Hearing from the Helpers

A podcast from the Northwest ATTC
Hosted by Mitch Doig
https://attcnetwork.org/northwest-helpers

Episode 1: Planting Seeds with Grace Jo

Mitch Doig:

The truth about our behavioral health workforce is there hasn't ever been enough people to meet the demands of the communities they serve. But in 2020, a larger focus began to be placed on this crisis as many in the workforce, even outside of behavioral health, reevaluated their lives and started to look elsewhere for employment. Unfortunately, this occurred at a time when collectively we all experienced a trauma where we were separated by our friends, family, neighbors, and even complete strangers. While much has returned to normal or at least found a new normal, many of us still need help from a caring person who understands the challenge of change. While humans have a natural tendency to care for each other, entering the behavioral health workforce has more prerequisites than simply just caring. It takes time, dedication, and depending on the specific career choice, either education through an institution or experiences throughout their lifetime. That's only one half of the challenge of joining.

I suspect that there are many caring people who would like to help, but don't know what options are available to them if they wanted to. Even at a young age, I wanted to help people. However, I'd use the word psychiatrist, therapist, psychologist, psychotherapist, and counselor, all interchangeably as a way to say, "I think I could help people, I think I could listen to them." Ultimately, I found my way into the field by almost a complete accident. It's been nearly 15 years and I still have a tremendous affection for this field, and I want to see if there's anything that might work to usher more people into it. My hope is that this podcast reaches at least one person who has been curious about becoming a helper, and that one of the people I talk to in these episodes inspires you to start that journey. Each episode of this show, you'll hear me, Mitch Doig, talking to somebody about what excites challenges and has guided them through their journey as a helper.

This episode, I'm talking to **Grace Jo, a peer support specialist who provides peer services at the Mental Health and Addiction Association of Oregon**. I met Grace in 2018 and she instantly became one of my favorite people in the field. Her compassion is unrivaled, and when I pitched the idea for this series, grace was the first person who came to mind as I thought, who could I talk to that has a passion for the work? And that passion could be contagious to others. I hope her story is as inspiring to you as it is to me. Enjoy.

Grace Jo:

I wasn't good at it in the beginning. It was all so empathetic, and if someone let's say says, "I'm so hungry right now, can you pick me up and go get me food right now?" Then I would immediately drop everything that I'm doing because I'm thinking that I am the peer support, so this is my job, so this is what I should be doing. So then I would drop everything and go and make sure that they got food. But the more I did that in different areas of their needs, the more I started to lose myself. And then eventually it took me to a place where I had to ask my supervisor for help and, "What am I doing wrong?" Or, "I need to stop my wait list because this is just too much for me."

And one of my mentors told me, if you operate this way and you don't take care of yourself and put you first and put up boundaries with your peers, you won't make it past five years. And she's told me that multiple times. So when she told me that, I didn't know what that meant at the time. I was like, "What do you mean? Aren't we supposed to... They rely on me, they need me." And then in that process, I also learned that it's not my job to fix them. It's not my job. My goal as a peer support specialist is to plant seeds. My goal is to spend time with them to where eventually that they don't need me anymore.

Mitch Doig:

And you're like, by fixing those things, they do need you. In that mode that you were saying like, "If I fix all their problems immediately, if I go get their food now." They do need you still.

Grace Jo:

Yeah. So as a peer, if I'm doing it for you, how are you ever going to learn? When I'm not available at 7:00 PM when I'm off work and you're hungry, I'm not going to be there to pick up your phone call to get you food. So if I'm not here, where are you going to know to get food for yourself? And in that process, my hope, the seed that I plant is that they won't need me to go to the right resource to feed themselves. So in that process for them, the hope is that they build confidence. They can help their friend get food, they have the skill of being resourceful and reaching out to others to get their needs met, right?

Mitch Doig:

Yeah. And it's funny, I don't know, seeing that realization on your face. Because I think that's the hard part about this work is people warn you all the time, they tell you, "This is going to be hard." Or, "You better take care of yourself." And it almost takes the point of walking up to the edge of like, "Oh, is that what happens down there if I don't take care of myself?" Be like, "I don't want that." For you to be like, "Oh, that's the scary monster under the bad people were warning me about this whole time." I guess it reminds me of that metaphor of the hot stove. Sometimes you got to touch the hot stove, which sucks. But it's also funny talking to you about this though, because I think...

I don't know, I'm a big body language person. I know in the text yesterday you were like, "I know you're a good counselor, so this conversation will go well." But I'm watching your body language and when you're talking about this place when you're in of fixing for your peers and getting them the food and responding immediately and dropping your things, you can see that it's tense. It's a hard place for you to go back to. But then when you're like, "Oh, yeah, and I get to teach them to help their peers and go get it for themselves and do those..." You see that light come in, where you're like, "No, those were success moments."

Grace Jo:

And I guess that's also connected to... This conversation reminds me of actually that day that I called my supervisor crying because I told him that I just couldn't do this anymore. And he didn't understand what I was talking about because in that moment I'm... And he was like, "Whoa, whoa, whoa. Slow down. Everything's okay. What is going on?" This is connected to the inner work that needs to be done to do this work. And I still do this work till today because my inner child is I was raised in a very strict Asian family and it's like, "Oh, you need to work. You need to work. You need to work. And make money, make money. And you'll be successful and be a doctor, lawyer, and whatever." My inner girl is like, "If you ask your supervisor that you just need a break, you are a failure and you're failing all these people. Who's going to help your peers if you're not available?"

And he then taught me that if I don't take care of myself, then what do I have to offer the people that I'm serving? And in that moment, I was so fixated in the, "I am a failure." And I guess it was like the asking for help, them telling me that it's okay, I'm not a failure, and you need to take care of yourself. Because if you don't take care of yourself, you're actually giving your peers a disservice. And I was like, bam, light bulb. So then I asked for help, and then everyone was just like, "Oh my gosh, Grace, we love you so much. How can we support you? It's totally okay." People are going to get their needs met even if you're not there. Humbling moment. [laughs] Yeah, it's amazing how much we beat ourself up and then it's beautiful.

Mitch Doig:

Well, and I think there's this other weird thing that you're describing about... And this isn't unique to peers or even that role that you were talking about before, but I think it weirded me out going into supervision for the first time. Because you're like, I don't know about you, but every time I had to talk to my boss beforehand, it wasn't good. It was a writeup. It was a like, "Hey, you didn't do this when you were closing yesterday." It was all of these things. "Hey, somebody saw this on the camera, we think it was you." Weird things like that. And then you show up your first day of work, they're like, "Oh yeah, and we're going to be for supervisions every Tuesday at 1:00." You're like, "I don't know what that is. What's supervision?"

Grace Jo:

I love supervision.

Mitch Doig:

Well, you have those aha moments, right?

Grace Jo:

Yeah. I guess I do. Yeah. When I first started in the field, because I came from cosmetology. Okay, so I started working when I was eight years old in the restaurant business with my family. And then fast-forward, fast-forward, fast-forward, fast-forward. Didn't know what I wanted to do, so I decided to go to dental school. Worked through the dental field for a while, got clean, and then front desk at cosmetology school. And I am the complete opposite. I know I'm not into hair, makeup, I was pretty tomboy, so I learned a lot there. Anyways, got into the field and supervision, it was awkward for me. Yeah. So my experience wasn't like, "Oh, am I in trouble?" It was more like, "Oh, this person is telling me good things about myself and it's congratulating me or giving me feedback on what I can do better."

And halfway I was uncomfortable and like, "Wow, this person believes in me." And the other piece was, "I love the feedback." So this is an opportunity of growth for me. So then fast-forward to today, I love supervisions because one of my goals is always to have a strong relationship with my close teammates. And for me, that allows for authenticity. Because we both know that this work is really hard at times, and having that person in that space to sometimes be like, "This is hard. I'm having shitty a day, dude, and this is why." For me, it's really important. Because I'm still working on... Some days I have a shitty attitude and I need someone to tell me, "You need to check your attitude." And for me, I love criticism, feedback or feedback criticism.

Mitch Doig:

Like critical feedback?

Grace Jo:

Critical feedback. I love critical feedback because it's like, "Yes, you're keeping it real with me. This is an opportunity of growth, let me take a look at myself."

Mitch Doig:

Well, it's interesting because you're saying that not only is it this place where you're going there to hear the good things that you're doing, you're also going there to hear the things that you need to maybe do more of, improve on, build, maybe are completely absent in your practice. That's different.

Grace Jo:

Yeah. And who else is going to tell me? Not everyone does, but I need to know because how am I going to grow?

Mitch Doig:

I know that was a bit of a detour, but I guess the thing that... To close that little loop, I just wanted to say to go back to the little management thing is I'm just curious how you can teach your staff as peers and as this coordinator to do all of those things for themselves eventually. Because I like this idea of you're essentially saying ultimately your role is to put yourself out of a job, is kind of the way you described being a peer. Is to be a peer so well that I just don't have to anymore, that they figure it out.

Grace Jo:

I think I may not know, but really I think it's just kindness, compassion, empathy and patience. Patience. And always being available for them. Being honest, authentic. If I don't know something, I'm going to tell you I don't know something. Let's go find out together because I want to learn too.

Mitch Doig:

Yeah.

Grace Jo:

I think that that happens a lot. I feel like besides building stuff, fixing things, editing things, and the stupid numbers according to reporting, when it comes with working with staff, that's really my dialogue. Yeah.

Mitch Doig:

Yeah. At the end of the day, just take care of your people.

Grace Jo:

Take care of your people, and how can I help you take care of the people if you're not available or if you don't have enough to give to take care of your people, what do you need? I am here. You know?

Mitch Doig:

Yeah. I have a friend who's an engineer and one of his funny... It's fun for me to take advice or lessons from things that are very different from behavioral health from clinical stuff. And he told me he was working on this project and he went to his boss who was the director of engineering at some bottling company or something. And he was like, "Hey dude, this is broken." And the guy was like, "Yeah." And just stared at him and he was like, "Yeah. What do we do?" And he was like, "Well, don't we pay you to do that?" And he was like, "Uh." And he was like, "Yeah, come back to me when you have some ideas and then when you need things to carry out those ideas, I got you. But I need you to do your part of this too."

And it was this very interesting lesson for me of the supervisor doesn't be like, "Okay, let me show you how to fix these and hold your hand." The supervisor's there to really say, "Hey, we both have a role in this, but mine is to unlock all those doors that you told me you need to open right now." And I was like, "Oh." And I think that, would I say it in that abrasive way that he said of saying, "So?" Absolutely not. But I think that there's an interesting thing of letting people learn through the mistake when it's safe to do so that I think is really cool that supervision gives you that opportunity to do too. Where it's like, "No, no, I think you got this. It might be clunky, it might be hard, but I think you got it."

Grace Jo:

Yeah.

Mitch Doig:

Can I ask, I didn't know you work... I know worked in cosmetology, you were the front desk person, but how did you make the jump into peer support then though? That's such an interesting leap, I think.

Grace Jo:

I think it was word of mouth and I was desperate to get out of cosmetology school. I go to self-help meetings like NA and AA, and then you make friends and then this person works in the field and then you start to get to know each other. You build relationships and, "Oh, I know this person and..." Her name's Tara, then she reached out to me and she said, "Hey, do you want a job as a mentor?" I was like, "What?" And it kind of came to me and that was the beginning of my journey. It was a for-profit treatment center that was stationed, their corporate was in Arizona and they had a house out here and it was this men's house, and that's really where my journey began.

Mitch Doig:

When you heard about this, because I remember there was somebody that I used to work with that posed that same question, be like, "Hey, do you want to be a mentor?" They had no idea

what that was. Did you have an idea of what that meant to be, I'm assuming recovery mentor, at the time?

Grace Jo:

I had no idea.

Mitch Doig:

You were like, "Absolutely, that sounds fun."

Grace Jo:

Well actually, if I take myself back there, I would think because I'm in recovery, I think ultimately, obviously I would go to meetings because that's all I did. And you would see people and hear of people who worked in the field of mental health and addiction. And at that time for me it was like, "Whoa, I want to do that." Or, "Whoa, I want to be like that." Because it sounds so professional and it sounds like I have to go to school to get there, but in fact, it wasn't like that at all. It was, "No, I want you to come work with me because of your lived experience through addiction."

Mitch Doig:

You're like, "I'm qualified."

Grace Jo:

Yeah, "I'm qualified." It's like, "What do you mean, I didn't go to school?" So that's how it happened.

Mitch Doig:

What was that first job as a recovery mentor? Because now you're somebody that I know who really emphasizes peer support over... Because I know I'll talk to mentors or peer support specialists who they'll still refer to their peers as clients, and I know you still are very, "My peers are my peers." So what's changed from those days of recovery mentor Grace Jo to peer support specialist Grace Jo, what's that shift like? That can be a very long answer by the way. Or a very long question, I think.

Grace Jo:

Yeah, I think that what I know now and from when I started, I feel like if I answered that in 2018, it'll be a lot different than it is now. When I started, I was a certified recovery mentor and sure, in the books you do the training and then, yes, I'm certified to be a recovery mentor. So then you could do the work in the field, but as a peer support or mentor, whatever you want to choose to label it, I would say. When you're doing the work and you're working with the people in that moment, it doesn't matter. What I loved... I'm getting goosebumps right now. What I loved about that job, my first recovery job, it's really beautiful and amazing how when you get to a level of connection with your peer, hearing their story from when they were a child to how they got there now is just beautiful.

And then really hearing and putting yourself in their shoes of how they got here and where do I fit into there to connect to that peer, to let that peer know that they're not alone? Because we all feel that way sometimes. So having another human in this human connection to connect on that level, it's just magical. And then you start to laugh together and then you eat together, and you argue. I've argued with some of those dudes at that house and walking them through together of

what happened, how we behaved, and coming out of that and then coming out of that together, it's a win for me. And the best thing is it's a win for them. Because like I said earlier, my goal is to have them not need me anymore. So that pivotal moment, let's say that argument that we had, a lot of it is explaining a lot.

Mitch Doig:

I think it's those moments though that you're talking about where you're teaching people to exercise their frustration muscles a little bit. You're teaching them through showing them, here's how I'm going to model this behavior to you. Here's how we're going to get through this argument together that we're both going to have and I'm not going to resort to behaviors that are harmful to you to have it. And that's a weird relationship for a lot of the people that you are probably being a mentor to, who are a peer to you in that moment, they've never had that experience before. That's got to be almost more terrifying to them than you turning around and yelling at them and saying some swear words and threatening, or something. That would feel safer to them, because it's predictable. But somebody saying, "Actually, we're going to talk about our feelings for a second and we're going to apologize and we're going to..." That's weird, right?

Grace Jo:

Yes. And that's exactly what happened. And then in turn, your relationship gets stronger.

Mitch Doig:

Yeah.

Grace Jo:

And then the more healthier you get, you can laugh about it in the end and those are the joys of life. [laughing]. The end.

Mitch Doig:

Well, there's a writer that I like. He wrote this book that's just full of a bunch of really weird essays about his life. But there's a quote in it that I think it's in the beginning, but he says, "If you can't laugh at it, it was never worth it." And I think that that's one of those funny parts about learning from our mistakes or whatever it is. Eventually I got to look back. I think AA meetings are notorious for that gallows humor. One of my favorite...

Grace Jo:

For sure.

Mitch Doig:

Can I ask? It's interesting, I think it's funny because my brain, I also agree that peers are magic. I think I've said this to you probably before is I, especially as a counselor, for me, I don't get to resort to that shared experience. And a lot of the evidence says that maybe I need to be more about them than me. And whenever I would get to see peers interact with their clients, it almost felt like there was this really magical shortcut to connection to showing hope, to showing, I don't know, I'd see you. I get you in a way that I never had as a clinician. And when I had asked why that difference between mentor or peer, you had said it's whatever it is you call yourself, it's about actually being a human. And I'm just curious, why is that connection so important? Because that's not something that I can think of for any other job on this planet that I think has

besides peer support. It's such a different thing. Like you said that your qualification is lived experience, that's the qualification. There's some trainings, but why connection?

Grace Jo:

Because I know what it's like to struggle. I know what it's like to be there. And I know what it's like to feel like for someone, just some random person, to come and be like, "I want to help you." And it's like, "You want to help me?" And then your life changes and you have a purpose. So that's why, really. Because I don't know, can you ever imagine being in a place where I just get so grateful? I think of this when I'm driving and then I see the homeless person on the street just yelling at the top of their lungs and having a conversation with someone that's not there. Okay, let's say that. And immediately when I see them, I'm like, "Can you imagine being in that person's mental space?" And then immediately it's like, "I really hope and I pray that this person can get out of it to experience the life that is possible, that is available for them." You know what I mean?

Mitch Doig:

That empathy muscle that you've kept talking about today, is you have that empathy when you drive by.

Grace Jo:

Yeah, I hate it. I don't like it. It's so draining sometimes. And it takes me to a dark place and it also takes me to this place of spirit pull. It pulls me and then I know that... It's so many things, dude. You have to take care of yourself at the same time. You can pray for them at the same time. You wish that you can go over, then you can help them. But do you have the capacity, and do you have the skill to help them help? And then when you want to support them, do you want to open that door because it's a journey. It's a lot, dude.

You're sharing your spirit with this person and they're relying on you. The first week it is pivotal though. Of course, I don't expect you to learn all these things and I don't expect you to not need me the first week. Which in turn, having a solid support team or support is important. Because then when you're not able, your team members are the ones that you rely on. You cannot do this alone. I think I just went down on a tangent.

Mitch Doig:

I think I know where you were going for a second. Because there was something, a seed. I'm going to keep using this metaphor that you said earlier, probably I'm going to really make you hate this metaphor. These seeds that you're planting. There's a seed that you planted a little bit ago that maybe I should actually come back to. Because what you had said was, "And knowing what it's like for just some random person to be like, 'Dude, I'm going to help you.'" That's honestly something that I think I've overlooked about peer support entirely, my entire career at this point. Because I think that there is something really, shouldn't be, but is very weird in our society about just some stranger being like, "Hey, dude, I get it and I'm going to help you." That's an uncomfortable feeling in itself and I'm wondering if that's part of that connection. Just to be able to explain, "Yeah, this is a weird thing that you and I are about to experience together."

Grace Jo:

Cut me off if I'm going the wrong way. But okay, so with you saying that connection, the connection that we have is, "I used to shoot dope just like you and I know you're in a really deep

dark hole and you feel like you can't get out. I know exactly what that feels like and I'm going to be here for you to get yourself out, because it's possible." Because when you're in that state of mind of... God, okay, so I'm a recovering heroin addict. I love all drugs. And long story short, I worked with a program where it helped people who were opioid survivors and the connection that I had with everyone that I worked with, my peers, they were either using opiates, recovering from opiates, had an overdose with opiates, used opiates, had opiates in the meth, had opiates in the crack cocaine, whatever.

And I would be introduced to them and that was the first connection that we had was you use drugs just like I did and there is a way out. There's a heroin anonymous meeting that I used to go to and their title was A Way Out. Or no, Just Stay. The meeting was Just Stay. I think there's another meeting called A Way Out. But those things, they sound so cliche, but when you're alone and you're struggling in a dark place, they work.

Mitch Doig:

I'm almost imagining being in this -- Because I think you had said when you're in that deep hole, I'm imagining you're in a hole that's so deep that the opening looks like a little pinprick of light. And that's that little saying, "It's up there somewhere." Somewhere, way, way, way up there. It's here. I'm the one that's proof. Remember, it's like you crawled back into the bottom of the hole to be like, "Hey, we're up there. We're up there. We can help." Or, "You can do it eventually at some point."

Grace Jo:

And the hardest part about that is though? And this is connected to as a peer support, we plant seeds. When I make that connection with someone and our connection is really strong and we build this really strong rapport and relationship, not everyone's going to make it. So I've learned throughout the few years that it's so weird, when I assume that this person's going to do amazing and they're going to do amazing things and they're going to make it out, they don't. And then if I just don't assume anything and treat everyone equal and put my biases aside, they end up making it. So pretty much it's like, "Who am I to measure their willingness? Who am I to assume that just because that they do amazing for a month that they're going to make it? Who am I to judge that they haven't been using for a year, so they're going to make it?"

I don't know that. But what I can do in my power is to plant those little seeds along the way. I've worked with a peer where they were doing so well for so long and then they fell off and they disappeared, I didn't hear from them for a while. But in that time of me building that relationship for a year, I planted a bunch of seeds because when they were ready to come back, they knew where to come to and that's the key. If I think about when I was using and I didn't know recovery existed. I didn't know what recovery was, or if it was a thing. My goal was to, honestly, my goal was meet the top dog so he can get me high for the rest of my life and so I could die that way. And literally that was my goal and that was my dream, and I was completely okay with that.

And that's the lifestyle that I lived and I didn't know... So that year of that year of the time that I knew that guy, the year of the time I was working peer supporting the peer, and we built that relationship for a year. I thought he was going to do amazing. He disappeared, he left, he wasn't ready. And then he knew where to come back, for me, that is success. It's success in the fact that that means in the time of the year that I knew him, sometimes part of our job as a peer support is to be a good example. Teach them what it is to be respectful, teach them how to grocery shop, teach them how to cross the street, teach them how to pick up the phone call and finish a phone call with Kaiser Permanente. Just anything and everything on how to live life. And sometimes when we have those moments with our peers, sometimes they don't forget that.

So the good things that they remember, they know that the kindness that we shared, the moments that we had is the reason to feel safe to come back. Because once you're doing well and you go back and you start using, there's this level of shame and grief and a shame pretty much or what I've noticed. And you're embarrassed to come back to tell the people that you've worked with that, "Oh man, I f-d up and I started using." And that's another thing, is some people come back and some people don't. And where I think it's success as a peer support specialist is when they come back is the peer was comfortable enough to come back regardless of how they're feeling. Does that make sense?

Mitch Doig:

Yeah. Somebody one time shared this outlook is at the end of the day, you need to be somebody worth talking to. And I feel like at the end of the day, like you're saying, one of these seeds is that there's somebody who's going to care about you regardless of whatever it is happened between this time that we talked and the next time that we talk.

Grace Jo:

Yes. And that's the gift that we get to give to our peer when we do peer work. Those are one of the million giftse

Mitch Doig:

Well, and I think that, at least in my kind of perception of shame, we learn shame. If somebody had never told me something was wrong, I probably wouldn't feel shame about it most likely. There are probably some things that I would maybe internally feel odd about, but you don't have these relationships of unconditional positive regard. You don't have these relationships where somebody says, "Yeah, bud, it's really hard right now, and maybe in the future it'll get easier." You don't have those relationships where I think you're describing... Because I want to make sure I'm also capturing something here, which is you don't have these relationships where somebody says, "Hey, I know you're 37 years old, but today I'm going to go show you how to shop for groceries that you can afford rather than steal them." For example.

Because I think there's this other thing that people... At least this is how I was interpreting what you're saying. It's not that I don't think any of these people don't know... Well, in some cases they probably don't know how to do these. But in other cases they might have known how to do them, but you start living a certain life for a period of time and those are just your habits that you get into.

Grace Jo:

My god, yes.

Mitch Doig:

Yeah. So you're also just having to maybe reteach or relearn different habits where it's like, "I know that this was working, and also what about this way?" You're just showing them another way of living. Because I think at a certain point, what you're describing is life becomes about survival rather than thriving. And for me, going to the grocery store and getting potatoes to make mashed potatoes is different from swiping a candy bar because I need calories. Those are two different existences. The cool thing that you're describing about peer work is it's not only like, "Look, I achieved this thing and I was in the same starting place as you, but I achieved this thing. I'm in the same starting place with you and bud, I'm going to help you get there too."

Probably all the things that I'm imagining you've helped people do as a peer is they're not imagining those three evictions that are on your record are going to pose some challenges for you getting housing. They're not imagining that criminal record of... For example, I don't think a lot of people realize having a theft on your record is harder than having a murder charge to get a new job.

Grace Jo:

Yeah.

Mitch Doig:

It's all those things that people don't see that peers become this navigator of a system that doesn't support people to get better, really. And you are that force that's like, "Nope, we're doing it anyway. The system's going to say no, but guess what, bud? We're doing it anyway."

Grace Jo:

Right. Right.

Mitch Doig:

But I don't know, because the reason I mentioned stigma though is I think you're also describing this place where people come back to your office and unfortunately... And I love your realism there. It's like, "Not everybody gets it the first time." And statistically it's not that likely that people get it their first time, sadly. I wish it was. I said this earlier, I wish I could put myself out of a job, has always been the goal, but ultimately I'll have to be that safe place for people to come and talk to.

Grace Jo:

Yeah.

Mitch Doig:

But I think you are describing this thing where people will come back and say, "Grace Jo, I messed up. Here's what happened." And you are not adding to the stigma of that, and that's different too. Because we're in that place of people saying, "Oh, you should have just never gone back to do that again." Because I don't know, I've heard, is this an AA sitting? You don't lose the days before, you do restart your account, but you don't lose that recovery time or that clean time before. That's like a saying, right?

Grace Jo:

Yeah. Yeah. You don't lose your recovery, you lose your... Yes, your clean date changes, but you don't lose what you learned in between in that time.

Mitch Doig:

And I think that that connection that you're hopefully getting with a peer, it's that lifeline back. It's that belief that, "Okay, I figured out some of it. It felt a little bit better or a little bit easier for a little bit."

Grace Jo:

Yeah. What comes up for me is, let's use my mom as an example, or my family. The stigma piece, stigma and why peer support is so important, I think, and my mom. So multiple times I tried to get clean multiple times, multiple times. And my mom would be like, "Why can't you get your shit together? Stop using. I don't understand why you can't just quit using drugs." And there's shame there. Like, "Shame on you. Why can't you just stop using drugs?" And then I'm over here like, "I want to stop using so bad, but I just don't know how. I can't just stop quitting."

But if let's say there's a peer support in that picture, that peer support would be like, "It's okay, this is normal. You can do this. This is part of the process. You're not bad or there's nothing wrong with you because you can't just stop using." So in that little message, that peer support, maybe the peer heard a little bit of hope that, "Wow, there is someone that believes in me. This is normal. I'm not crazy. This is not supposed to be easy, but I have someone there that can support me through it." Is one of the million things that we get to help do as a peer support.

Mitch Doig:

I don't know, it's again, one of those reasons that I do think what peers do is kind of... I always feel almost dismissive when I say it's magic because it's not magic, it's an actual thing. But for me it almost feels like if you came to me for help and I was like, "Well, it makes sense that you have this addiction. Your dopamine receptors are really struggling to get dopamine from here, so you're getting from here." And if I explain addiction that way, that doesn't help you get sober in any way.

Just as much as your family is saying, "We love you and we care about you, why are you doing this to yourself?" Doesn't help you in any way. It's that middle area of saying like, "Hey, I totally get it. I get why you're going through this and I get the way out of this, if you'll just come with me for a little bit." It's that thing that neither of those two camps can do. We can't explain it away with science. We can't explain it away with love. We have to meet somewhere in the middle of, hope's kind of in the middle of this. I guess is like, "Yes, there's a possibility that you can learn these new pathways and take care of yourself by doing it." I guess.

Grace Jo:

Yeah. Yeah.

Mitch Doig:

What are some of those other seeds that you plant, I guess, as a peer? Because you've mentioned that hope part of this, those building skills. What are some of those other seeds that when you think about peer work that you're planting along the way?

Grace Jo:

Oh, good question. Lifestyle. Planting seeds, lifestyle. Daily--

Mitch Doig:

What do you mean by lifestyle?

Grace Jo:

I guess I'm going to start off by saying the little things are a big deal. Lifestyle. Planting seeds. And it's connected to lived experience. So for example, not just about walking them through how to buy healthy foods in the grocery store and checking out, giving them your money and feeling good. It's not just about that. It's about also where you can go to maintain your sobriety, clean

time. Planting seeds can be hygiene. It could be hygiene. Sometimes we have to have the hard conversation of, "Hey, taking a shower makes me feel refreshed." And being prepared and how to dress appropriately or presentable to go to a job interview.

Mitch Doig:

It's those reminders of... I'm not going to say that hygiene isn't essential to survival, but it's one of those things that... And if I'm to really take this maybe to an extreme. But if I'm stuck out in the woods in the middle of nowhere because of a plane crashing or something, I'm not probably going to be like, "I got to brush my teeth first thing this morning."

Grace Jo:

Just think about it. Our brains, for multiple years, all you're doing is the getting and using and finding ways and means to get more. So your brain is used to that and so then you're not doing that anymore and you don't have the drugs. So your brain is like, "Whoa, why aren't we getting and using and finding ways means to get more? Why are we grocery shopping? Whoa, how do I give my money to the cashier at the grocery store?" Those basic things, it's like you forget.

So this is where I say explaining every little thing and the why is so crucial in peer supporting. And obviously it depends on where your peer came from and their story. And did they just come out of prison after doing 28 years, or were they just in county jail for three days? Or did they come from an affluent family and they're trying to... Are you supporting someone who's from an affluent family? You really have to gauge that and go from there. Going back to your question of planting seeds, sometimes the seed that we plant can be sitting down and meeting them exactly where they're at can mean meeting them at their comfortable place under the I-5 bridge because that's where they've been sleeping.

Bringing them a cup of warm coffee and an egg McMuffin from McDonald's and sitting there with them, getting down and dirty and being comfortable where they're comfortable and having a human conversation about nothing else but what's important to them. And for them, it may be a special moment of, "Wow, this person came under the bridge where there's probably rats and dirty needles and just gross and mud and rain. And they were willing to come and sit here with me and have a warm cup of coffee, and bring me me a cup of coffee." You just planted a seed because they won't forget that moment.

Mitch Doig:

Suddenly you're like, "Wow, I'm worthy of this. I'm worthy of somebody saying this."

Grace Jo:

Thank you.

Mitch Doig:

There's no judgment when you're walking into that zone. You're like, "Nope, I'm no better than you. I'm no worse than you. We're having a conversation right now and you're worthy of that time. You're worthy of the egg McMuffin, you're worthy of all that too."

Grace Jo:

And those are the moments where it's like, "All right, I'm giving you all my time. You are the most important person in my life in this moment." And I think that's why I love this work. That's where my empathy and my connection comes in. Because I don't know, Mitch, being a human is hard

in itself. And if I think about what I have here, and I wish everyone can have that. And I just want to share that, and I'm so lucky. Sometimes I think I give it my all to the people who need support because I know in the back of my mind that I'm blessed to come home to a shower and a house and just to sit in silence. There's millions of people who don't have that and so that's why I want to share that space with them. That's why I just have this passion for it. I can't explain it. It's not explainable, I just do. In the foundation of love, kindness, and tolerance and just... I don't know. Life is so short, dude.

Mitch Doig:

Well, and I think it's so short. And life is short and why suffer through it, I think. That's kind of the thing, you're like, "Life is short and what if you got to enjoy it? Eventually you get this, eventually you get to come home and not have wet socks. Eventually this happens." And it's not that you're choosing what that looks like for them even too. I heard a little bit back, you had talked about a lot of this has to figure out where they've been and where they want to go, and not making those assumptions about any of those things. Not making those assumptions about what people already know even. You're constantly having to help somebody figure out what it's going to look like for them. And that sounds both hard, but also there's so much variety in that. I can't imagine. Aside from the figuring it out not to fix for them, that sounds like a fricking hard thing to learn too.

Grace Jo:

Oh my gosh, thanks for bringing this up. So that's one of the core things about peer support too, right? I'll give you an example. I worked with a peer for a long time. This person was not ready to stop using, but he wanted help. So I understand that feeling. I have the empathy around, "I want to quit using, but I don't know how." For months, I tell you, I would come to his house and hang out with him in the garage. So my job as peer support is to consider, "I'm sure this house wasn't really safe. I probably shouldn't go inside the house by myself as a woman into this man's house. There's a lot of traffic there." I have all those in consideration due to my experience, my lived experience. And the different levels of peer support is this peer in the garage, he was so high, always nodding out, but I was just there. I was just there.

And I want to put in a disclaimer though, there are people who are able to peer support people who are using currently, and there are people who cannot. And I think that's really important to know that about yourself because it can become a dangerous place and it's okay to not be okay with that. That's healthy. Anyways, meeting him exactly where he's at, was that for him. So the months of me reaching out to him, making sure he had clean needles, making sure he was being safe, not overdosing, making sure he had Narcan, that was my job with him as a peer support. And just being there and sharing space and letting him know... The plant that I seeded there is about no matter what, I'm going to show up for you until you're ready. And eventually the showing up, taking him to court, coaching him into throwing his prescription of Xanax in the garbage before he went to court, because I told him that I wouldn't hang onto it. That was a pivotal moment in his life.

Mitch Doig:

Sometimes you're there for those, again, I'm going to say big moments. Where I imagine down the road he's going to remember the time he was standing over the trash can thinking, "Am I really going to do this right now?"

Grace Jo:

Yeah, that's a big deal.

Mitch Doig:

Can I ask, because I think that's something that I think now we're talking about more and more, but peers and harm reduction is a different thing. I think especially because I know we, in some ways started this conversation about you becoming a recovery mentor, but I think sometimes recovery might be recovery from the things that you didn't want to have happen when you're using drugs. And I think that's something that makes people a little bit uncomfortable. And you're talking about showing up every day, this person consuming a substance, experiencing the effects, nodding out. Which I'm assuming it's some sort of something that makes them at a high rate of overdose, potentially. Stop breathing, those things, you getting Narcan, clean needles, those sorts of things.

I guess what would you tell people who are uncomfortable with the idea of that? And to be frank, I have a really hard time grappling with this because for me, I think people deserve a right to live, regardless. At the end of the day, for me, it won't matter if we're hoping everybody just gets sober if people are dying along the way. And I think that the thing that you just described, it's like you're death preventing at that point. And it's like, "So are we going to have an argument about death prevention being a radical idea?" But what would you say to folks who are like, "No, no, no. My job as a peer is to help people to recovery, not to help them continue to use." If that's the framework that they see that action through. How would you respond to people who don't see the overlap of peer support and harm reduction?

Grace Jo:

Wow, this is a good question. I feel like this is hard to answer for me because it comes so natural for me, I think. And it might be a long-winded answer.

Mitch Doig:

Yeah.

Grace Jo:

If you understood what it took to get there, you would know. I don't know.

Mitch Doig:

I know you had said earlier your job qualification was lived experience. You're like, "My job qualification for this is also I just know." It's a value set you're actually bringing to the work, it's not a skill actually, it's value.

Grace Jo:

Yeah. But I think what I hear in your question is... So I want to say, kindly, who are you to make a decision for what they want?

Mitch Doig:

This goes back to your assumptions. I don't make the assumption for where they've come or where they're going.

Grace Jo:

Yeah. So how do we know what if this peer going the harm reduction route is going to save his life period? Simply. Can we get our mind to that place for them temporarily? It is. It's like this

dance. It's a dance. It's a level of acceptance. Honestly, just because we're willing to show up for someone who is still using it doesn't mean that's what I want for them, is another way to answer accepting harm reduction.

Mitch Doig:

So it reminds me, there's one of the concepts of motivational interviewing is acceptance. And one of the ways that I've heard acceptance described, it doesn't mean that I am... Sorry, there's a smarter word to say here, I can't think of it. But it doesn't mean that I'm condoning or saying what you're doing is okay, but it does mean I accept where you are as a result of those things.

Grace Jo:

And the bottom line is I care for you and you can do this, and let's do this together.

Mitch Doig:

Yeah.

Grace Jo:

And I do want to say also what I meant by when there are people who are just not willing to support people who are using, I think, then bring someone else with you.

Mitch Doig:

Have your own support, even.

Grace Jo:

Yeah. Bring someone else with you.

Mitch Doig:

Well, and I would imagine too, this is something that from peers that I've worked with in the past, they've definitely told me, "Two years ago, I don't think I could have done X, Y, or Z." That we were just talking about, kind of thing. They'd be like, "Now I'm okay too." Because I think part of the thing that is interesting to me about peer support is, at least in Oregon, it's two years. Two years of recovery experience, whatever that looks like to become a peer or a recovery mentor, that's a very short amount of time to have your life in a direction of together. I was going to say together, but for some folks, I know that takes a lot longer. So I imagine some of those scars are still a little fresh. Some of those reminders, those triggers are still a little fresh. So that is hard at the beginning for a lot of folks.

Grace Jo:

Yes. Yes.

Mitch Doig:

What isn't peer support to you? Because I think that this is a weird line that I've seen people struggle with is maybe, for example, why not just have an AA sponsor versus a recovery mentor? One costs money and the other doesn't, why not just have one? And cost money, insurance, but to somebody it does.

Grace Jo:

Yeah. What isn't peer support?

Mitch Doig:

Yeah. Maybe we could start there. What's the difference between peer support and an AA sponsor, for example?

Grace Jo:

Oh, okay. Boundaries.

Mitch Doig:

Oh, okay. It's that professional stop point basically?

Grace Jo:

Yeah. Okay. It's mushy, but it's clear. I don't know if you're going to use this part of the video, the recording, and some people might think different. But what I was told in Narcotics Anonymous is a sponsor is someone who takes you through the steps. The step work is the program and peer support. So that's the difference between a sponsor and a peer support. That's not to say, and peer support, there's some sponsors who are rough around the edges because they care and they kill you with kindness. And where the boundary comes in, jumping into the peer support, I can't be like, "You need to work the steps, you have to go to NA, and you have to do this in order for you to stay clean." It's not like that.

Mitch Doig:

You're describing maybe being a peer support specialist is you're like a guide on a tour, whereas a sponsor maybe in some cases, is a little more directive. And says, "Here's exactly the way to do it, in some ways."

Grace Jo:

Correct.

Mitch Doig:

Yeah.

Grace Jo:

Yes. Yes.

Mitch Doig:

The reason I asked that question, just as an aside, is I worked with somebody in the past who... Which it's funny because having this conversation, she was like, "And then I figured out what was actually happening." But she was somebody who would go to support group meetings and would drive people. She'd be like, "I'll drive you. I'll drive you there. If you just need to go to meeting, give me a call, I'll drive you to one." So and so forth. And one day, I guess somebody was like, "You know you could get paid to do this, right?" So for her, she was like, "Wait, for real? That's what being a peer mentor is?"

And then I think she went and took the CRM classes and was like, "Oh, it's not just this. I still want to do it though." But there was this moment where I think there's a lot of folks even within the field, but even just within the recovery community that are like, "It's not that different." But it really is. I think, going back to that assumption thing, you're almost helping somebody draw the map to their own recovery rather than saying, "Here's the map." And I think the 12 steps work for a lot of people, but you're really saying, "What is your map? And if your map includes a spot here for the 12 steps, cool. And if it includes a spot for this thing, also cool."

Grace Jo:

Your recovery maybe looked like the gym. And personally for me, that's not mine, but that doesn't mean it can't be yours. So I support you through that. And another thing that the difference I think is ethics, boundaries and ethics. When we turn that hat from... Like you were saying, that girl was driving her friends to a meeting. The hat that changes is being paid to do this comes with, "Oh, once you turn into a certified recover mentor, or a peer wellness specialist, or a peer support specialist, you are a professional, so you act that way." So the ethics, the number one thing that I always hear during my trainings is don't sleep with your client. And okay, that's not funny. It's not funny.

Mitch Doig:

Because it's one that you don't imagine having to say. I was leading an ethics training last year, and somebody was like, "Why do we always have to talk about this?" And I was like, "The day we no longer have to talk about this, I will be very happy. I will be very happy." But it just happens.

Grace Jo:

Yeah.

Mitch Doig:

And it doesn't just happen in a, "Oops, this happened." But it happens frequently, I guess I should say.

Grace Jo:

Yeah, that's what I learned too. They said it was one of the number one complaints. And I say-

Mitch Doig:

Yeah, they say dual relationships. So it could be a lot of things, but that is one of the things that can be a dual relationship.

Grace Jo:

Yeah.

Mitch Doig:

And I think it's hard too. I don't know, listening to you talk about, like earlier, the way you talked about peer work. You're doing all these things, you're building this connection, you're getting to know all these, I think you had described it as it's really beautiful to hear this person's entire life story and then see how I can fit in this to help them continue their life story. I think that that's another one of those skills to be able to have a healthy separation from them still, but still have

such, for lack of a better word, an intimate connection without that becoming an intimate relationship. That's a skill. That's a challenge.

Grace Jo:

Yeah. What comes up for me is having those hard conversations. Yeah. I think it has to do with how you introduce yourself in the forefront. Really, these are my needs, and what are your needs in order for us to begin this relationship type thing. So with the peer, it's like for me, "Hey, I'm here to support you." And this is learned, okay? This was taught to me. I wasn't like this in the beginning, and this is connected with boundaries. In the beginning it's the, "Hey, I'm available Monday-Friday, 9:00 AM-5:00 PM and I will turn off my phone at 5:00." So the peer who has no idea is like, "What do you mean? I thought you're going to be here to support me whenever I needed." But it's like, "Hey, I am human too. This is my place of work and this is what I do for work and I love, but I need to take care of myself." Type of thing. "Do you have any sensory issues or is there anything that is important for me to know to respect you from the get-go, so I can maintain this throughout our relationship?"

Mitch Doig:

You're letting them know all the parts of that relationship, but I think you're also showing in a certain way. You're like, "I'm friendly to you, but I'm not your best friend. I'm not here to be a paid friend for you." I think that that'd be a weird dynamic if people could be paid to be your friend. I remember one thing that I used to tell people is, "I know too much about you to ever be your friend." And I say that in a nice way. It's just like, "Would you want your best friend to know all of these things all the time?" And I don't know that I always do.

But I think you're describing too, there's limits to what I'm allowed to do, and that's what enables me to continue to help you help other people is being able to explain things like mandatory reporting, being able to explain things like, "I have office hours." But there's this learning opportunity where if I'm not available from 5:00 PM-9:00 in the morning, who else can you call during that period of time? Let's figure that out as an opportunity, rather than a challenge for you. This is an opportunity to learn a recovery skill because I won't be here for you all the time.

Grace Jo:

Yes. Yeah. And the ethics that come in, there's the rules and regulations that the agency that you work for give you, and then you have your own personal ones. So's it's this balance that you bring in together and do for the greater good of what you think is right. And if you ever question it, it never ever hurts to ask, so always ask. What's that saying? That you're okay to ask for forgiveness, but blah, blah, blah, blah. I forgot how you say it. I'd rather ask for forgiveness than...

Mitch Doig:

What is it, ask for forgiveness rather than permission. But it's almost like the reverse for ethics where it's like, "Can I do this?" Not, "Uh-oh, oops, I did this."

Grace Jo:

Yes.

Mitch Doig:

What advice would you give to somebody, or maybe not even advice, what would you say to somebody who's like, "You know what, I have the lived experience, I think this sounds interesting." What would you tell somebody who's at that place?

Grace Jo:

There's something in your body that's telling you to do it, so just try it because you can always change your decision, or you can always change your mind.

Mitch Doig:

Sure. You're not making a life commitment to do this either.

Grace Jo:

Right. Yeah. There's a lot of opportunity out there in different styles. It can open you up to... There's a nonprofit world, but there's also the for-profit world, maybe you're going to like that. It's a different beast in itself, but it's there.

Mitch Doig:

It's interesting because you see that again, and it makes sense to me. Because again, if I'm just going back to that story that you had told about seeing the person on the side of the street yelling or talking to somebody who isn't there or that we don't see, I could see the application for somebody to, not a security guard, to come up to you and be like, "Hey, bud, do you need that cup of coffee? Do you need that egg McMuffin? Do you need a conversation right now? Why did you wander in here, were you looking for something?" And then for them to say something off the wall like, "I was coming in here to talk to Bill about the Jeep." Or something, and then be like, "Oh, okay. I've totally been there. I've come here looking for Bill to talk about the Jeep before too. This is an Apple store, so let's go help you figure out what you need though."

Grace Jo:

Yeah, yeah. You know what too, is I don't think peer support doesn't always have to be about mental health and addiction.

Mitch Doig:

Yeah.

Grace Jo:

But naturally it kind of does. But let's use the Apple store for an example. You're at the Apple store and you're a peer support and some random... I don't know, just someone who doesn't struggle with substance use or mental health. They are like, "Hey, what do you do?" And you open up that conversation and they're like, "Oh my goodness, my uncle may benefit from your services, so how do I get connected with you?" Just conversation starters. So one of the things that I love about peer support is sometimes I think simply the way that my brain functions is it's about how to be a kind human being and putting yourself in their shoes and how can I help you in this moment, even if it's just for 30 seconds?

Mitch Doig:

Well, and let's say it's not related, but I think the amount of people that you're going to have that kind of reaction that you just mentioned, where, for example, you talking to some person who

just came to get their phone fixed. And you're like, "So what do you do?" And you explain this. So like, "Oh, my cousin or my uncle, whoever." A lot of people are touched by these social issues and also might be feeling like, "I don't know how to help, but oh my gosh, there's hope for this?" That can even do something. That hope's maybe contagious in a way that could be really cool.

What do you hope changes in the field? I think again, at least in Oregon where you're based, the field's in a weird place where I think there's a lot of programs closed, people move jobs, COVID had some obvious impacts. I think right now there's a really heavy focus on D&I related things that are happening in the field. So we're at this interesting pivotal place to use a word that you had said earlier about one of your clients. What do you imagine or hope changes moving forward?

Grace Jo:

The system.

Mitch Doig:

What do you mean? What has to change with the system? And it's probably not one thing, but what's coming to mind?

Grace Jo:

I know. There's the kindness. I don't know, dude. Really, on a smaller scale of the big wigs, I wish we can all work together. It is not a competition. And how can we all work together to help this one here? Why does it have to be about, I get the whole... Let's say there's federal money, there's county money, or there's donated money or whatever it is. There's this thing called doubling services, but what if the agency or the people at one agency where you're getting the county funds that isn't connecting with them, so why can't we try to connect the peer to the, let's say, the federal money agency? What if he connects to someone there? So I can get deeper in it, but the power and control, I wish that was different. And I could go deeper into it. We live in America, it's the government and...

Mitch Doig:

Well, I think it's hard because that's the complex part about... It's the thing that I didn't know when I entered the field. The hard part is since our behavioral health system is a part of our existing health system in the United States, some of those costs are nonprofits competing or because I'm guessing that's part of what you're hinting at. And I think part of that is because you don't want to over-utilize the system, we put in those safeguards of saying, "Well, we can't provide the same service across three organizations." And what if somebody does need three peers? Our system doesn't allow that. And I understand the fear behind that, but what is the opportunity if we were allowed to do that? And that's a future that I want to be in, for sure. And I hope we get there someday. Honestly, my big hope is someday I hope we get there and it's like, "Hey, you're a human, you have healthcare. Cool, enjoy."

Grace Jo:

There is people who do, and the change is happening slowly, and that's what I hang on to. But there will be those that will enter your journey, they're going to make it hard. But guess what? You can peer support them.

Mitch Doig:

The weird uncomfortable part about that is you enter the field to help people and just like any workplace, like any workplace system like anything, there's going to be those distractions or those challenges that are coming with the fact that you work on a team, work within a company that needs to keep lights on. All of those things that happen. And I don't ever want to pretend for a second this doesn't have those things. And also it has those moments that earlier give you goosebumps. It has those moments that you're like, "You know what? That person did it. Maybe they had to come back to me six or seven times, but they did it eventually." Or I don't know if you have a success story that you're able to share like this, but I had this weird moment one time where I didn't have a success story with a client.

I left an organization and four years down the road, I'm meeting with teenagers now, and I go out into the lobby to go grab somebody for an appointment and somebody just is like, "Hey, Mitch." And I turn and I'm like, "I know that voice. They're too old to be here." And it was one of my old clients and she was the sponsor of my teenage client.

Grace Jo:

Oh, wow.

Mitch Doig:

And she was like, "They told me that you were their counselor." And I was like, "You're sponsoring people?" And they're like, "Yeah." And I'm like, "Hmm." Which told me a lot about where they had gone. And it's funny because I didn't fix anything for them, but again, it's those breadcrumbs. And I'm just curious, is there any those moments where you're like, "That was one of those moments that really ignited a passion for this work that you're able to share?"

Grace Jo:

The person I was talking about meeting this person in his garage as he's always getting you know, you know. I thought he was going to die. I didn't think he was going to make it, and he is now a house manager for a recovery home and doing really well. And I connected him to another agency because I was switching programs and he's doing well.

Mitch Doig:

I think it's fun that that story not only is this person found their recovery, it's this person found their recover is now supporting other people's recoveries in a way too. That's really cool.

Grace Jo:

And he's doing speeches and it's cool. Something that someone taught me is, yeah, I don't get to own their success or their failures and that's why I love doing peer support. I love doing peer support because of that. Because it takes the weight off your shoulder.

Mitch Doig:

Yeah. That's a burnout prevention, because I think the fun part as I have been talking to you today is the things that you've been describing is all of those little seeds that you've been planting. Those are those things that I think we tend to overlook so much as being integral to care. I very earlier in my career had that experience of people leaving and coming back and leaving, coming back or worse, and then some people figuring it out. But I had asked a supervisor, I had said, "Are we bad at our job?" And he had asked me why I thought that, and I

said, "Because people leave and they come back, or they relapse, or so on and so forth." And he was like, "Man, you're really overlooking the fact that for 90 days, this person had somebody who was wrapped around people that cared about them. They were attending groups with people who had very similar experiences, and they weren't alone for the first time in however long. They succeeded at something. They got healthcare, they got food and put on weight, they slept for 8 to 10 hours every night."

All of these things, "They reconnect with their family." And it's all of those pieces that, at the very, very least, that's a little bit of hope that somebody got to experience repeatedly for a period of time. And I think that that's that really cool thing that you've been describing of why peer support's so cool is you're just like, "I've got more of it. I've got more hope in my back pocket. I've got my front pocket, I've got it all over the place. Can I give you a little bit more? When you're ready, when you're willing, and if you want it."

Grace Jo:

Yes.

Mitch Doig:

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