



# Bringing the Fun and Engagement

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(ACTUALLY, THE ENGAGEMENT AND FUN)

## Who Am I...

**Aaron Barrow** is an Air Force veteran who is in recovery. He has worked as a Peer Supporter and then Peer Specialist in residential VA care for over 12 years and in the mental health field for over 17 years.

Aaron is also a certified WRAP facilitator, trained as a Whole Health coach and Taking Charge of my Life and Health facilitator and regularly provides trainings at local and national conventions.

Aaron was designated the VISN 20 Peer Specialist of the year for 2019. Aaron also serves as an elected local school board member. He received a Bachelor of Science in Psychology in 2006 from the University of Southern Oregon.

# Peers Who Will Be Assisting Me Today

**Dan Friedrich** is a Marine Veteran and peer support specialist. He serves as the Peer Mentor Team Lead for the Veteran Peer Services program at NAMI Multnomah. Dan is passionate about helping peers and their families feel heard.

**Tammy Davis** Tammy is a Post 9/11 Army Veteran and a Certified Veteran Behavioral Health Specialist. She is passionate about using her voice and lived experience to support and encourage fellow Veterans on their healing journeys.

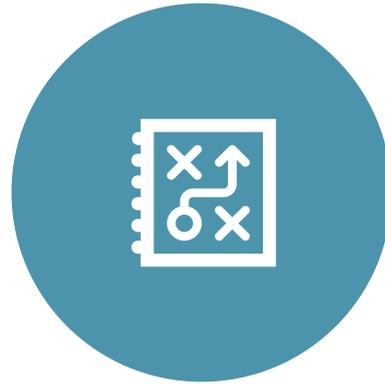
**Darci Standefer** is an Air Force Veteran who started working with NAMI from 2002 to 2004. She joined NAMI again in 2019 acting as a group facilitator and will be facilitating a group for Lane County NAMI in July.

# Today's Topics:

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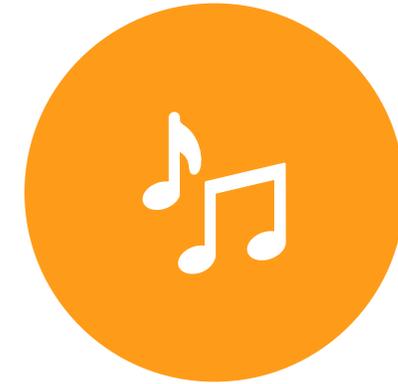
BUILDING BLOCKS  
OF PEER SUPPORT  
GROUPS



GET STARTED ON  
RIGHT FOOT



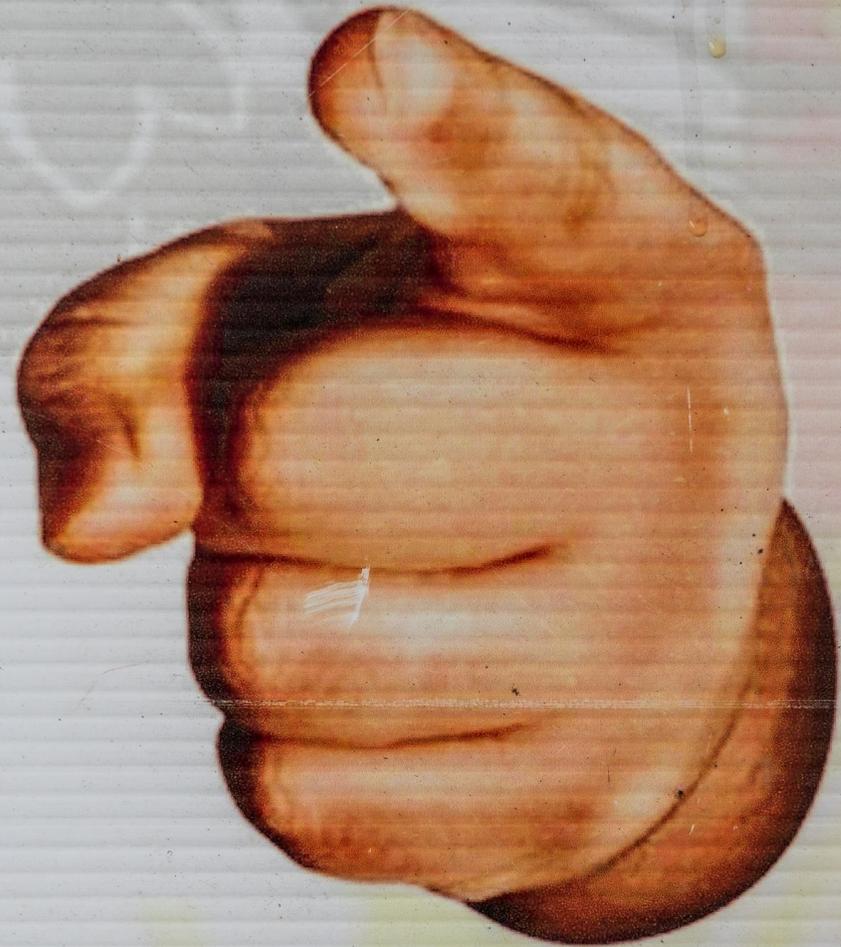
KEEP  
CONVERSATION  
FLOWING AND  
CLOSING NOTES



TIPS AND POSSIBLE  
PITFALLS

# Why I Created This Presentation

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**WE WANT YOU**



# What makes for a great Peer Support Group?

Shout it out or put your answer into the chat box!

# The Essence of Peer Support

(According to Aaron and a website that I cannot find again)

## Role-Model the Recovery Journey

- Inspire hope in peers
- Show that recovery is possible

## Helps Others Find Own Path

- Person centered approach to recovery
  - Holistic approach
- Deepen peers understanding of their own journeys

## Develops Relationships

- Based on mutual respect and shared histories

## Acts as a guide through recovery systems

- Hospital communities
- Social Services
- Community supports

# Peer Building Blocks and Peer Support Groups

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Bring the energy of fellow group member (consumer?)

- I'm here to learn too
- Here is some of my story

Group centered on peers' journey

- Where do you want to go?
- How do you want to get there?

Creates a connected environment (relationship driven)

- Create safe spaces
- Invites group input

Not focused on Delivering Information

- Creating a knowledge exchange



You Don't  
Have to  
Know  
Everything  
about  
Everything

# WRAP as an Example

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Asks for group members buy-in from the very start

Explores wellness tools utilized by group members

Encourages conversations and sharing by group members

Facilitators are guides, not educators

Focus is on strengths, goals and needs



# Fun WRAP Technique

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# Peer Group Facilitation and Support Groups

(a beautiful combination)

Connected histories can create meaningful dialogues

Interview styles can deepen a conversation

Peer may be more sensitive to trauma and trauma markers

History of support group participation teaches Peers group flow and structure

# Opening Techniques

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OR, LET'S GET FOLKS TALKING!!!



Is it okay to make those quiet people talk?

Put your answer in the chat box!!!

# Room Setup

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(How to design a connected space)



# Setting Expectations

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## Quickly Establishing/Creating group agreements

- Creates group member buy-in
  - Question: What helps you feel safe?
- Gets people talking
- Setting expectations early can enrich the dialogue
  - I'd like everyone to use "I" statements
  - We discourage cross-talking in this group
  - Please don't give advice unless it is asked for
  - It's okay to pass or step out if feeling overwhelmed
  - What is said here stays here

# Younger/New Groups

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Check-in exercises can create early connections

- Can be in a “round the room” or “popcorn” style format
- For large groups can keep short
  - Please tell me one word that pops into your head when you hear the word “recovery”
  - How would you describe your weather today
    - Example, Feeling stormy, sunny with some clouds, etc.
- For small groups can be more complex
  - I’d like to know your name and how you are feeling this week
  - Why are you spending time with us today?
  - How do you know that a friend has been struggling?
    - Asking people to describe others can be less evasive
- Can be getting to know you exercises (something fun)
  - If you could be any type of ice-cream, what would you be?
  - What is your favorite season and why?

# For Older/Established Groups

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A quick review of group agreements/expectations can be helpful

Check-ins less focused on “getting to know you” (can still be modified by group size)

- More focused on connecting group members
  - Please tell us how your week has been
  - What have you done this week to strengthen your recovery
- May revolve around introducing/finding the topic
  - What is an aspect of your health that you value?
  - What is a strange coping tool that works for you?

# Getting the Conversation Started

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- Exercise your curiosity
  - Why is “being clean” so darn hard anyway?
  - What do you know about “”?
- Challenge the group
  - Why is meeting new people so hard?
- Ask for a recap
  - Can anyone tell me what we talked about last week?
  - Can someone tell our new/returning member about “”?
- Start with a short reading
  - Ask for group volunteers to read
    - Keep it short
    - Should not dominate group
- Tell a short personal story
  - I remember a time when I felt like hiding and always kept my curtains closed. Can anyone relate?

# Keep the Conversation Flowing

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# How do you keep people talking???

Answer in the chat box!!!

# Ways to keep people talking

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## Use those Peer Interview Skills

- Brief Reflections
  - Difficult
  - Secure
  - Fast
- Complex Reflections (find the idea behind the thought)
  - It can be scary
  - Improves your mood
- Use metaphors to summarize
  - Be careful with this one
  - Can be useful ask if fits
- Ask open ended questions
  - Why did that stop you?
  - What was it about "" that was challenging?

## Move the conversation around the room

- Who else has ever felt that way?
- "", what do you think about ""?
- Strong topics may move themselves

## Latch onto ideas generated by the topic

- Exp. Who else has experienced ""?



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Silence can  
be your  
friend

# Breakout Groups (recommend 8+ people)

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Can be helpful in large group settings

Gives more people a chance to talk/share with the group

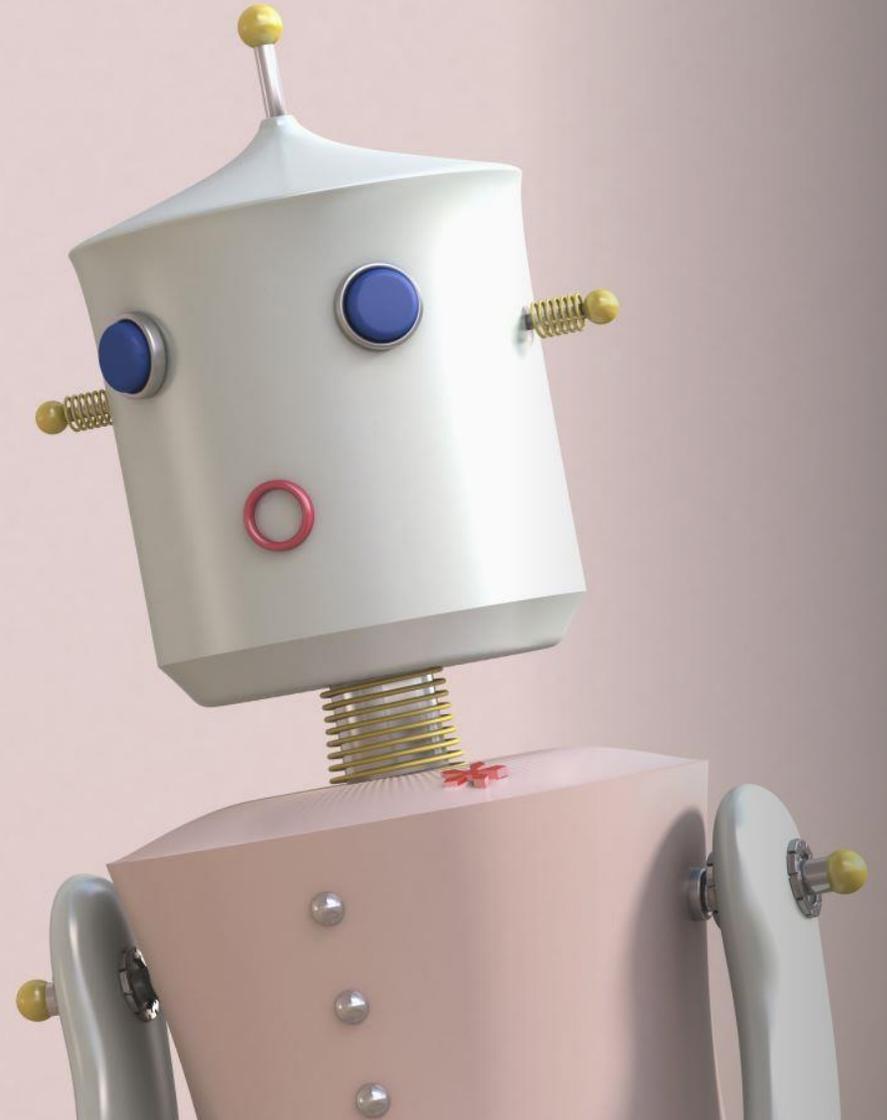
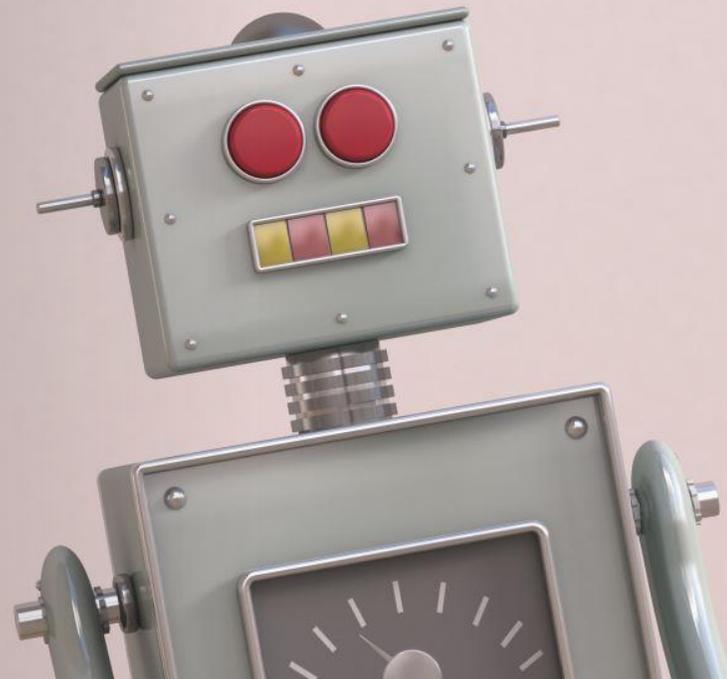
You can mix it up, group differing people up together

Ask for someone to “secretary” for the group, report back to main group

Can move from group to group, keep members on topic

Let's try a  
breakout group  
now!!!

WHAT ARE SOME  
TECHNIQUES  
YOU USE TO  
KEEP THE  
CONVERSATION  
FLOWING?



# Ending Your Group

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LET'S END ON A HIGH NOTE!



A MISTAKE I'VE MADE...

(AND HOW YOU CAN AVOID IT)

# Techniques to Close Your Group

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Utilize the last part of group to uplift group members

- How have you overcome ""?
- Do you have any tips for ""?

Can use a closing check-out

- Larger groups/limited time
  - Please say 1 word about what you will take from this group today
- Smaller groups/more time
  - Please share an idea that you will take from this group today

You can close with a chant or a prayer

Offer to touch base with peers who are having a rough time

- Maybe offer 1 on 1 after group

# Tips and Questions



# Some Things to Avoid

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Avoid lecturing the group

Don't give unsolicited advice

Avoid "rescuing" group members (silence can be your friend)

- Are you trying to say ""?
- I'm going to cheer you up

Try to keep personal stories and anecdotes short

Do your own recovery work outside of the group

# Helpful Group Facilitation Tips

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Script can be helpful but feel free to improvise

Gives group members space to explore ideas

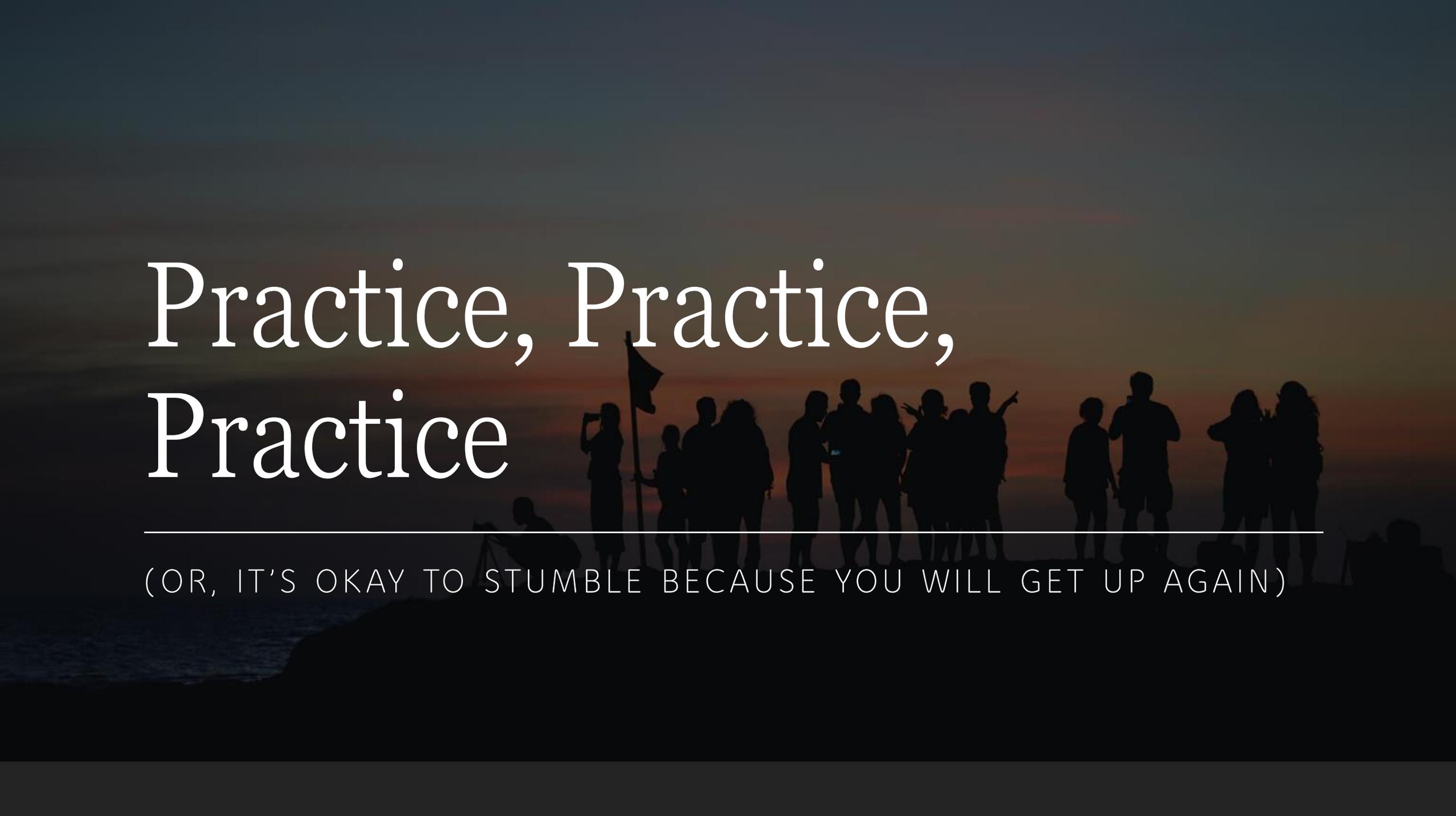
- Even if you think you know the answer

Silence can be your friend

Can suggest a 1 on 1 for someone who is struggling/telling graphic stories

- Can personalize using person's name

# Practice, Practice, Practice

The background of the image shows a group of people silhouetted against a sunset sky. The people are standing on a beach or a rocky shore, looking out towards the ocean. One person on the left is holding a flag on a pole. The sky is a mix of dark blue, orange, and red, indicating the time is either sunrise or sunset. The overall mood is contemplative and inspiring.

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(OR, IT'S OKAY TO STUMBLE BECAUSE YOU WILL GET UP AGAIN)



Do you have  
any questions?