

# QPR training interview Transcript

## Attendees

Casey , Kemi , Lindsay

## Transcript

**Kemi :**

**Kemi :** Hello everyone, I am here today with two amazing community members here in Reading, PA and we are going to discuss this new QPR training that they have begun doing in our community.

**Kemi :** So without further ado, would you like to introduce yourselves?

**Lindsay :** Hi! My name is Lindsay and I have the opportunity to work with Kemi, which has been amazing, and I serve as the program director for [Youth Volunteer Corps of Reading](#).

**Kemi :** Thank you.

**Casey :** Hello everyone, my name is Casey Traxxler and I work alongside of Lindsay and want to thank Kemi for giving us the opportunity to share our work with the larger community, and I'm excited.

**Kemi :** Thank you both!

**Kemi :** So without further ado, can you start by explaining what QPR training is and what it aims to accomplish?

**Lindsay :** So QPR stands for question, persuade, and refer. It is three very simple, yet powerful steps that anybody can take to help learn how to save a life from suicide. So QPR is essentially designed to increase one's ability to recognize suicidal thoughts and behaviors and then to refer the person who is at risk to a professional resource. So again, three simple steps and anybody is able to take this training.

**Kemi :** That's amazing. What motivated you to become QPR trainers? How did you get started?

**Casey :** So, both of our degrees, both Lindsay and I, come from mental health backgrounds. We both studied mental health in college and had careers previously that were directly involved in the mental health field. So we're both very, very passionate about this cause, and then through Youth Volunteer Corps, we are a youth-driven youth-led organization and our kids that are engaged in YBC continued to come to us identifying mental health as a major concern and the desire to do something about it. So Lindsay and I went through the program to become trainers so that we could provide our youth with the tools necessary to create change within their communities.

**Kemi :** That's really awesome and great that you get to work with the youth in our communities through YVC as well. Lindsay, you mentioned before how QPR stands for question, persuade, and refer, but how else is it different from mental health or suicide prevention trainings?

**Lindsay :** So I think one of the things that's super unique about QPR is that it can be done very quickly. So a lot of the other mental health trainings are pretty robust in nature and that could be 8 hours; it could be a multitude of days, where QPR is typically done around an hour and a half to two hours. And I think what's super special about it is that it's very empowering. So you know, like I said earlier, anybody can be trained in QPR. It is super simple, and it fits into time frames that people have, right? And these other trainings, they're incredible. I would highly encourage anybody who is either interested in mental health or has plans of going into the field of mental health to look into further trainings, but if you're really looking for something that is quick and it is simple and it is proven effective, QPR is definitely the way to go.

**Kemi :** Have you guys taken any other trainings that you would recommend in addition to QPR?

**Casey :** Yes. Both Lindsay and I have Be There Certificate training online which we found to be extremely engaging. It's not just reading and learning through reading that text. It's interactive, and the way that the material is presented is very attractive to various audiences.

**Casey :** So, we've also encouraged our Youth Volunteer Corps Mental Health Ambassadors to also participate in that training because it is appealing across those audiences.

**Kemi :** Yeah, there's definitely so many skills amongst all these trainings. What would you say are the most important skills or tools that people can take away from QPR training?

**Casey :** I think that QPR training gives the audience clear direction through those three simple steps and then you also walk away, as a participant, you walk away with a small reference guide that you can look back on to look at indicators or refresh yourself on the steps that you should take as well as national resources that you can give to someone. So, this is super helpful in high-stress situations.

**Casey :** I think that definitely sets QPR apart from other trainings in those tangible resources. Because when we're dealing with or supporting an individual that is having suicidal ideations, it's not something that comes naturally to everyone. Yet, we can all play a part in supporting that individual. And I think that a resource guide really helps boost that level of confidence to provide the support necessary.

**Kemi :** Thank you, that was a great answer. I love to hear how tangible and realistic these things are for people that want to take this training. So I've heard that you've delivered QPR to a wide range of people even at our international summit conference. Can you share some of the audiences you've worked with and how they've responded?

**Lindsay :** So, we have had the opportunity to train a wide variety of audiences, middle school students around the county, where Casey and I live, also high school students, ranging from the county in which we live to across the United States and Canada through the National Youth Volunteer Corps. So we were fortunate enough to go to the National Summit and there be able to train both youth and adults in QPR. School personnel, school safety officers, community members, community organizations, grandparents, caregivers, so Casey and I are really getting in front of any population. If somebody is reaching out and they're interested in gaining more information, if they're interested in suicide prevention, we're going to go out and train them. So, we've trained middle schoolers, we've trained grandparents, and then kind of a wide variety of demographics in between.

**Kemi :** Have any groups responded differently? Do youth respond differently than adults?

**Casey :** Yes, I would say they definitely have responded differently.

**Casey** : It's so interesting because the youth tend to be a little more inquisitive and talk about scenarios and they have situational questions that they want to process with you. Where we've noticed that adults tend to be a little more, they internalize a little bit more and they talk to you about maybe things that they've observed and questions about observable things, but they're not as open to what they maybe have experienced and want to process that with you, where youth are definitely more engaging in that way.

**Kemi** : I feel like we see that in a lot of mental health sectors, but of course it's wonderful that people of all ages want to learn. My next question is, have you witnessed the impact of QPR training in the community?

**Lindsay** : Yeah, I think we have, across the spectrum. We're having conversations that a lot of times people feel very uncomfortable having. We're saying the word suicide, we're talking about suicide, which is a huge barrier for a lot of people. So, I think just opening up these conversations and having youth be able to go home and talk to their families and talk to their grandparents. And then on the flip side, having grandparents being able to go and ask questions of the youth. And I think what is so important is that we're opening up the line of communication. We are saying the word. We are talking about it in a way that offers hope, that provides support. So I think that has been one of the biggest pieces of this is that we're just talking about it and we're talking about it in a way that is safe, in a way that is practical and in a way that a grandparent can comprehend and in the same way a 17-year-old can comprehend. So yeah, I think that's definitely been one of the biggest impacts that we've seen.

**Casey** : And also just to add to what Lindsay was saying too, we have been doing two trainings a month at a local high school and we've been training youth at that high school. And last time I was there for the training, I was waiting for my co-facilitator to arrive, and as I was standing there in the main office area, a lot of teachers on hall duty were stopping to talk to me, including the school resource officer or school police officer. and they were very interested to know why we were there and who we were training and after sharing that information with them, they had a different level of appreciation for the kids that were going to be attending that training; they were admiring the fact that they were going to be in attendance. And then they took it a step further and also expressed, "Man, I wish we had the opportunity to attend that training along with the kids!" So I think the level of appreciation, too, with community members has definitely been apparent. And I think that should be celebrated as well because it's important to recognize that positive outlook on these trainings.

**Kemi** : Wow, that's so cool that people were approaching. And Lindsay, thank you so much for stressing the fact that even though these conversations are difficult, they're so important to have. I mean, conversation is how we begin talking about solutions and actions that we can take. And thank you both for giving this training at schools, too. That's so amazing. My next question is in what ways can people without formal training still support mental health awareness and suicide prevention?

**Lindsay** : So, I mean, I think that's oftentimes a barrier in seeking out these trainings or, attending these trainings is like, I'm not a professional, I'm not trained in this. This is going to go so far over my head, and that's so far from the truth. So for individuals who have no formal training on mental health, QPR is a great place for them to start because it's simple, it's easy, and it's really just creating this culture of support and understanding and conversation. So, formal training is in no way needed to become QPR certified. And again, I think that's one of the coolest things about it.

**Casey** : And also I think just as a community, it's important to recognize that we're all in this together.

**Casey** : And trainings aside, I think just humanizing one another, being there for each other, being supportive, recognizing that everybody has different struggles that they are experiencing, and just being accepting of everyone is so very important for mental health.

**Casey** : So aside of trainings, I think we all just need to take care of each other and be there.

**Kemi** : I completely agree. I feel like our connections are the best things we have and as you guys said, QPR training is a great place to start, but also supporting each other is invaluable. How can people get involved in their communities with QPR training, supporting each other, or just finding similar resources in their areas?

**Casey** : So, if you're in Berks County, obviously you can reach out to us. We are local trainers, so we could certainly provide QPR training to you if you are in need. However, if you are outside of our little bubble, you can go to the [QPR Institute website](#) and you can learn about upcoming training sessions or there is the option to search for trainers by specific location. We have been requested, if you will, through the QPR Institute website by individuals in Berks County that are looking for the training but don't know that we exist. so the QPR Institute does a phenomenal job of connecting you with trainers in your region.

**Casey** : You can also look into [NAMI, National Alliance on Mental Illness](#) to see if they are in your community and they also offer resources and training to those in need. And then we also have our Youth Mental Health Ambassador Initiative. If you are a youth, we do have virtual meetings as well as in-person meetings. But if you are a youth that is passionate about mental health, we welcome you to join-minded youth that are putting in the work.

**Kemi** : Thank you so much for that information. That's so interesting how people can search a database to find trainers near them and join our local initiatives. Though I doubt it, if anyone is still on the fence about taking this, or similar trainings, what would you say to them?

**Lindsay** : I think to kind of, piggyback off of what Casey said a moment ago, mental health is everywhere, everybody is struggling in some capacity. and youth especially, are coming to us and saying we're struggling, but our friends are struggling, and we don't know how to help them, and our parents are coming from a different place so we're not connecting that way. So I think this training again just allows you to have these conversations, allows you to empathize with others, and hopefully can begin to bridge that gap. Because that's what's happening, we're coming from different perspectives with different life experiences, and and we're missing each other.

**Lindsay** : So just to kind of foster that sense of understanding and support and care and concern and to also remember, like I just said, everybody is struggling in some capacity, and the professionals just can't meet the demand. So there are way more individuals in need of services than there are services, so by being trained in QPR, you can recognize the warning signs, how to intervene, how to refer and who to refer. And you're really helping to bridge the gap. So it's incredibly important, I think, not only for your mental health, but for the mental health of those around you.

**Kemi** : Yeah, thank you so much. Just to wrap up here,...Is there anything else you'd like to share about QPR, its importance, or the role of the community in suicide prevention?

**Casey** : I think it's also important to note that QPR training has manipulated the material to reach different audiences.

**Casey** : So, for example, Lindsay and I deliver the in-school training to the high school students that we go and visit twice a month. yet our community organizations that are requesting this training, there's a different QPR training for adults. So we match the needs of our audience, the training does, which I think is very attractive. It's not trying to fit a square peg into a round hole, if you will. The material is adapted to meet the needs of the audience for QPR.

**Casey** : But aside from QPR, I just want to highlight that reinforcing respect and kindness within the community is so very important, and I think we all play a very important role in that. So whether we're QPR trained or not, it's important to recognize warning signs in our community and step in. And if you aren't QPR trained, that's okay. Still, be there for that individual and let them know that you see them, they are being heard, and just treat them how you would want to be treated. So, yes, everyone should get QPR trained, but if you don't have that available to you in the immediate future, I just want to reinforce that you can still be a positive community member and you still can make a difference.

**Kemi** : That is a wonderful message, thank you for sharing that. I know you are looking forward to a bunch more QPR sessions in the future. So, my final question is, what is one thing you hope each person leaves with after a QPR training session?

**Lindsay** : So, I think I can speak to both Casey and myself on this, and that's leaving feeling empowered, maybe feeling a little less unafraid of talking about suicide, of saying the word suicide. We hope that they leave with a better understanding, because one of the things that Casey and I do in the very beginning of the training is kind of debunk the myths; this is what suicide is said to be but it's not. Debunking myths and giving those that are in our trainings a sense of feeling empowered and you are not a professional, and maybe you don't have formal training, but you have a voice you matter. You're having conversations that are very, very, very difficult, and as a result you're going to save a life.

**Lindsay** : So, I think it's just reinforcing that message that your voice matters. You now are hopefully equipped with further information. So, let's figure out how we go out and use it.

**Kemi** : Thank you so much, both of you, for your insightful answers.

**Kemi** : I hope that everyone listening has learned something you can take away. And I encourage everyone listening to find a local training whether it's QPR or [Be There Certificate](#), or something else to support yourself and help you support others. All right. Thank you both!

**Casey**: Thank you, Kemi!

**Lindsay** : Thank you so much, Kemi!