

# Focus 2.0

***A Publication of The CAFÉ TA Center***

***Issue 9***

## **What is the Focus 2.0?**

The *Focus 2.0* newsletter highlights important issues in mental health, providing timely information on recovery, peer support, and the value of including people with lived experience in the mental health system of care.

Have a suggestion for a topic? Let us know!



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## **What's Happening with Women's Mental Health?**

**M**arch is Women's History Month, and a time to recognize and celebrate the achievements and contributions of women. Unfortunately, this year's Women's History Month coincided with the release of some deeply concerning findings about the mental health of young women and girls from the Centers for Disease Control. What do they reveal, and what do they mean for the mental health recovery community?

According to the CDC press release [U.S. Teen Girls Experiencing Increased Sadness and Violence](#) "nearly 3 in 5 (57%) U.S. teen girls felt persistently sad or hopeless in 2021—double that of boys and the highest level reported over the past decade." By comparison, only 29% of teen boys reported similar feelings. While the report included concerning findings across the entire population, it also made it apparent that there is something unique happening with young women and girls.

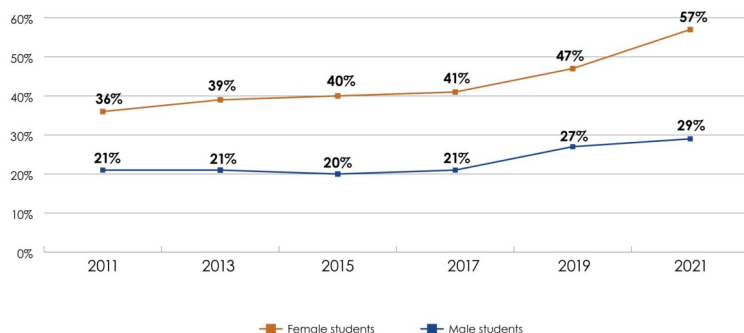


The reasons behind this trend are not entirely clear, but observers have noted a number of factors that could be at play. First among them is social media use, and the tendency for adolescent girls to compare themselves negatively to how others are portrayed on apps like Instagram and Tik Tok. It's possible that girls are especially vulnerable to the pressures of social media, a factor that some teen girls identified themselves in [this NBC report](#). Another factor is the COVID-19 pandemic.

The data in the survey was collected in 2021, when young people were experiencing disruption and disappointment, and frustration with that reality may be reflected as sadness and hopelessness reported by adolescent girls in the survey. While all youth deal with similar pressures, in [this New York Times column](#) a Temple University psychology professor and author of *You and Your Adolescent* noted that differences in how boys and girls identify their feelings may be playing a role, adding that male discontent might be self-identified as anger, or only visible behaviorally.

While those explanations are plausible, the same CDC report pointed to another potential root cause: trauma. According to their findings, nearly 1 in 5 girls experienced sexual violence in the past year, representing a 15% increase against 2017 data. Given the strong and well-established correlation between trauma and poor mental health, it seems likely that an increase in trauma is a main driver behind these findings.

**PERSISTENT FEELINGS OF SADNESS OR HOPELESSNESS  
AMONG U.S. HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS, BY SEX, 2011-2021**



Whatever the root causes of these new CDC findings may be, their release has brought new attention to the unique mental health experience of women and girls. For people in the peer support and mental health recovery community, the conversation provides an opportunity to revisit resources specific to women's mental health, like those available from the Department of Health & Human Services at <https://www.womenshealth.gov/mental-health> and from the National Institute of Mental Health at <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/women-and-mental-health>. It also offers a chance to think about who has access to peer support, and what their recovery community looks like. Peer support can be especially effective when the people engaged share experiences. That's why there are specific peer support communities for veterans, for people involved in the justice system, and for youth.



This is a moment for peers and peer-run organizations to ask themselves what they can do to bring their unique skills and perspectives to a new generation that is facing its own set of challenges. Whether the findings in this new CDC study represent a trend or an aberration, the fact remains that adolescent girls and young women stand to benefit from the trauma-informed, recovery-oriented values of the mental health recovery movement. The question is what can be done to bring those values to a

new generation that very much needs them, and how they can help young women address their wellness before their feelings develop into more serious long-term mental health conditions.

# SAMHSA Seeking Comment on National Peer Support Certification

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SAMHSA is working to improve the capacity of the nation's mental health system, and has expressed a commitment to building the peer mental health workforce as part of that effort. To help grow peer support nationally, SAMHSA's Office of Recovery has created a "National Model Standards for Peer Support Certification."

**SAMHSA is seeking public comment on their draft peer support certification standards through 5 pm ET on April 10, 2023.** Now is the time to make your voice heard!

To see the draft standards and submit your comment, visit <https://www.samhsa.gov/about-us/who-we-are/offices-centers/or/model-standards>.

## SAMHSA's National Model Standards for Peer Support Certification

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### What's Happening at CAFÉ TAC?

CAFÉ TAC just completed **two training series** designed to help people with mental health conditions thrive in their communities and make a difference in shaping the nation's mental health system of care.

Our 12-part series on **job seeking and employment**, *So You're Ready to Work, Now What?* equipped attendees with tips and resources to find the right job and succeed in the workplace. Covering everything from writing a resume and explaining lived experience, to communicating effectively and weaving self-care into the workplace, this series included key guidance to help anyone with a mental health condition to participate in the workforce. Find the recordings and resource guides at <https://cafetacenter.net/cafetac-presents-so-youre-ready-to-work-now-what/>.

Our six-part series *Master Your Personal Narrative: Storytelling As A Leadership Tool* featured a conversation on taking a personal recovery narrative and expanding its scope to make a difference at the organizational and policy level. It addressed venues where **a story can become a leadership tool** including advocacy, executive/organizational leadership, and agency-level systems change. View recordings of this series on our website at <https://cafetacenter.net/master-your-personal-narrative-storytelling-as-a-leadership-tool/>.

## What's up next?

CAFÉ TAC is excited to continue its exploration of innovative peer-centered practices in the coming months. Building on the success of our earlier [Peer-Run Crisis Alternatives](#) series, this set of monthly webinars featuring facilitator Cherene Caraco will explore a range of areas and practices where people with lived experience have opportunities to bring recovery values to they system of care. The first installment in this series is scheduled for April 19<sup>th</sup>. Stay tuned for additional details and a registration link!



We also have new resources set for release in the coming months, including a video series on how families and caregivers of people with mental health conditions can support their loved ones' recovery and foster wellness for everyone, as well as a new peer-created guidebook on engaging publicly and growing the peer voice.

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## Capacity Corner: A Column about Capacity-Building for Your Peer-Run Organization

*CAFÉ TAC is pleased to share this feature, a column from CAFÉ TAC Training Coordinator John Ferrone on leadership challenges within peer-run organizations, where many advocates with lived experience direct their efforts to promote recovery and inspire change.*

*This column's topic is **Building Positive Momentum by Telling the Story of Your Organization.***

**W**hat does it mean for your organization to have *positive momentum*? This is a phrase that simply means that good things are happening, and each good thing leads to more good things. You're probably familiar with this concept from a personal perspective: Something good happens in your day which leads to other good things, and the positive momentum builds until you lay down at night to go to sleep and you think, "Today was a good day."

Past articles in this Capacity Corner series have discussed the types of activities that will lead to those good outcomes for your organization. What's your next step if you've implemented certain strategies and you're accomplishing new and better things? Well, the easy answer is "Keep up the good work!" But obviously there's another answer, and that is: Become your own best cheerleader and tell the story of your success, and keep telling the story.





# PROMOTE Y YOURSELF

When's the last time your organization submitted an editorial to the newspaper explaining the need for what you do, where you were able to include a few gems about the great accomplishments you've achieved recently?

Or, if your organization has a Facebook page, would a person who looks at it see in the history the announcements about the milestones you planned and then reached? Would they see your positive momentum?

Do you have an Annual Report about the organization that showcases your progress and achievements?

Do you send out a monthly email newsletter touting your recent accomplishments and discussing what's coming up next?

When your Executive Director is meeting with community partners (for example, a presentation at a local Rotary meeting or other community club), does he or she rattle off the four or five activities and impacts that the organization has implemented and achieved?

There are many other forums, venues, and channels through which to deliver a message about your positive momentum. But why do that? Isn't that bragging?

Telling your story is not bragging. Please let go of that baggage! Or maybe we should call it "braggage" (corny joke, get it?). You don't need to compare your organization to others or put another organization down. You don't need to be haughty when you're talking about your organization. You don't need to exaggerate. Instead, what you need to do is inform people—potential donors, community partners, referral channels, etc.—about your progress so they know you're active, capable, and ready to interact.

It is true that your good work will speak for itself to a certain audience. But your audience of people who need to know about your positive momentum is far greater than just those you serve. As you become more and more comfortable telling your story like a regular public relations pro, you'll start to see the effect as your organization becomes the talk of the town:

1. More inquiries about services;
2. More interest in providing financial support;
3. More desire to partner from local orgs;
4. Higher credibility among other organizations and their leaders;
5. Higher internal morale;
6. And most importantly, increased positive momentum as a result of your telling about the positive momentum (the flywheel effect).

It's one thing to do great work; it's another thing to regularly share what you've accomplished. Being your own best cheerleader makes it far easier to accomplish the next positive results. It takes effort, though, because not every day is rosy, as you know. You need to choose your channels through which to share your positive momentum, and commit to it. Too many leaders forget about this (or it never crosses their mind) and their organizations miss out on the opportunity to boost their own positive momentum. Make that change today! Choose one tactic for sharing your positive momentum, create a timeline, and keep to it—you'll see results within a few months.



*Is there a leadership challenge you're facing in your peer-run organization or advocacy efforts? We want to hear about it! Reach out to us at [cafetacenter@gmail.com](mailto:cafetacenter@gmail.com) with your question or comment. We will be happy to help, and your challenge might just be the subject of our next Capacity Corner column! (Anonymously and with your consent, of course!)*



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