SHE RECOVERS®
FOUNDATION

LANGUAGE, VOICE & TONE GUIDE

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Our organizational language, voice and tone have the ability to greatly impact our communications and influence how we are viewed both as an organization and as a movement. Our collective voice is rooted in a deep desire to cultivate meaningful connections with partners, friends, and fellow travelers who remind us we are always stronger together.

1. TRAUMA-INFORMED

Description

We take great care to ensure our spaces and programs are welcoming and supportive. SHE RECOVERS Foundation participates in organizational trauma-responsive training, receives guidance and mentorship from trauma-focused clinicians, and provides trauma-informed training to ensure our organization and all representatives of SRF are able to identify, understand, and acknowledge aspects of trauma and its associated manifestations.

We will…

- Reference SRF as a trauma-responsive organization
- Reference SRF offerings (facilitated by SHE RECOVERS Certified Professionals) as trauma-informed
- Self-identify with labels that feel comfortable to us

We don't…

- Label others. For example, for some the term "alcoholic" is disempowering and not reflective of their experience. They may prefer to self-identify as a person in recovery from a substance use disorder or simply as a person who lives sober / in recovery / broke up with alcohol.
- Use the term "relapse" to name a resurgence of addictive behaviors or mental health issues. We prefer the term recurrence.
- Say "this is a safe space". Safety is an individual experience.
  We can't determine what is safe for others.
- Sign off with "cheers" or other references that may have roots in substance use
- Assume everyone has the same personal philosophy and understanding of addiction / substance use disorder / substance misuse

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- Use authoritative, absolute or “power over” language such as “you must” or “you have to”
- Reference SRF or its offerings as “trauma-focused”

We might say things like…

- We co-create welcoming and supportive spaces…
- Perhaps…
- Possibly…
- You may want to…
- If you can, imagine…
- Maybe you…
- Some folks may…
- If you feel comfortable…
- We strongly encourage…

2. INVITATIONAL

Description

We foster a culture of “calling in” instead of “calling out”. We recognize that our words and actions may not always have the impact we intended. We value a spirit of “rupture and repair” when navigating conflicts and disagreements.

We will…

- Speak from a place of personal experience, using “I” statements whenever possible
- Recognize repair is a process, not a performance

We don’t…

- Predict outcomes for any person’s chosen path of recovery such as *“you’re just going to relapse if you do that”.*
- Claim to know what is best for another individual

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We might say things like…

- We invite you to consider…
- I hear you…
- We welcome you to…
- Please join us…
- We acknowledge…
- We support you to…

3. OPTIMISTIC YET REALISTIC

Description

We believe in a future where all women are celebrated and deemed essential to healthy communities. We also recognize that recovering from a myriad of life experiences is not easy. (but it is always worth it). We acknowledge the very real barriers that marginalized populations may face, including lack of access to capital (i.e. financial capital) and other factors related to age, race, sexual orientation, differences of life situations, and abilities. We are also able to see the qualities of strength, resilience, and courage folks embrace in the face of adversity. Recovery (and sharing space in a non-profit organization) can be challenging, heartbreaking, and full of stepbacks (cha-cha anyone?).

We will…

- Celebrate all recovery milestones
- Cheer people on
- Maintain a positive outlook
- Acknowledge challenges and complex emotions
- Recognize strengths in self and others and ability to overcome adversity
- Move beyond lip service - take action whenever possible, as long as appropriate
- Share hopes, dreams and big visions
- Consider if our positivity is actually toxic positivity

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We don't…

- Spiritually bypass
- Say "at least" Example: *"well at least you still have a roof over your head."*
- Encourage people to *"look on the bright side"*
- Tell people to just be grateful

We might say things like…

- We believe in you…
- We hear you…
- My hope for you is…
- The things I appreciate about you are…
- The qualities I see in you are…
- I am amazed by your ability to…

4. EMPOWERING + EMPATHIC

Description

We focus on our strengths, not our defects. This is how we change.
Our empathy is compassion in action. We listen, deeply.

We will…

- Remind people of their potential
- Encourage practicing personal agency

We don't…

- Try to fix people
- Minimize or invalidate the feelings and experiences of others
- Let our own discomfort determine how we respond.
  Example:. *"you don't have to feel that way"*

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We might say things like…

- You are holding a lot
- That sounds hard
- We're rooting for you!
- I am deeply sorry ____ is happening…
- How can I support you…
- I see your resilience / strength / courage ___ and acknowledge your struggle…
- I am rooting for you…
- Everything you are feeling is valid…

5. AUTHENTIC + RELATABLE

Description

We aren't afraid to laugh at ourselves and find humor in our "imperfectness". We embrace our humanness, and it shows. We don't shy away from being real and telling-it-like-it-is. We spare y'all the gory details because there is enough of that already on television.

We will…

- Consider who has the right to hear your / our story
- Recover out loud in a way that is true for us as outlined in the SHE RECOVERS Recover Out Loud Toolkit
- Lead with transparency and courageous vulnerability
- Laugh at ourselves

We don't…

- Go into explicit detail when speaking about triggering topics such as sexual or physical abuse, violence, suicide, death, self-injurious behavior, and/or alcohol and drug use
- Promote weight loss, cleansing, fasting, "clean" eating and/or the use of addictive substances to cope with life stressors
- Take ourselves too seriously

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- Use self-deprecating humor *if the intention is to belittle or undervalue ourselves!*

We might say things like…

- "The shit you did is just the shit you did, it's not who you are" - Dawn Nickel, PhD AKA Mama Dawn

6. INCLUSIVE

Description

We believe our diversity is our greatest strength. We welcome women and non-binary individuals who identify with women's communities. We also welcome all races, sexual orientations, and all those differences of life situation, background, and ability…*but no dudes allowed.*

We will…

- Advocate for human rights and social justice
- Prioritize the needs of marginalized populations and identity-based groups
- Research the origins of philosophies, activities, and art to avoid cultural appropriation
- Consider including Land Acknowledgements in our presentations and personal introductions
- Include our pronouns in our introductions (i.e. personal statements, email signatures)
- Adopt a spirit of progress not perfection. Say "oops - what I meant to say is…" when we mess up. It's ok to make mistakes!

We don't…

- Use exclusive greetings and terms such as:
    - Hey ladies
    - You guys
- Say things like "that's crazy" or "it's insane" to describe significant feelings and/or situations

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- Use culturally appropriated words like:
    - Tribe
    - Powwow
    - Guru
    - Ninja
- Act dismissive
- Label others
- Trauma-dump or hotwire connection
- Endorse or oppose a particular political party

We might say things like…

- Inclusive greetings and terms whenever possible such as:
    - Y'all
    - Dear ones
    - Fellow travelers
    - Friends
    - Humans
    - Lovelies
- Smash the stigma often associated with mental health and use alternative language to describe significant feelings and/or experiences such as:
    - Bananas
    - Intense
    - Crunchy
    - Unusual
    - Surprising
    - Life-altering
    - Significant
    - Ridiculous
    - Incredible

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- This simple shift in language can create a deep impact when co-creating welcoming and supportive spaces for everyone.

7. CURIOUS

Description

We choose to suspend judgment and approach every opportunity with the spirit of curiosity and contribute more than we criticize. We recognize we don't know what we don't know and that the mental health space is ever-evolving. We are committed to asking questions and doing research to better understand the opinions and experiences of others that may differ from our own. We acknowledge that there are many perspectives, models, and definitions of recovery that can vary based on economic, cultural, social, financial, physical, emotional, biological, historical, geographical, and spiritual influences.

We will…

- Are respectful of multiple perspectives, pathways, patchworks, models, and definitions of recovery
- Obtain consent when providing feedback

We don't…

- Project a negative personal experience of a particular pathway or model onto another person's recovery

We might say things like…

- I'm curious to know…
- Can you tell me more about…
- That wasn't my experience of ___ but I respect yours
- There are many paths up the mountain
- We must be supported to find and follow personalized pathways and patchworks of recovery

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