

Overview: Effective Peer Support for Effective Altruism (EA)

What is the problem?

Mental illness impedes clear thinking, productivity, and relationships—all of which would allow for agency and flourishing. Given the usual or even increased prevalence among EAs ([Our World in Data, 2021](#); [Slate Star Codex, 2020](#)) and around 35% productivity loss for affected individuals (e.g., [Beck et al., 2011](#)), the movement loses 5 to 10% of its productivity and likely impact. With 7,400 Highly Engaged EAs, this reflects a workforce loss of around 400 people. Half of the affected EAs report an unmet need for mental health support ([Mental Health Navigator & Willbanks, 2019](#)). The special effects of working in X risk and reducing suffering require tailored services, and with the effects of the AIS, FTX and image crisis, psychosocial support for EAs is now needed more than ever.

How will Effective Peer Support help the future of humanity?

Guided Self-Help and Digital Therapeutics have proven to be cost-effective and scalable solutions that can help relieve overwhelmed care providers. Meta-analyses show that when guided online by trained laypersons (i.e., peers), they are just as effective and engaging as professional one-on-one therapy while costing a fraction ([Baumeister et al., 2014](#)). The beauty of this is that a peer guide requires only to be trained once to deliver a diverse portfolio of digital interventions. Also, building strong peer relationships and feeling social support independently strengthens engagement as well as mental health itself ([Pfeiffer et al., 2011](#); [Harandi et al., 2017](#)).

We test established guidance frameworks, such as peer counseling and support groups, and combine these with proven digital content and tools such as [Moodgym](#), CCI Self-help, or ACT audiobooks. This way, we aim to develop a system that improves mental resilience in the EA community at scale. Using these levers, we estimate the cost-effectiveness of our programs to become larger than those of StrongMinds.

What we did so far

In Dec, Jan, and Feb we created this [Helper Table](#) and a [Support Network Slack \(EA forum announcement\)](#), developed and piloted the first simple versions of Effective Peer Support. **More than 300 EAs** working in all cause areas have signed up for our service, mainly after one [EA forum announcement](#) [read by 1.173 people]. We matched some of them by similar preferences and goals to 4 groups in an evidence-based way. Then, we ran theme-based groups (procrastination, perfectionism, value-aligned living, inner conflict) with different evidence-based treatment approaches (CBT, ACT, IFS). The groups ran for 5 weeks.

Quantitative results with 15 participants (4 groups):

We measured by standardized psychological questionnaires and with the help of anonymous forms:

- Participants significantly increased in psychological well-being pre-post ($p < 0.05$)
 - Productivity, perfectionism, and self-leadership increased in the correspondingly themed groups
 - Our programs were rated as either “Good” or “Excellent” by all participants.
- 3/ 5 groups decided to keep meeting regularly.

Qualitative results: What our participants said, e.g. (you can ask for more quotes):

- *“Awesome group. So much trust and support. Facilitator was super awesome as well”*
- *“I acquired some tools which I can use anytime, anywhere under emotional distress or just to feel generally better about my life.”*
- *“Materials were great and set a good foundation [...]”*

What tangible goals can we achieve in the following months until the end of Oct?

- Test last uncertainties and iterate our programs once more based on the pilot programs
- Run a RCT with productivity + mental health program, with >50 people + super-facilitators, train facilitators
- create a scaling strategy to transfer the concept to other communities in demand, such as students
- Lab: explore other scalable product opportunities

Who are the charity and people behind?

We are called “Rethink Wellbeing” and are a team of experts, including a former psychology professor, experienced EA-aligned psychotherapists, engaged psychology graduates, around >70 signed-up facilitators so far, and a large team of supporters (more details on our [website](#)). Our mission is to bring people into their best, mentally resilient, and productive shape, first EAs, then the world. We aim to do so by offering psychological training and support.

What is the funding situation?

With Effective Peer Support, we were among the 4% finalists of 630 applicants for the Clearer Thinking Regrant Program [6 reference checks, 24-page application]. A few days before receiving the funding the FTX bankruptcy happened, but we got replacement funding via some generous donors which will last until the end of July.

Your donations will enable us to extend the runway, to help more people quicker and with higher quality.

We aim to raise an **additional \$ 100k** by 31. July 2023. **Every \$ counts**¹.

¹ For example, with \$1.000 we could:

- reimburse the materials (third-party audiobook, workbook, or online course) for 30 program participants who cannot afford it themselves (about 1-2 out of 5) or
- pay 2 experienced facilitators to host another group to help 4-6 participants each. These pilot groups with experienced facilitators help us to optimize the concepts so that they can later be led by peers themselves, or

