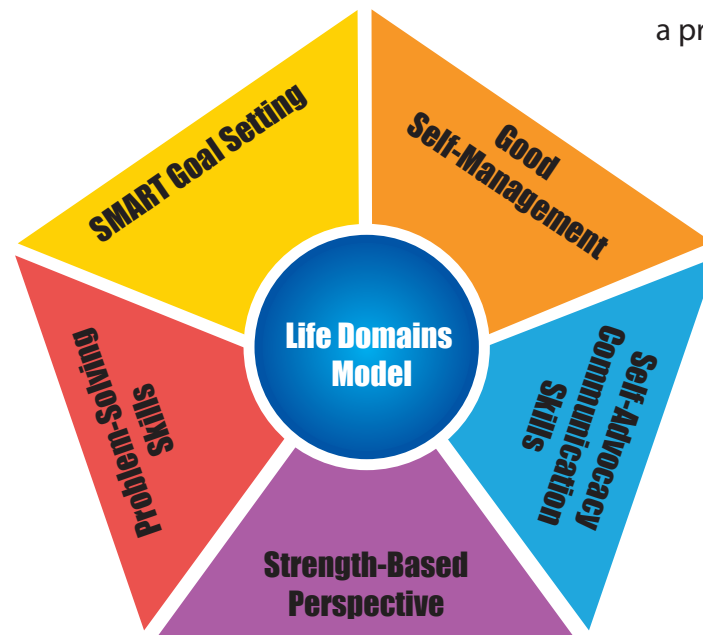


PEER MENTORING

The Path To Empowerment

a program of



What is Peer Mentoring?

Peer Mentoring is an effective way to learn a variety of personal skills, including problem-solving, assertiveness, and goal-setting. Trained Mentors are dedicated to helping people adjust to new challenges and situations.

Within the context of spinal cord injury (SCI), a Mentor is someone who has successfully adapted to living with SCI and wants to empower others to do the same. Mentors are knowledgeable about coping strategies, daily living skills, and critical resources.

Why is Peer Mentoring Important?

SCI is one of the most challenging injuries a person can experience. Adapting to life with a disability can be a long-term process, but one that can also be extremely rewarding.

Peer Mentoring provides the tools to cope with the medical, psycho-social, and physical changes often associated with SCI. Current research suggests that peer-mentoring is an effective intervention for improving functional outcomes, health, and well-being in persons with SCI. People participating in Peer Mentoring Programs may have a lower incidence of secondary complications (e.g., pressure sores, depression, pain) associated with SCI. Mentors can help Peers re-evaluate their life/career goals. They are able to assist with the day-to-day challenges of living with SCI, particularly those related to self-management of health care and social interactions. SCI may prevent a person from doing things the “old way,” but it doesn’t prevent them from learning new ways to live.

Learning new paths to independence, finding new sources of self-esteem, and becoming part of new social systems are all part of successful adaptation to spinal cord injury.

Benefits of Peer Mentoring

A Peer Mentor Program can have a positive effect not only on the Peer participant, but on family members, the mentor, and the host site as well.

For Peers

- Opportunities to interact with someone who has successfully adjusted to SCI
- Opportunities to learn and improve life skills related to SCI
- Opportunities to talk with someone with similar life experiences
- Opportunities to develop/expand effective support systems
- Information about practical issues such as accessibility, and the use of adaptive technology

For Mentors

- Opportunities to “get by giving.”
- Opportunities to develop/expand effective support systems
- Opportunities to improve interpersonal and communication skills
- Opportunities to acquire new knowledge and develop new skills

For Families

- Opportunities to meet a person with SCI who has made a successful adjustment to his or her injury
- A reliable source of SCI information and resources
- Someone with whom they can share their concerns, fears, hopes, and questions
- Education resources to learn the practicalities of living with SCI

The goals of United Spinal’s Peer Mentoring Program are to help men and women:

- Cope with SCI
- Prevent secondary medical complications
- Discover ways to live healthy, active lives; and
- Set and achieve SMART (Specific, Manageable, Achievable, Realistic and Timely) Goals.

How does United Spinal’s Peer Mentor Program Work?

United Spinal collaborates with hospitals, rehabilitation facilities, selected community-based organizations, United Spinal chapters and support groups that agree to implement the United Spinal Peer Mentoring Program at their facilities. Each program location designates a qualified individual to be—the “Mentor Coordinator”—who will be responsible for implementing the general operations of the peer mentoring program at that site.

For more information about the peer mentoring program please contact:

National Director:

Local Contact:

Lindsey Elliott, MSW
United Spinal Association
718-803-3782 ext. 7241
lelliott@unitedspinal.org