

Cooptation and Peer Support

What is it and how might it get played out in the behavioral health workforce?

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Agenda

- ▶ Define Cooptation
- ▶ Discuss how cooptation of peer support gets played out in the behavioral health field
- ▶ Discuss various cooptation scenarios through role-plays
- ▶ What can be done?

Cooptation defined...

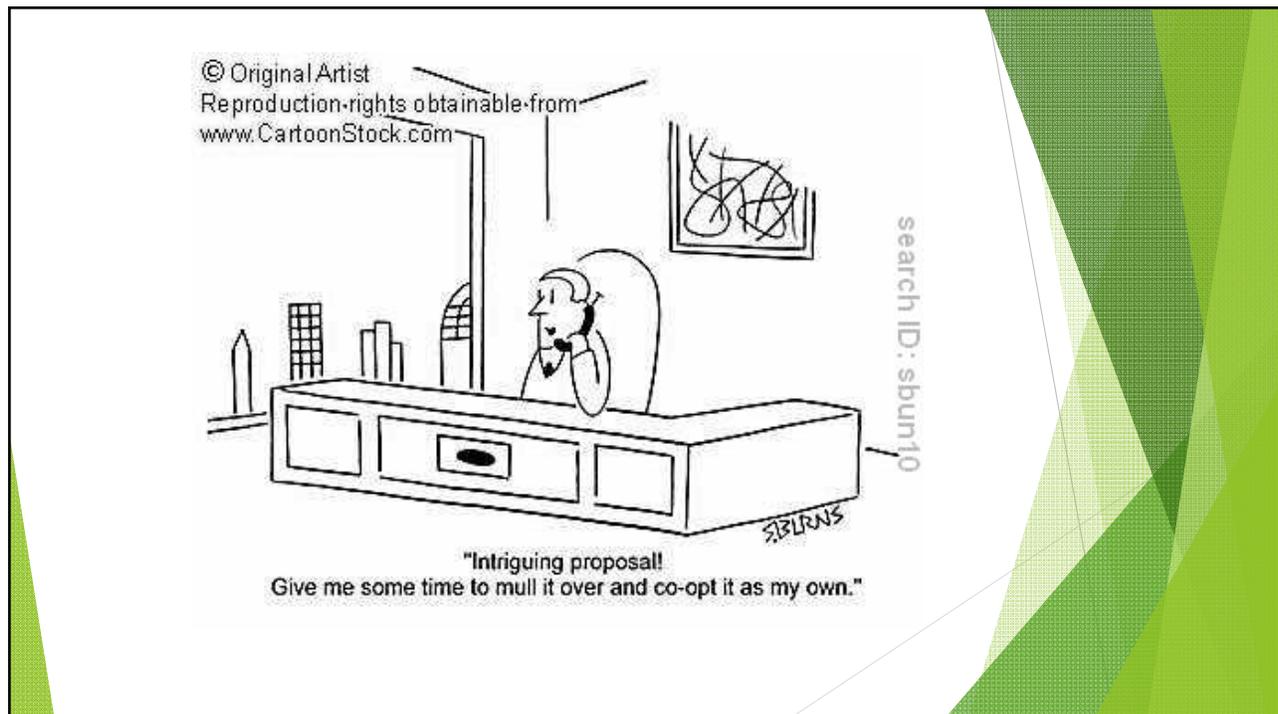
Oxford Dictionary:

1. Appoint to membership of a committee or other body by invitation of the existing members
2. Divert to or use in a role different from the usual or original one
3. Adopt (an idea or policy) for one's own use.

Or

the process by which a group subsumes or assimilates a smaller or weaker group with related interests; or, similarly, the process by which one group gains converts from another group by attempting to replicate the aspects that they find appealing without adopting the full program or ideals.

At the root of cooptation is power and privilege!



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"That 'let sleeping dogs lie thing?'
We need to co-opt that."

Culture Vultures

What does it mean?

- ▶ Sell-out - one who betrays a cause for personal advantage
- ▶ Culture vulture - one who steals traits, language or fashion from another culture
- ▶ Other ways that cooptation might be described.

"SELLING OUT IS USUALLY MORE A
MATTER OF BUYING IN. SELL
OUT, AND YOU'RE REALLY BUYING
INTO SOMEONE ELSE'S SYSTEM OF
VALUES, RULES AND REWARDS."
- BILL WATTERSON



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Cooptation in peer support

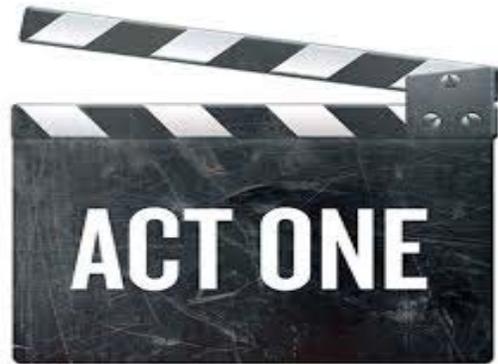
- ▶ Peers Peer support staff lose connection with values & take on views and beliefs that demean people who use services (Darby Penney)
- ▶ The organization doesn't support peer support staff's role through policy and practice (Darby Penney)

What might it feel like?

- ▶ Peers doing work of others in an organization that might prescribe to a different set of values.
- ▶ Peers feeling that the work itself compromises their peer or recovery values.

Some have even said the term itself has been coopted (Sera Davidow article).

Scenarios and Role-Plays



What can be done?

- ▶ Know the history of the consumers, survivors, ex-patients, mad peoples' self-help movement.
- ▶ Know your state peer values and ethics; get a sense of how they might get played out in a working relationship with a PIR.
- ▶ Role-clarity in work responsibilities - job descriptions are important, however, role-clarity relates to all on the team having a sense of their roles on the team and that of others.
- ▶ Policies and procedures might need to take into account the role of peers
- ▶ Opportunities to honestly discuss concerns in supervision or with team leaders and team members, as they come up. Peer specialists should not feel as if there are repercussions for discussing their concerns.

What can be done?

- ▶ Opportunities to discuss with other peer specialists concerns as they come up - perhaps in co-supervision / co-reflection meetings.
- ▶ Peers should have the opportunity to discuss their values with others in the organization.
- ▶ Stay connected and knowledgeable about what's going on in the field of peer support. Join organizations such as iNAPS, or statewide peer organizations.

Thank you!!!