



# EFFECTIVELY PARTNERING WITH PEOPLE WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE OF SUICIDE

## HOW TO: adopt an approach of compassionate curiosity

To understand compassionate curiosity, it can help to define the individual words:

**Compassion** means to connect with a person's feelings and thoughts, what they are going through, on a level that says "I get you", "I've been through similar".

**Curiosity** involves gently looking for information to help you understand, without judgement, the perspectives of another.

**Compassionate curiosity** translates to the ability to seek to understand another person's perspective while withholding judgement and stepping into the shoes of the other person in an endeavour to understand how they feel and what they are thinking.

In the context of suicide and suicide prevention, compassionate curiosity is a helpful way of working with other people whose perspective may oppose your own. This is often evident in interactions between people with a lived experience of suicide and other stakeholders from traditional health settings, funders and some service deliverers. It is a key ingredient for true collaboration, co-design and co-production with people with lived experience of suicide.

People with lived experience may find adopting an approach of compassionate curiosity helpful when interacting with those who are reluctant for change or who fear the unknown, for those who know no other way of working and for those whose risk aversion prevents them from embracing a more contemporary approach to suicide prevention. People with lived experience of suicide can do this because many know what it is like to be on the downside of the balance of power and understand their discomfort. They can be leaders of change, be drivers of a new culture and graciously demonstrate meaningful integration.

Other stakeholders may find adopting compassionate curiosity an important causeway to understanding the lived experience perspectives and opening their minds to innovative, lived experience informed solutions. It supports the necessary creation of a space without judgement for people to express themselves including their very strong emotions that are born out of previous hurt and harm.

Compassionate curiosity enables people to generously educate and guide others while also seeking to learn from others.