

Guidelines for Interviewing People with Lived Experience

Stories from people with lived experience can help reduce stigma, increase understanding, and encourage others to seek support. Interviews should always be conducted with care, respect, and trauma-informed practices.

Before the Interview

Prepare thoughtfully before speaking with someone about their mental health experiences.

Helpful steps include:

- Explain the purpose of the interview clearly
- Let the person know how their story will be used
- Discuss topics ahead of time when possible
- Allow the person to set boundaries
- Remind them they can pause or stop at any time
- Avoid pressuring someone to share details they are uncomfortable discussing

During the Interview

Create a supportive and respectful environment.

Best practices include:

- Listen without judgment
- Use person-first and respectful language
- Ask open-ended questions
- Give the person time to respond
- Focus on recovery, resilience, and support when appropriate
- Respect emotional reactions and pauses
- Avoid graphic or triggering details

Wyandot Behavioral Health Network

Website: <https://www.wyandotbhn.org/> | Phone: 913-328-4600

In Crisis? Call or text 988 (Suicide & Crisis Lifeline) or call 913-788-4200

Questions to Avoid

Avoid questions that may feel harmful, invasive, or sensationalized.

Examples include:

- “Why didn’t you just get help sooner?”
- “What exactly happened in detail?”
- “Were you dangerous to others?”
- “Do you think you were weak at the time?”

Trauma-Informed Interviewing Tips

Trauma-informed communication helps people feel safer and more respected.

Remember to:

- Prioritize emotional safety
- Respect privacy and confidentiality
- Avoid judgmental language
- Recognize that sharing personal experiences can be emotionally difficult
- Offer breaks if needed

After the Interview

Support should continue after the conversation ends.

Helpful follow-up steps include:

- Thank the person for sharing their story
- Explain next steps and timelines
- Allow them to review quotes if appropriate
- Share mental health resources if the conversation was emotional

Remember

People with lived experience are more than their struggles. Respectful storytelling can help build understanding, hope, and connection.

Wyandot Behavioral Health Network

Website: <https://www.wyandotbhn.org/> | Phone: 913-328-4600

In Crisis? Call or text 988 (Suicide & Crisis Lifeline) or call 913-788-4200