be helpful. Try to be comfortable with silence and allow time for people to think about what they are going to say.



Don't judge.

Wait until all the facts are in before making any decisions.



Don't solve.

You are there to listen. If you are focused on finding answers, you are not listening completely.



Avoid assumptions.

Assumptions can get you into trouble in trying to understand other people. Don't assume that they:

- Use words in the same way that you do
- Feel the same way that you'd feel
- Are distorting the truth because what they say doesn't agree with what you think
- Are lying because they have interpreted the facts differently from you
- Are unethical because they are trying to win you over to their point of view
- Are angry because they are enthusiastic in presenting their views.

Assumptions like these may turn out to be true, but more often they just get in the way of your understanding and reaching agreement or compromise.

Avoiding Advice

Peer support is not about solving someone's problems. It is about providing a space where a person can feel heard and listened to.

Try not to be solution led. Instead ask questions that will help lead a person to deciding what action they would like to take. If you think some kind of support might be helpful for them, phrase it as a question and allow them to decide whether to act on it.

“Would you say..?”

“Does it feel as though..?”

“What do you think would happen if..?”

“How do you think you would feel about..?”

What if they ask me what would I do?

Sometimes your student may ask you directly "What do you think I should do?" In this case, the same as above applies. Frame it as a question and guide them towards what they would like to do.

If in doubt, you can use this framework of questions

- What is the real challenge here for you?
- What have you tried already?
- If you could try anything to solve this, what would you try?
- And what else? (Repeat two or three times, as needed)
- Which of these options interests you most?
- What might stand in the way of this idea, and what could be done about that?
- What is one step you could take to start this, right away?

Asking Questions

Questions are an important part of a conversation. They need to be used appropriately to benefit a discussion.

General guidelines for questions

- Ask questions that serve a purpose.
- Ask questions that have substance to them - to help the person get somewhere, to gather information that is useful for the person.
- Take questioning very slowly. Many people need to develop trust with a person in order to feel comfortable.
- Do not ask too many questions, so that a person feels “grilled”.

Some pitfalls of questioning

Leading questions

This type of question is assuming we already know the answer before a person has answered.

e.g. “That’s hard for you, isn’t it?” ...“When will you tell your parents?”

Why questions

‘Why’ questions can put people on the defensive as they can imply that they should know the answers already.

e.g. “Why isn’t this working for you?” “Why do you not understand this?”

Intimate questions

Some questions are not appropriate to ask because they may not be relevant or may be too personal. Always be respectful and avoid being voyeuristic. Helping a peer does not involve getting “juicy details”.

e.g. “Are you gay?” ...“And then what did you do in bed?”

Poorly timed questions

Such questions interrupt the flow of a person sharing their story. They can be inconsiderate and can abruptly end a conversation.

e.g. “How long has this been going on for?” (asked in the midst of someone divulging that he smokes too much marijuana)



Open and Closed Questions

There are two types of questions – closed and open questions.



Open questions

To get more meaningful responses, questions need to be asked that are not dead-end. Open questions encourage people to explore their story and to elaborate on specific experiences, behaviours, and feelings.

Suggestions for forming open questions

To begin discussion

Use “What” and “How”:

e.g. “How can I help you?” ... “What is on your mind?”

To request description

To look for more detail you can use

e.g. “Tell me about...” “Explain to me...”

To expand on what is being said

Encourage the person to carry on, allowing them to explain further

e.g. “When you say he upsets you, what exactly do you say/do?”

To focus on feelings

Allow the person to share how they felt in the moment or afterwards

e.g. “Could you describe your feelings?”...“How do you feel about that?”

To focus on plans

You can guide someone to think about what they would like to do or actions they'd like to work on

e.g. “How will you make it happen?”...“What could you do that might change things?”



Closed questions

Closed questions often begin with verbs like do, did, does, can, will, etc. and can be answered with a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ response. If a specific piece of information is needed, then a closed question may be used.

Closed questions are also helpful to check facts and to ask for clarification. However, closed questions lead to very little discussion as they elicit a one-word response.

An example is: “Do you like your course in College?”. They often elicit a one-word answer, only get short answers. If used appropriately, closed questions can be useful for:

Clarifying

"Do you want to go to university?"

Checking information

"It seems to me that ... is this right?"

Establishing facts

"Do you want to study for another 3 years?"..." Do you want to go to that university?"

Getting someone to focus on a particular issue

"You mentioned alcohol; is that a particular problem for you?"

Get Comfortable with Silence

"True silence is the rest of the mind; it is to the spirit what sleep is to the body, nourishment and refreshment." - William Penn

Silence in a conversation can be a rich experience. The absence of noise allows time to think and reflect, space to sit with another person and to feel an emotion.

Unfortunately, most people fear silence in a conversation and it can feel uncomfortable if you are not used to it. Sitting with a person in silence often shows deep, empathic understanding. Through practice, we learn to recognise the difference between "stuck" silence and "reflective" silence. If you are unsure about the silence, it is OK to ask the person to clarify.

Otherwise, lean into the silence and stay with it. Try to avoid filling a silence when it starts to feel uncomfortable. A tip is to stay with the silence for as long as you are comfortable, then slowly count to 20.



Owning your Statements

As a way to help, we can over-identify with another person and assume that both their problems and our problems are similar, when in fact they are not.

'I' statements seek to maintain distinct boundaries between people in a conversation and help clarify personal experience and opinions

One important aspect of listening is for a person to 'own' personal statements about feelings, thoughts and behaviours. Consider possible ways that you might use 'I' statements when chatting with a peer. Owning statements is often most effective when combined with reflecting, paraphrasing and summarising.

Example:

"You wanted to talk to him about it, but you were nervous as to how he would respond? As I listen to you, I find myself getting very angry with him and feeling tense. Is this how you felt?"

"I hear what you are saying about having to share a room with your cousin. I would feel claustrophobic with such an arrangement; how do you find it?"

Avoid:

"You felt angry and tense!" (assuming the other person's response and putting words into their mouth)

"That happened to me once and I..." (focusing on yourself and assuming that the situations are similar)

Empathy

What is empathy?

Empathy is being able to understand what someone is feeling and going through without necessarily having that experience ourselves. It is what forms connection between people and helps create spaces where people can open up and feel comfortable sharing whats on their mind.

“Empathy means temporarily living in other’s world whilst keeping a foot in your own, seeing the issues through the other’s eyes, feeling their emotions whilst controlling your own, remaining impartial without judging or sympathising” (Brown, 1998)

You can practice empathy and communicating that by:

- Understanding what is really “going on” for a person
- Asking relevant questions about a person’s circumstances
- Thinking, acting and feeling in the person’s interest
- Refraining from making assumptions or judgement



Boundaries

Boundaries are a really important part of self care. Setting boundaries involves defining our personal space, knowing our levels of comfort, and clarifying what we can offer to others. Certain situations can arise that may be ‘sticky’ or unclear. These situations might test your boundaries.

As Peer Supporters, there are many boundaries that you can practice for the benefit of yourself, others and the institution.

Boundaries are the distance and emotional detachment that need to be maintained to ensure an effective perspective on a situation. If we lose our ability to be objective, we tend to become too involved in a person or situation.

Remember:



• You can support someone, but you can’t always solve the problem.

• If you show respect to someone, they should show the same level of respect to you.



• Know the limits of the Peer Support relationship. Be clear about your role.

• Establish boundaries around the time of meetings with peers (e.g. restrict meetings to an hour, at a time that suits you).



• Be responsible about choosing places to meet peers (e.g. if you can't use the 1:1 room, choose a public place during daylight hours, do not go to a pub or someone’s apartment).

• It is OK to say “no” to a case and in general.



• Involve others so that you do not become burdened by a situation (fellow Peer Supporters, S2S co-ordinator).

• You have a right to your own privacy, don't share your phone number with a student.



• If you’re offering support to someone as a volunteer the dynamic of the relationship is different to that of a normal friendship. It is NOT acceptable to start a romantic relationship with someone who has come to you for support.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is a key component to helping others. For students to seek help from a Peer Supporter, they must know that the information and feelings that they divulge will go no further.

Confidentiality is especially important within colleges, which are often small communities where news and gossip travel fast. A student may be trusting you with vulnerable information and so it is important to respect their privacy.

It is crucial not to disclose any identifying details (name, age, course, hometown, etc.), and usually there is not even a need to discuss that the conversation took place with anyone other than the S2S Coordinator, programme officer and the group in confidential debriefs.

In extreme circumstances, breaking confidence and seeking help from professionals may be the best help you can provide to a distressed student.

It is important to know when confidences should be kept and when they should be broken. The general rule is to maintain confidentiality in all but exceptional cases – when a student may cause immediate harm to themselves or others or when a person under the age of 18 is or ever was at risk of harm. For a refresher of what that might look like, [click here for a link to the Children First training you completed.](#)

Early on in “one to one” discussions with students, it is your responsibility to clarify the limits to your confidentiality. It is important that students are aware of these limits BEFORE they make disclosures.



If a student discloses information that they wish to remain confidential and you feel that it should be passed on, assess the situation.

Ask yourself the following questions:

- Why are you considering breaking confidentiality?
- How serious is the situation?
- What immediate and significant risks does the student face?
- Are their actions placing anyone else at immediate and significant risk?
- What implications – both positive and negative – could breaking confidentiality have?
- What significant harm could result from NOT breaking their confidence?

The rule of thumb is that if you cannot come up with a clear, significant and specific harm to the student or others, then do not break confidentiality.

However, if you do have a good reason to break a confidence, try to limit the negative consequences of this by explaining to the student your reason for breaking confidentiality.

Being clear about:

- Why you are breaking the confidence
- Who you will tell
- What you will tell them
- What they are likely to do with the information
- What consequences this will have for the student involved and for your relationship
- In making a difficult decision to break confidentiality, you should discuss the situation with the S2S Coordinator. Without using names or distinguishing details they can help you decide the best course of action.
- Additionally, if you are feeling overwhelmed by the information that was disclosed to you, you should seek support for yourself. You can talk to the S2S Co-ordinator or Student Counsellor about your feelings without breaking confidentiality or relaying specific details.

Referrals

You may occasionally come across situations when it is inappropriate for you to get involved, when the case is too close to your own experience, or when the issues require professional involvement and support.

Often the best support a Peer Supporter can provide is genuine concern, a listening ear and a referral to specialist help. It is important to understand the variety of situations that require the involvement of other people, as well as feel able to help a peer access specialist help.

Part of being an effective Peer Supporter is the ability to identify a problem and find the appropriate support. It is always better to refer, than to take on problems or issues that are 'over your head'. The key message is **if in doubt, refer.**

There may be times where you come across a student in distress or who has expressed suicidal thoughts. You do not have to carry this alone. You can provide a listening ear while also referring on to additional support. In these cases, always get in touch with the S2S Coordinator.

Handling Disclosures

Here are some general suggestions when someone reveals something to you.

- Listen carefully. Your support and encouragement are important.
- Know your limits and boundaries. There are some situations you cannot (and should not) handle on your own. When in doubt, refer peers to more qualified supports.
- Seek consultation. Let the student know that you would like to talk to a more knowledgeable source before giving any direct advice. Talk to that person, and then get back to the student as soon as possible.
- Reassure the peer that you will maintain confidentiality unless you feel they are a harm to themselves or another individual.
- Continue to follow up with the student, if appropriate. Make sure they know that you are available for them and you will support them as they work through what is going on.

What and When to Refer

What

It is important to know what a referral is and what situation warrants a referral. A referral is not needed if someone just starts crying. This can be uncomfortable, but it is not a reason to refer someone. However, if a person is crying because they've just expressed they want to harm themselves, that is a time to refer. A referral is when you believe that what a person is experiencing requires help beyond what you can provide.

When

You now know what a referral is but how do you know when to refer someone? Someone may need to be referred if;

- The problem requires specialist help
- You are unable to be genuine, honest and impartial
- You are worried that the person might come to harm or get into deeper problems
- You are concerned about your own circumstances (e.g. you have exams, had a recent bereavement, etc.)

There are situations that always call for specialist help and is a time to call in for additional support. Situations that always call for specialist help;

- Depression and/or suicidal thoughts
- Extreme stress, anxiety or panic
- Unresolved grief
- Alcoholism/drug abuse
- Serious medical problems
- A child may be at risk of harm

Where to refer

Where

Places to Refer a Student in College (will depend on the problem)

Service	Contact
College Tutor	Student has email
Students' Union	01 646 8431
Senior Tutor's Office	stosec@tcd.ie
Student Counselling Service	student-counselling@tcd.ie
Student Learning Development	student.learning@tcd.ie
College Health Service	01 896 1556/1591
College Chaplains	01 896 1260/1402
TCD Global Room	international@tcd.ie
Disability Office	askds@tcd.ie
Equality Office	equality@tcd.ie

Places to Get Help Outside of College/After-Hours

Service	Contact
S2S Coordinator (Ralph)	085 7833 548
DUBDOC	01 45 45 607
Samaritans (24 hours)	116 123
Niteline	1800 793 793
Text About It	Text TCD to 50808
AWARE (Bipolar & Depression Support)	1800 80 48 48
College Security (emergencies)	01 896 1999



How to refer

Referrals need to be handled sensitively. If someone has shared their worries with you, it means that they trust you and are hoping that you can help and support them. Try to consider a poor referral scenario: a student confides in a peer who insensitively and abruptly suggests that they seek help elsewhere. How might the student feel?

Possible student reactions:

- Abandoned, Rejected, Unheard
- They aren't able to help me
- I'm a hopeless case
- My problems aren't serious enough
- They're too busy to help me
- They aren't interested in helping
- I'm a burden to them



Knowing the possible reactions or feelings someone may have to a referral, it is best to give the student time and be as sensitive as possible.

Choose your words carefully. Use phrases like:

- You might find it helpful to...
- You might like to talk with...
- Would you consider talking with...
- I think it might be useful for you to...
- How would you feel about talking to...
- What do you think might happen if you spoke to...

Be honest. Tell the person why you are not the best person or why someone else might be better help at that moment. You can always stay in touch and offer listening support and a check in if they need it

Reluctant Peers

When you believe that a peer might benefit from professional help, it is best to be honest about your reasons and express your concern about their wellbeing. Sometimes people may be reluctant or shy in accepting a referral, so here are some suggestions.

They deserve support

Dispel myths that surround seeking help. Encourage your peer to schedule 'just one' appointment with a professional, and often one appointment is all that is needed.

Suggest all options

A peer may not want to see a counsellor, but will agree to visit a G.P or may choose to talk with a chaplain. Present all of the person's options when discussing support services.

Explore the person's reluctance

If your peer is reluctant to seek help, ask why they are not keen on seeing a professional. If you explore their reluctance, you may be able to help encourage them.

Second opinion needed

Explain that the problem is outside of your area of expertise, and you'd like to connect them in with someone who may know more.

Give them the details

If they are unsure about seeking help, it may be useful to provide the person with names and contact numbers that can be used at a later date.

Help make an appointment

Ask if they would like you to arrange an appointment with a professional. If you arrange the appointment, inform the professional of your specific concerns regarding the person.

Honesty about involving others

If you feel the situation is an emergency and the person will not see a professional, you may need to speak to someone on their behalf. If possible, gently explain that you will need to speak with a professional. Sometimes it can be useful to give the person the choice about who you will contact.

Questions about Referral



What is a CRISIS & what do you do?

A crisis is when you are concerned about a person's immediate wellbeing. In a crisis, you should seek urgent professional attention from any of the supports listed on [page 36](#). If appropriate, you may want to accompany the person to a professional. A crisis is not when a person cries or if they are managing an ongoing difficulty (unless it has become an immediate crisis and their wellbeing is endangered).



What if the person refuses?

Unless it is an emergency situation (potential harm to self or others), everyone has the right to refuse support. They may just need time to think about a referral. Offer an open invitation to the person to come back to you. When you see the person again, ask how they are and reiterate that support is available if they want it. Refusal to seek professional help does not mean that you must provide help that is outside your area of expertise.



What if YOU need support?

If you have any concerns about what is best to do, please talk to the S2S Coordinator. They will support you and help you to clarify the best course of action. Please remember that if you have serious worries about a peer, it is important that you yourself have adequate support. You need to feel confident that you have done all that you can do to make sure that the student is safe.



In Case of Emergency

Phone campus security on **01 896 1999** in case of an emergency. They can contact an ambulance for you and will then know where to direct an ambulance when it arrives.

A&E Accompaniment

From time to time a TCD staff member may refer a student to A&E and you may be asked to accompany them with a fellow Peer Supporter, never on your own. You are never expected to provide accompaniment without prior consultation with a member of S2S/SCS, and you will never be asked to do this alone.

There may be a significant waiting period at A&E. Please don't agree to accompany a student unless you are sure that you have the time to do it. If the S2S Coordinator contacts you about your availability, you are not under any pressure to agree to come in. Most A&E referrals take place towards the end of the working day (between 5-7pm).

Arrangements will already have been made with the hospital, and you will be given a referral letter to present at reception when you get there. Transport will also be arranged for you, and a member of S2S/SCS will be available to discuss the situation and to answer any questions you have before you leave.

You should exchange your contact details with the TCD staff member who has requested your support, and keep them up to date wherever possible. You can also call/text them if there is anything you are unsure of, or if you need further help at any point.

Your support will be requested when it is helpful for the student to have calm, supportive company from a peer. They may not wish to talk about the situation, and are more likely to appreciate day to day conversation or amicable silence. The student you are accompanying may be in a vulnerable state, so please remember that any sense of panic or urgency is not helpful.

A&E accompaniment should only be provided upon request from a member of S2S/SCS staff. Concerns that a student outside of the S2S/SCS service may need hospital consultation should be raised with S2S/SCS or the College Health Centre immediately.

Before you accept an accompaniment, Check in with yourself first:

- Are you free for the rest of the day/evening? (If not, don't go).
- Have you eaten? (If not, eat something or grab food for later).
- Is your phone battery low? If it is, can you grab a charger or provide an alternative contact number?
- Are you tired? (Prioritise your rest and take a nap)
- Do you have the headspace to do an accompaniment?
- Have you done an accompaniment recently? (If yes, take a break)

Before you leave:

- Do you have the TCD staff member's phone number?
- Do you have your referral letter?
- Have you got all the information you need? (If not, ask!)
- Do you know when you can go home?
- Is there someone you can contact afterwards for a debrief?
- What is your self care plan for after? (movie? bath? therapy?)

A quick recap!

- 2 Peer Supporters – ALWAYS!
- Meet with a staff member to discuss what is required.
- Taxi will be ordered for you. Referral letter should be given directly to you.
- On arrival at the hospital, head to triage/A&E reception. Hand over the referral letter.
- Go with the student to the waiting room.
- Stay with the student until a family member, friend etc. arrives, or until they are called to be triaged by a nurse/doctor.
- Contact Ralph/person acting in lieu to let them know you're ready for a taxi.
- Arrange a debrief together or individually as soon as you can afterwards.

Allocation of cases

Requests for Peer Support come in through the online form. Once a request comes in, the S2S programme Officer will allocate the case on the following criteria (in this order):

1. Suitability in terms of specific requests made by the student (gender identity, course)
2. Availability of the Peer Supporter
3. Workload undertaken so far by the Peer Supporter – in order to ensure equity of workload a Peer Supporter who has undertaken less cases within the relevant academic year will be asked first.

If a student asks for someone specific, that Peer Supporter will be contacted, otherwise the request will go out to the group of Peer Supporters and the Programme officer will decide who to assign the case to based on who responds. The Peer Supporter selected by the Programme Officer will be contacted by email. It is at the Peer Supporters own discretion as to whether or not they would like to take the case on, and it is absolutely ok to say no.

Where possible a Peer Supporter will be allocated to a case within 48 hours of a request being made, and the Peer Supporter is to make contact with the student within 48 hours of the case being assigned. All meetings must be arranged between the hours of 10am-5pm Monday-Friday to allow for referral/immediate debrief if necessary, and must be held in a public place.

All Peer Supporters attend a debrief with the S2S Co-ordinator or Programme Officer after each meeting. As cases go on and depending on what was discussed, a debrief may not be necessary but first meet-ups with any student must be followed with a debrief.

Remember! Once you have a case, email the S2S Office with the details of your meet-up and any updates

Where to meet?

Where you meet with your student is entirely up to you. Some people prefer to go for a walk, others enjoy a more private space. One thing to keep in mind, all meet ups should be in person, no online meet-ups no matter how many times they ask!

S2S have a private space for you to use that you can book. You can book it to meet your student, or if you just need a quiet space.

We have a zoom room also that is yours to use if you need a study space or somewhere to take an online call.

The most important thing is, we also have a microwave and a kettle with tea and coffee galore!

Zoom Room: [Book Here!](#)

1:1 Room: [Book Here!](#)

You can find us here: [House 47, Trinity College Dublin, Co.Dublin](#)





GDPR

As S2S Peer Supporters, you are required to adhere to the [Student Counselling Service's Privacy Notice](#) and to be mindful of how and why you process personal data.

Personal data you are likely to encounter as an Peer Supporter includes:

- Students' name and contact details (TCD email addresses)
- Emails between you and your student, with private information

To ensure that everyone's data and their privacy is respected, please be sure to:

- Use your TCD email to respond to emails.
- Delete emails once you have dealt with them and closed a case. If emails contain personal/sensitive data that may be needed in the future, please consult with the S2S office about secure storage on the SCS Titanium system.

Please refer to [Trinity College's Data Protection Handbook](#) for more detailed information.

Trinity Graduate Attributes



Trinity College Dublin has identified specific Graduate Attributes that students should be able to demonstrate upon graduation. They are important because they will:

- Enhance your learning. Working on them will help you become a better and more successful student
- Help to prepare you for your future and lifelong learning given the changing nature of society
- Enhance your employability as they are highly desired skills by employers.

During your time as an undergraduate in Trinity you will have the opportunity through your coursework and assessments as well as co-curricular and extra-curricular activities to develop and improve these attributes.

Being an S2S Peer Supporter allows you to develop these attributes.

Practising Self-Care

When you become a Peer Supporter, self care is a vital part of your role. Self-care can mean relaxing, spending time with friends or getting a coffee. It can also include placing boundaries, knowing when to say no and recognising burnout. Having a tool box of self-care strategies will allow you to engage as a peer supporter and prioritise your mental health.

Think about the things you like to do that you enjoy or that allows you get a case off your mind. Make a list and make sure you engage in one of them before or after a case.



Supervision & Debriefing

Group Supervision

Once a month you will attend mandatory group supervision with one of the counsellors from the Student Counselling Service. This group will be with your fellow peer supporters and will be a confidential space for you to discuss your cases, explore different approaches for your student or share any difficulties you are having. Not only do you have the support of a counsellor in this session, but also the support of your peers.

Important! These sessions are mandatory and can't be rescheduled. Make sure to prioritise these group sessions.

Debriefing

Debriefing is a little bit different. Booking a debrief with the S2S Coordinator or the Programme Officer is a 1:1 private chat. These are booked after you've had a session with a student and are a chance for you reflect on how you did. A debrief is always recommended after your first session with a student and then after, you can decide how often you would like to debrief.

These debriefs aren't about the student, they're about you.

How did you feel? what do you feel went well?

What would you like to work on?

Was anything particularly difficult?

They give you a chance to get your feelings off your chest, find some validation and reflect on the case you just had.

Book a debrief here!



Recognising Burnout

Becoming a Peer Supporter is something that takes a lot of energy, passion and involvement. You may have been driven to the role out of a want to help people, and because of this you may at times experience burnout. Burnout can make tasks more difficult and you may find yourself struggling to do something you once enjoyed doing. But what is that exactly?

Burnout

Burnout is a reduction in motivation and enthusiasm for something that you were once passionate about and can sometimes leave you feeling resentment for it. Burnout can lead you to feel:

- Exhausted
- Disinterested
- Stressed
- Frustrated
- Difficulty doing everyday tasks



Burnout is our body's way of telling us it's time for a break. It is important not to power through it, but to prioritise rest, take a step back and look after yourself so that you can step back in.

Taking a step back

Stepping back does not mean stepping out. It can be a difficult decision, especially when you are passionate about Peer Support, but sometimes it can be the best decision for you. Stepping back gives you a chance to recharge and recover and then come back to Peer Support with a renewed passion.

When you would like to step back for a time, reach out to the S2S office and we will support you through this. Any active cases can be reassigned.

Once you feel ready to step back in, get in touch with S2S and you will be welcomed back. Taking a break and stepping back will not affect your role as a Peer Supporter, and is always encouraged if you are ever feeling burnt out.

Am I helping?

Something you might find yourself asking as a Peer Supporter is "how do I know that I am helping?" The short answer is, you may never know and even if your student says "Thank you, that really helped", you may not believe it.

Instead of seeking external indicators, believing you are helping starts with self-acceptance and throwing away the idea of perfectionism.

You simply being there for your student, sitting with them and listening to them is helping. A person may be seeking advice and not be ready for Peer Support, that does not mean you are doing it wrong.

"Perfectionism is not about achievement and growth. Perfectionism is the belief that if we live perfectly, look perfectly and act perfectly, we can avoid the pain of blame, judgment and shame.

Perfectionism is a 20-ton shield that we lug around thinking it will protect us when, in fact, it's the thing that's really preventing us from taking flight."

- Brené Brown, 2010

Artwork by Andrea Pippins



**Thank you for being a
Peer Supporter**

**We really hope you get
even more out than you
put in !**