

## Peer Bio Questions

1. Please provide a couple of sentences about your living/lived experience in mental health (only what you feel comfortable sharing publicly)

At the age of 19, I was diagnosed with severe ADHD. After struggling through 6 months of university, I took an intermission. I was working at a bar, drinking often and struggling with extremely severe depressive symptoms. I couldn't keep track of anything; my physical and mental spaces were utterly disorganised, which honestly was the norm for me. Whilst I had always had a confusing relationship with academics (growing up, my teachers described me as either brilliant and hardworking or unmotivated and unfocused), I had never felt so dismal, so I sought help. The first day of treatment was by far the best day of my life. It was like I had been living in a thick hazy fog, and the weather had finally cleared up. On that day, I cleaned my room for the first time in my life; I could finally complete a mundane task and had the subsequent realisation that I needed to understand my neurodiversity to function well.

Many things have changed for me since then. I'm studying for a Bachelor of Psychology (Honours) at Deakin University. I currently hold a Distinction average and am looking forward to my fourth year of study. I have held leadership positions within the university, including serving a year term as a Student Partner on Deakin's Mental Health Advisory Group. I have interned at Bendelta, where I focussed on Leadership and Development and created and facilitated a workshop on neurodiversity in the workplace. I currently work as a peer facilitator at Fit To Drive. Personally, the way I function on a day-to-day basis has changed dramatically, including how I study and work. Learning about ADHD and the science of behaviour change has enabled me to create systems and routines that work for me.

2. Favourite colour and why?

I don't have a particular favourite colour, but rather appreciate various colour palettes that make me feel calm or joyful. I have a Pinterest board filled with many interesting colour palettes that I reference when I am designing a space or creating art for fun.

3. Favourite recreational/social activity and why?

I have many hobbies and am always interested in trying something new. I love to host jam sessions; making music with other people is a fun way to let all the creative energy out. I enjoy watching TV shows, movies and anime, reading books, cooking, and playing social sports. In a few weeks, I will be starting ceramics lessons, which I hope will prove to be a fun and mindful activity.



#### 4. Favourite food and why?

My favourite comfort food is the garden goodness burger from Grill'd because it is delicious. Other than that, I tend to cook for myself, and I genuinely get a kick out of creating meals that are good for my brain's health.

#### 5. Tell us a little bit about why you want to become a peer support worker?

I want to work in a peer support role because I want to use my lived experience to help support others experiencing mental health concerns. Mainly, I am interested in providing support to those who think they might benefit from some mental health or peer support but are unsure or don't think it's bad enough to seek help. I believe that providing early support and intervention can help destigmatise mental health within the individual and prevent long-term and/or severe suffering. Additionally, I feel fulfilled when I support ADHD students/peers in understanding how their brains work to help them set themselves up for success.

#### 6. Tell us one goal you would like to achieve with APTF?

One goal I would love to achieve with APTF would be to provide flexible support in a timely manner. Whether it's discussing mental health with a peer or creating a long-term plan for future success. The flexibility in the types of support and the duration is why I deeply appreciate APTF's structure; it allows for the achievement of many different types of goals.

#### 7. Can you tell us how APTF is different to other services offered to people with mental health-related challenges?

APTF differs from other services offered because it focuses on building rapport through lived experience and allows individualised support that isn't capped to a certain number of sessions; as long as the service is still beneficial, we can keep it going. APTF can fill some of the gaps in our health system, catering to those who want more support than is offered to them currently.

I have benefited greatly from the advice and guidance from lived experience mentors, and I appreciate that APTF facilitates this interaction. I have been grateful to have been guided by ADHD-diagnosed professionals and academics, but these relationships only occurred by chance. I found their advice and support immensely beneficial; they understood what I was going through and offered guidance from an empathetic place. It was much better than the countless experiences I had growing up, where I struggled with organisation and was met with judgement or given a system to use that did not work with my brain. These struggles of trying to be understood in different contexts have made me want to offer empathic support, based on evidence and lived experience. The flexibility of APTF enables such support.

#### 8. How do you think a younger peer would benefit from your support?

I believe a young peer could benefit from my support in a multitude of ways that can stem from the types of concerns and goals the individual has.



I can offer two tiers of support; the first leans on my lived experience, and the second relies on my lived experience, work experience and tertiary education. Additionally, the latter requires more research and preparation. This will enable me to offer both regular peer support and ADHD-specific support.

### **Tier one supports: Using lived experience to provide empathic support.**

- A safe space to discuss LGBTQIA+ and ADHD concerns (as I am a part of both worlds)
- Flexible peer support based on the wants and needs of the individual
- Driving to different locations to hang out or complete a fun activity together. I'm open to everything, including sports, grabbing food, playing music together, hanging out at the library or anything else that is wanted.
- Actively and empathetically listen to the peer's concerns in person or over the phone.
- Provide the peer with guidance and emotional support when requested
- Having discussions with the peer's family/ support networks to help them understand neurodiversity and mental health in general.
- Acting as a body double to provide external motivation to ADHD students.

### **Tier Two: ADHD-specific support services**

As a tertiary-educated psychology student with a plethora of knowledge and experience surrounding ADHD, I can offer the following additional services:

- ADHD study skills sessions
- Help to design and implement evidence-based routines to help guide them towards their specific long-term goals (academic, health & fitness, social, well-being etc.)
- Teach peers about different life skills and healthy coping mechanisms so that they can implement themselves when needed.
- ADHD-informed recommendations for improving daily functionality and facilitating the steps needed to achieve the improvement.
- Any other requests that go beyond using my lived experience.

I am particularly interested in helping individuals with ADHD understand why they might function differently and helping them to create strategies to achieve their long-term goals (or helping facilitate behaviour change for goal achievement generally). I am flexible in the types of support I am willing to offer and will happily discuss any requests.

**Please also provide a photo of yourself that you are happy to share publicly.**

