Ethics: You're Allowed to Ask

Keep this. It's the whole course in writing: the four chapters, the ideas that came up, and where they come from. The test is open-handout.

Quick thing before you start. Probably a good idea to check your own agency's ethics and boundaries first. Makes sense, right?

H.E.L.P. is a fictional agency and its people are made up. Its procedures are story conditions, not Ohio rules. This course doesn't supply a complete emergency, confidentiality, reporting or consultation policy. Your own agency's policies are the ones that count.

How the hour is built

This handout, read through once	**15 min**
The video, four chapters with Cookie and the H.E.L.P. crew	**13 min**
Your call: three practice situations	**7 min**
The test: 15 questions, 12 to pass, open-handout	**15 min**
Course evaluation and certificate	**10 min**
Total designed time	**about 1 hour**

Designed time is the course read and done the way it's laid out. How fast you move through it is up to you.

Chapter 1 · There's room to talk

Marcus is staying at the house. He found a car, he's thinking about work, and he wants to talk it through. Darren says "your journey, man," which is respectful, and Marcus is still left on his own with it. Respecting a decision and having a conversation about it can happen together.

Start with what the person wants help with

One possible opening: "What would help? I could listen, or we could look at the numbers together." Adapt it to the conversation.

Person-driven

The person's goals guide the work. It doesn't mean useful information has to leave the room. Ohio's peer support rule emphasizes partnership and informed choice, and the National Practice Guidelines connect respect for decisions with sharing information and options.

Chapter 2 · A question that can take an answer

Understand what the plan means to them

A car can mean transportation, independence, work, or something else. Tyler asks what it would change before he opens the budget. Without that, he might hear "purchase" when Marcus is talking about freedom.

Contribute useful information

Check facts. Mark estimates "not confirmed." Help the person find reliable answers instead of hiding facts inside a riddle.

Ask questions that leave room for an answer

Leaves room: "What would waiting a month change for you?"

Already has an answer: "Don't you think you should wait?"

An open question invites more than yes or no. A reflection checks whether you understood. This is communication practice, not full motivational interviewing training.

Chapter 3 · The concern on the table

State the concern clearly

Separate what you know, what you don't know, and what concerns you. Tyler: "We don't have the exact weekly amount or the due dates, and the job hasn't started. What am I missing?" That's different from "this will end badly." A concern can be worth discussing without being a prediction.

What we know	What we don't	What concerns us
the car is available	payment, dates, job	covering payments first

Keep personal experience relevant

Ask before sharing a story or advice when it fits. Share the part that helps this conversation. Tyler's repair-cost story adds a cost to consider. It doesn't tell Marcus what his car will do.

Revisit a concern for a reason

New information, changed circumstances, or the person's own request can make another conversation useful. Ask yourself: did something change, is there new information, does the person want to revisit it, or am I repeating myself because I want a different answer?

Safety, privacy and role

Immediate life-threatening emergency: call 911 and follow emergency procedures. Don't wait for a routine supervision meeting.
Risk unclear: get timely help through the appropriate process. You don't have to make a clinical call yourself.
Confidentiality: follow the rules that apply to your work, including when you consult someone. Explain relevant limits early. Don't promise absolute secrecy.
Contract or driving question: it may need an official source or qualified legal help.

Asking permission before advice is a communication tool. It doesn't cancel an emergency response or another real duty.

Chapter 4 · Still useful when they choose differently

The video shows two possibilities. Marcus waits, or Marcus buys. Neither one is the "right" ending. In both, Tyler keeps being useful.

- **Marcus waits.** Tyler recognizes the work Marcus did: checking information, comparing options, deciding.
- **Marcus buys.** Agreement isn't the price of ordinary support. Tyler keeps helping with the job search, within his role and the limits of his service.
- **If it doesn't work out.** Talk about what happened and what he wants now. A setback gives you information. It isn't a verdict.

We don't have to arrive with the perfect answer to be useful. Sometimes we bring information. Sometimes a relevant experience. Sometimes a question that helps both people notice something.

Which kind of guidance is this?

Ohio rules, national practice guidelines, communication tools and personal experience are different sources. A suggested phrase isn't a legal requirement. National guidelines don't replace applicable law or credential requirements. H.E.L.P.'s procedures are fiction.

Sources

1. Ohio Administrative Code, Rule 5122-29-15, peer support services (partnership, informed choice, individualized recovery goals, crisis assistance).
2. International Association of Peer Supporters, National Practice Guidelines for Peer Specialists and Supervisors (2019).
3. SAMHSA, Core Competencies for Peer Workers in Behavioral Health Services.

The sample conversations and wording in this course are original teaching examples, not quotations from these sources. The stories told by Cookie and Taco are fictional teaching examples. No CEU approval, credit-hour or certification claim is made here.