

Interview with Barbara Kohlmann (BK)

Conducted by Maria Haun

Date: 04/03/20

Why did you become a PSW?

BK: When I first heard about such a profession in 2006, I thought I would like to support people in coping with their illness and show them that it is possible to live well with such an illness. Well, I have always liked to support others and work as a volunteer.

What do you like most about your work?

BK: What I like most about the job is that I work with people. I am very interested in people and their life stories. My hope is that I can help my clients to find positive solutions for themselves. I want to support them, so my job is to support them so that they can support themselves.

What are the benefits of peer support in addition to psychiatric care? Why is peer support important?

BK: Hopefully, over the years, the treatment in psychiatry will change and that it will be normal to have peer support. Peer support covers a different area than a doctor, nursing staff or a therapist. For example, we have more time for the client, much more time. It is also important that we are on an equal basis with the client and that we are experienced in crises. It is precisely because of our positive experience with crisis management that we can share this with others. In a way, the fact that I am experienced in crises and have coped with it well also gives me hope again and that is very important to me. This is often not given enough attention in psychiatric care, because the focus is first of all on deficits, in short, what one can no longer do, one can no longer work, one should apply for a pension, and then one cannot do this and that, but that is not true either. So I think peer support is a very good addition psychiatric care.



What do you wish for the future?

BK: For the future I wish that peer support becomes standard in psychiatry, and for myself, I hope that I will have the opportunity to continue to work as a Peer Support Worker after the UPSIDES study.