

Kidney Concerns

News for Kidney Patients and Their Families

Spring 2019

Informed, Empowered, Engaged

In this issue...

Peer Mentoring

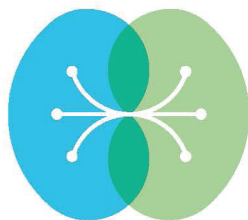
When I first started dialysis, I was scared out of my socks. It happened quickly and suddenly—my whole life seemed to stop. My medical team was wonderful and did all that they could to help my body adjust. And they offered what comfort they could. But the fact remained that everything in my life seemed to have changed and not for the better.

Then a miracle happened. My dialysis unit had a peer mentoring program, and I was introduced to other patients who were trained to talk to me about some of my fears and anxieties. Some I could relate to. Some I couldn't. But they all showed me that I could still have a very, very good life. I had the power inside me to make it better. I learned how to identify my fears and how to problem solve. I learned how to have hope again.

Not every dialysis unit has a peer mentoring program. It can even be a little difficult to find. But there are now phone options and online options. I encourage anyone who is feeling the fear and anxiety that is so common in dialysis patients, both new and experienced, to look for peer mentoring options and give it an honest chance. If you don't click with your first mentor, try another one. And keep trying if you must. Believe me, peer mentoring can change your life.

Maggie Carey,

Consumer Committee Chair



**Midwest
Kidney Network**

What is a Peer Mentor?

Peer mentors are individuals who have made a positive adjustment to their own kidney disease. They are willing and available to support others who are currently trying to adjust to life with kidney disease.

Peer mentors are not therapists or professional counselors, but they are sensitive and careful listeners. With special training, peer mentors help other patients think through the problems they may be experiencing.

As a patient, you have immense credibility with those who are struggling to adjust. Because you have had similar experiences, you bring a level of understanding that is hard for others to replicate.

Could You be a Peer Mentor?

Peer mentors are an extension of their dialysis unit's health care team and typically work under the direction of the unit's Social Worker. If you are interested in peer mentoring, we encourage you to work with your unit's Social Worker to talk about options.

Midwest Kidney Network's Consumer Committee has developed some tools that can help when starting a peer mentoring program.

These tools can greatly increase your ability to help others. The following are some of the topics covered in the Midwest Kidney Network's peer mentoring tools.

- Preparing to be coaches/mentors.
- Understanding boundaries and confidentiality.
- Knowing your own limits and capacity to help others.
- Improving your listening and communication skills.

Peer Mentor Objectives

- Be a role model for new patients
- Be responsible for your own health care
- Talk about difficult issues
- Share with people who are new to the unit or changing modalities
- Share resources from your local Network or other organizations
- Share your own story, yet knowing everyone's story is different
- Be a good listener, not an advice giver
- Teach people how to work with their health care team
- Learn what to ask and how to ask
- Help reduce people's anxiety and fear
- Communicate clearly
- Teach people how to advocate and stand up for themselves



Peer Mentoring Resources

- Visit our website at www.midwestkidneynetwork.org or contact us at 1-800-973-3773 to learn more.
- Contact the National Kidney Foundation for information on their NKF Peers Program at 1-855-653-7337 (855-NKF-PEER)

My Journey

Mitchell Broach

Over my 26-year journey of living with kidney disease, I have certainly been blessed. I have had 2 kidney transplants and excellent medical care. I've also had the love and support of family and friends, one might say that I'm thriving. So, it is not only my privilege but also my responsibility to pay it forward as a peer mentor.

Peer mentors are an extension of the treatment facility's health care team and work with individuals facing life circumstances similar to their own. Peer mentors are patients who have made a positive adjustment to their chronic kidney disease and are available to support others who are on dialysis.

Although it is clear that the experiences of one person are not identical to the experiences of another, having kidney disease in common will allow the mentor and the mentee to relate on a personal level. Using appropriate helping skills and a good understanding of the human personality, the possibilities for providing support and assistance are all the more effective.

Peer mentors are not problem solvers or advice givers, but simply compassionate listeners. Peer mentors provide new dialysis patients or kidney transplant recipients with knowledge gained from personal experience. Although they have special training to enable them to help other patients, peer mentors are not professional therapists.

As a peer mentor it is my goal to steer patients toward a path to positive adjustment. One of the most gratifying

experiences in life is helping others. Being a patient serving as a peer mentor has certainly been fulfilling.

Those of you who have adjusted well and are thriving with kidney disease can use your positive experiences and outlook to help fellow patients. Be a peer mentor. It is a rewarding and gratifying volunteer position.

Take Care and God Bless.



Mitchell serves as the President of Kalamazoo Area Renal Support Group and also as a member of the Midwest Kidney Network Consumer Committee.

Qualities of a Great Peer Mentor

- Friendly and outgoing
- A listener and a learner—a coach gives the other person time to talk
- Non-judgmental toward the values and behaviors of the patient and/or family members
- Dependable, meets time commitments
- Respectful of privacy and confidentiality
- Desire to help other patients
- Flexible and open in discussion
- Non-directive and supportive
- Encouraging and positive
- Empathetic and empowering

"Speak in such a way that others listen to you. Listen in such a way that others speak to you."

~Anonymous

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Patient Grievance Process

Your dialysis unit or kidney transplant center is required to have a grievance process. Midwest Kidney Network also provides you with a complaint and grievance process.

Through the grievance process, you can voice concerns about the care you receive to an objective third party. You can file a grievance anonymously and in the manner most comfortable to you.



A grievance can be filed by a patient, or a patient representative. The following are examples of grievances.

- You feel that your care team is unresponsive to your concerns.
- You are worried about your safety when getting treatment.
- You do not feel that you are being treated fairly.
- Your privacy or confidentiality has been violated.

If you want to discuss a situation, event, or condition involving your care, we encourage you to contact us. Any discussion you have with us remains confidential.

Contact Midwest Kidney Network
1-800-973-3773