



“Korero Mai, What’s On & Whakaaro Pai” 17—JULY 2011

A newsletter for those interested in the provision of services for people with experience of mental illness, articles from Service Users/Tangata Whaiora and “What’s On” - promoting educational and recreational activities for under \$5.00 per event.

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Coming Events: July, 2011:

- Wednesdays: Real Artz 10-3pm at Real Tart—Gold Coin only
- Thursdays: “Mental Health Matters”—Access Radio 104.4FM 9.30am. Tune in—Hosted by Like Minds Taranaki
- Mon 4th: Public Presentations by TDHB & Like Minds, 5.15pm at the Baptist Church, NP—plus supper!
- Tue 5th: Networkers Mtg. 10am—noon, Taranaki DHB A&D—main meeting room**
- Thur 7th: Inter-cultural Awareness and communication for Employers, at Venture Taranaki 10-2pm
- Wed 13th: Focus Group—10.30-12pm at TDIC—all welcome
- Wed 20th: Positive Ageing Forum—10-noon at NPDC discussing “Emergency Planning” - all welcome.
- Thur 21st: Creative Writer’s Meeting 2pm at Like Minds
- Thur 21st: S&C Tara. Social Services Networking Group at Opunake Health Centre, 10.30am
- W/F 27-29th: Unmasking Violence Conference—Hawera Community Centre. Email: hrcfc@xtra.co.nz
- Thur 28th: “Mates” Outreach 2.30pm at Progress to Health



Editorial: WITT financial breakthrough...

In less than five years, WITT has gone from an organisation in turmoil to a leading, financially sound, institution—with a great future.

And if this year’s graduation ceremony is anything to go by, you could only describe WITT as a dynamic, successful, multi-cultured and multi-faceted Polytech.

What a turnaround. It was ably led by Chief Executive, Richard Handley, his Board and dedicated staff. But the ceremony was all about the graduating students—all 298 of them.

Sex stereotyping ruled OK...

10 of 12 Bachelor of Social Sc. students were female.
 All 18 Bachelor of Nursing students were female.
 All 14 of the Nat. Dip. in Social Work were female.
 All grads in the Dip. in Health Studies were female.

But the tables turn when it came to engineering...

All but 4 of the 51 graduates in the NZ Diploma in Civil Eng. were men.
 All 7 grads in the Dip. Highway Eng. were men.

Multiculturalism ruled in the Culinary field...

51 of the 61 graduates in the Diploma in Professional Cookery were from overseas.

Graduates in Maori Studies stole the show...

26 graduated in Te Tohu Mohiotanga (Dip. In Maori Language—Level 5)
 39 graduated in the Nat. Dip. in Maori Performing Arts (Tutoring) (Level 6)
 17 graduated in Pokairua Hopuapua Reo (Dip. in Oral Taranaki Language—Level 6)

Keynote speaker Marcus Akuhata-Brown gave an inspirational address inspiring all in the packed theatre. Student representative Paula King’s moving vote of thanks on behalf of the graduating students was also exceptional.

Like Minds Taranaki donates 1% of their annual budget to provide awards for graduating students.

Watch out next year, when the first graduates from the Mental Health Support Worker’s Certificate strut their stuff. That will be a celebration for the mental health sector.

Countering Stigma and Discrimination....

a responsibility we all share...

Stigmatisation of people with experience of mental illness is created by bias, prejudice, distrust, fear, stereotyping, embarrassment, ignorance, anger or avoidance.

Stigma leads others to avoid living, working, socialising, renting, employing and supporting people with experience of mental illness.

It impacts on people's abilities to access resources and opportunities in their communities.

It can lead to low self-esteem, isolation and a sense of hopelessness.

It deters the public and politicians from adequately resourcing mental health services and mental health promotion.

More tragically, it can deprive people of their dignity and their participation in their communities of interest.

Stigma demonstrates a lack of understanding, compassion and information of mental illness and the people it affects.

When people who already have to face the challenge of recovering from mental illness are avoided, deprived of employment, housing, close relationships, and participating in their communities, the impacts can be devastating.

Stigma can lead people to feel flawed, ostracised, unneeded and unwanted.

It can, at its worst, lead those who need help the most towards social isolation, depression and suicide.

"One of the biggest barriers to recovery is discrimination. That is why stopping discrimination and championing respect, rights and equality for people with mental illness is just as important as providing the best treatments and therapies."

Blueprint for Mental Health Services in New Zealand, November, 1998.

For those facing mental illness, it can be a matter of life and death that we succeed.

Definitions:

Stigma refers to attitudes and beliefs that motivate people to fear, reject and avoid those who are labelled with a mental illness.

Stigma also affects those who provide practical support to people with experience of mental illness and even those paid to provide professional medical care – making the mental health field unattractive to many nursing and medical staff and to some GPs.

Discrimination can have even more far reaching effects.

Discrimination occurs when people and organisations act upon their feelings of rejection and discomfort about people with mental illness. The result may be a withholding of some basic human rights that people with experience of mental illness and those who care for them, rights which are enjoyed by the rest of society.

Internalised or self-stigma...

People of all ages experiencing mental illness are at risk of internalising stigma and, consequently suffering diminished self-esteem, confidence and shame.

This low self-esteem—of feeling unwanted and un-needed—can affect a person's self-belief, confidence and motivation and prevent them seeking appropriate mental and physical health care, employment, closer relationships, or independent living.

This avoidance of treatment, social opportunities and employment further exacerbates their mental distress and can lead to lower levels of recovery.

Fear of stigma and discrimination can lead people to lose their self-confidence, becoming more socially isolated and defensive.

Such are the potential negative effects of self stigma that

they can lead to increased misuse of alcohol and/or other drugs and potentially increased risks of financial problems, relationship issues, justice issues, depression, self-harm and suicide.

Suicide is the most tragic outcome of mental illness and is integrally connected to internalised stigma.

Societal messages that one is devalued, unloved and with little hope of a brighter future can become the person's reality, resulting in a sense of total despair.

Two of the most powerful and effective strategies to combat self-stigma and self-discrimination are empowerment and recovery.

Mental health recovery is never easy. It is often more of a journey of healing and transformation, towards again living a life of meaning and enjoyment.

Such are the potential negative effects of self stigma that they can lead to increased misuse of alcohol and/or other drugs and potentially increased risks of financial problems, relationship issues, justice issues, depression, self-harm and suicide.

Public Presentation by Taranaki DHB MH & A Services and Like Minds Taranaki...

5.15 pm at the Baptist Church, Liardet Street, New Plymouth Monday 4th July.

Dr Samir Heble: Stress - how to cope...

followed by a practical breathing meditation for all attendees

Wayne Morris: Creativity and mental well-being...

For more information—contact Like Minds Taranaki—put it in your diary...

Networkers Meeting...

10-12 noon—5th July '11
TDHB A&D Meeting Room

Speakers:

Debbie Whittle:
CEP in Taranaki

Suzanne Wallace:
Salvation Army Bridge
Programme Leader

Dr Samir Heble

Some parting thoughts for the future of Mental Health Services in Taranaki

And a chance to farewell Dr Heble before he leaves for Western Australia...

Plus member's catch up...

Any apologies — to Gordon at Like Minds Taranaki 06-759-0966
mental.health@xtra.co.nz

Look forward to seeing you...

Settlement Support hosts... Intercultural Awareness & Communication Workshop for Employers...

Facilitator—Margaret Smith
Thursday, 7th July, 10am– 2pm

At Venture Taranaki Board Room

Registration required via
Geetha Kutty,
Settlement Support Coordinator
06-759-1088 or ssnp@xtra.co.nz
Please register asap

This workshop is all about improving communications with people of different cultures leading to effective workplace interaction.



FOR LEASE

Workwise has moved, creating an opportunity. 140m. Reasonable rent. Great location for offices, 17A Brougham St, good natural light, with 2 meeting rooms and secure car-parking. Ph 769 5636 or 027 676 5994

Taylor Made Training... SAD BLOKES

An Introductory workshop on Men, Depression & Suicide

9am— 4.30pm—Friday 15th July

Autolodge Motor Inn,
393 Devon St—NP

\$125 (GST incl.) Lunch provided.
Organisations can be invoiced.

Facilitator—Barry Taylor
Barry has worked in suicide prevention for 24 years at local, national and international levels.

Men are over represented in measures of poor health including depression and suicide. Learn to understand the social and cultural contexts in which men frame and make sense of their depression.

To register:
bp.taylor@vodaphone.co.nz

Clinical Governance in the Mental Health Sector...

Anne Ridgeway-Ellis, Manager, Community Services, invited a number of people to contribute to what is planned to bring this critical but often misunderstood concept to be transformed into a unified, clearly understood, efficient process.

Not that a wide range of groups and committees weren't doing their thing—more because there appears to be no clear shared understanding of what clinical governance is and there probably won't be until all disciplines and all sectors are in agreement.

No easy task as too many, are doing too much, with minimal cross fertilisation. It is so 'compartmentalised' that there are 'silos within silos'.

So, hopefully, in time, we can begin to look forward to the development of a shared understanding of clinical governance and a unified plan on how we can improve clinical services and developing the skill base to ensure that this knowledge becomes a natural part of service delivery.

The breath of life.

*I breathe in calm
And breathe out peace.
Every breath filling me in with an exquisite moment.
A new life that adorns my being in a colourful drape.
I begin to play with unbridled gaiety
In this ecstatic paradise.
Like the ever curious child
I explore the impermanent moment
With incessant vim and vigour.
I discover its varied contours
And seek its hidden crevices
My cluttered mind
Undresses herself of unwanted wear
And basks in the purity and the simplicity of the Now.
And as I take in my next fresh breath of life
I marvel at its profundity
At its complexity, depth and wisdom
At its untainted spirit
And rejoice knowing
That every breath is a new breath
And every moment, a grand moment.*

Dr Samir Heble

(poem based on the essence of Mindfulness)

New Crisis Team Free Number is here...

Ring: 0508ASSIST or 0508 277 478

Notice a change in format to this newsletter?

Like Minds Taranaki would like to thank Sapna Heble for not only reviewing our IT system and our website but also our newsletter format—and suggesting changes for the better.

A big thank-you Sapna.

Access Radio Taranaki... "Mental Health Matters"

Hosted by Like Minds Taranaki every Thursday, 9.30am, 104.4FM

7th and 14th July:

WITT MH Support Workers Certificate with

Kathleen Mary and students

21st and 28th July:

Family/Whanau Advisors—roles and responsibilities with

Kathleen Mary and Sue Philipson

Tune in and check it out...



Supported by the TSB Community Trust

Issue 48— Compiled BY people on limited incomes FOR people on limited incomes... Please place on a notice board somewhere where people on limited incomes will notice it...

JULY 2011

- Till 31st Dec** **Te Henui Vicarage**—288 Courtenay St—Saturdays and Sundays 1-4pm. The New Plymouth Potters Club members display their works at the historic Te Henui Vicarage Gallery. View the historic residence of the first vicar of the parish of St Mary's and Holy Trinity churches. Built in 1843, it is one of the oldest buildings in New Zealand. **FREE**
- Till 17th July** **War Brides: Leap of Faith Exhibition**—Level 2, North Wing, Puke Ariki. This exhibition reflects on the joys and sorrows that followed wartime romances, and the 'leap of faith' involved in following love to a distant land. **FREE**
- Till 31st July** **Stranger Than Fiction Exhibition**—Main Exhibition Gallery—Puke Ariki. A display of the unusual, the unexplained and the uncommon from Puke Ariki's collection which allows YOU to make up your own explanation or story for each piece. Grab a blank label and let your imagination run wild and pin your label up next to your chosen item—as many as you want! **FREE**
- Till 28th Aug** **The Pressure of Sunlight Falling**—Photography Exhibit by Fiona Pardington—Govett-Brewster Art Gallery. A series of large photographs depicting life casts made by medical scientist and phrenologist Pierre-Marie Dumoutier during a South Pacific voyage between 1837 and 1840.
- 7th & 14th July** **Mental Health Matters Radio Show**—Access Radio Taranaki 104.4FM—9:30am—These sessions discuss the WITTMH Support Workers Certificate with Kathleen Mary. **FREE**
- Sun 3rd July** **Family Fun Hour**—Govett-Brewster Art Gallery—11:30am. Explore current exhibitions in a lively and interactive art trail. Young children please bring an adult. **FREE**
- Mon 4th July** **Mental Health Public Presentation**—Baptist Church, Liardet St.—5:15pm. TDHB MH & A Services and Like Minds Taranaki present speakers Dr Samir Heble talking about 'Stress and how to cope' followed by a breathing meditation and Wayne Morris who will be giving a talk on 'Creativity and mental well being' with a light supper to follow. **FREE**

"The difference between perseverance and obstinacy is that one often comes from a strong will, and the other from a strong won't" ...Henry Ward Beecher

- Mon, Wed, Fri** **Boxfit Taranaki Classes**—50 Rimu St—5:30pm. Bring a towel and water. **\$2**
- Mon & Thur** **Yoga at the Women's Centre**—Every Mon at 5:15 pm and every Thur at 10:30am. **\$5**
- Every Tue** **Tai Chi at the Women's Centre**—Community House 32 Leach St.—1:30pm **\$5**
- Every Wed** **Table Tennis**—Westend School Hall, Bonithon Ave—7:30-9:30pm. Members **\$1** Casual **\$2** BYO bat or the club do have some spares to play with—a great way to keep fit and be social!
- Every Wed** **Real Artz**—10am-3pm at Real TArt Community Gallery—a great opportunity for people with experience of mental illness or other disabilities, to participate in art and craft. Call Gordon on 759 0966 or Sarah on 769 5717 **GOLD COIN**
- Every Fri** **Creative Space** – Art and craft for people with a disability—83 Hine St, 9am-4pm. **GOLD COIN**
- Every Fri** **Whizzy Walkers**— Meet at Plunket House at 10am. A walking group which has been formed specifically for caregivers who would like to join others in a brisk walk with their child and buggy for about an hour - a great way to make new friends while staying active. **FREE**
- Every Fri** **Zumba Fitness Classes** —Waitara Memorial Hall — **WAITARA**—6:30-7:30pm. Fitness class with a Latin flavour. Get fit while having lots of fun! Concessions available. **\$5**

"What's On" is emailed to over 300 organisations in Taranaki and sent on to 100s more via their email networks and displayed on many notice boards etc. It has become quite wide-reaching and could be worthwhile for you to consider using it to promote your educational and/or recreation activity – if it is free or \$5 or less.



Puke Ariki—Stranger Than Fiction Workshops—Based on this wonderful exhibit and held in the Education Room at Puke Ariki on the Saturdays in July at 10am. Bookings are essential through the i-SITE at Puke Ariki, phone to book on 06 759-0897. All workshops are **FREE**

9th July—**Writing for Pleasure and Publication**—No experience needed! With author David Hill.

16th July—**Icky things in Jars**—Your chance to make something weird and gooey to show in a jar.

23rd July—**Museum Madness**—Make your own extraordinary object!

30th July—**Icky things in Jars**—Another chance to make something weird and gooey to show.

Thur 21st Jul Creative Writers Support Group (WHIM) - Every 3rd Thursday of the every month. 2-3pm at Like Minds Taranaki, 3rd Floor BNZ Building. 759 0966 for more details. Fun, friendly & **FREE**

21st&28th July Mental Health Matters Radio Show—Access Radio Taranaki 104.4FM—9:30am—These two sessions discuss the roles and responsibilities of Family/Whanau Advisors with Kathleen Mary and Sue Philipson. **FREE**

School Holidays—Term 2 ends **Friday 15th July** and Term 3 starts Mon **1st August**. Check out your local libraries for events to keep the children occupied over the school holidays. For more information on events contact **Puke Ariki** on 06 759 6060. And while you are there don't forget to sign up for a free membership to the library....a great opportunity to become inspired or just to soak up the ambience of this wonderful resource. **Govett-Brewster Art Gallery** is another great place to take the kids—take in the variety of exhibitions there or go and experience one or more of the wonderful events that take place there for **FREE** Open daily from 10am—5pm—contact 06 759 6060 for more information on the events taking place over the holidays. **FREE**

Move It Or Lose It! – Keeping fit for the over 50's – exercise to music. Classes cater for most ages and fitness levels. Contact Sonia 759 8918 or Diana 753 3333. First class free! **\$2**

CCAC – Free computing. Level 1, 36 Devon St West. Train at times to suit you. One to one for beginners and Intermediate level work at your own pace. **FREE**

'Mental Health Matters' - Access Radio 104.4FM—9:30—10am. Every Thursday. Like Minds Taranaki are the hosts of this show discussing a wide range of special interest topics and topical events. Contact us: 759 0966 if you have any queries.concerning issues raised. **FREE**

Zumba Gold—A fun dance based class suitable for those over 50, pregnant mums or those who have physical limitation. With classes in the Ngamotu, Merrilands and Fitzroy areas there is bound to be one happening near you... Contact Carolyn on 751 3732 or 021 101 371 or email her at ccslatinfitness@slingshot.co.nz for more details on times and places. **\$5**

Support Group— Theatre Lounge, Hawera Community Centre, Albion Street, **HAWERA**—10am—12pm. Meeting fortnightly, this group is for those who suffer or have suffered from anxiety and depression. It's a chance to share and help support others in a relaxed environment. For more information contact Tom Gibson 06 7646417. Tea and coffee provided. **FREE**

Touched By Suicide Support Group—Meets every third Thursday of the month from 7pm-9pm. Held at 83 Hine St this group is led by trained facilitators and offers care, understanding and support to anyone affected by the loss of a loved one through suicide. Any further enquiries phone Jo on 021 027 369 35 or Tiaki on 06 757 9300. **FREE**

South Taranaki Touched By Suicide Support Group—Meets the first Thursday of the month from 7pm-9pm in the Theatre Lounge at the Community Centre in Albion St, **HAWERA** Any further enquiries phone Jo on 021 027 369 35 or Tiaki on 06 757 9300. **FREE**

Post Natal Support Group – 1st & 3rd Wed of each month at the Women's Centre 10-12pm. For more information phone Like Minds Taranaki on 06 759 0966. **FREE**

MATES Men's Meeting—Groups held at Taiohi Oranga (Social Services House) 45 Regent St, **HAWERA** on the 1st and 3rd Thursday of the month 7pm-9:30pm and at TDIC, 28 Young St, **NP** on the 2nd and last Thursday of the month 7-9:30pm. There is also a group aimed at men living with the challenge of mental health issues and held on the last Thursday of every month at Progress To Health, 15 Dawson St, NP, 2—4pm. **FREE**

Bipolar Condition Support Group—A friendly, informal small group meeting weekly in part of the old Barrett St Hospital on Wednesday evenings from 7-8pm. If interested please contact either Darren on 758 8918 or Kathryn on 751 1390. **FREE**

This space could be used to promote one of your events, please contact Stephanie Mapley at Like Minds Taranaki

We are very keen to hear of events from Central, Coastal and South Taranaki - ring us on 0800-454-536

The next "What's On" will be in late July for August let us know what is different, fun & almost free...



National Depression Initiative...

continues to provide a suite of support options for those experiencing depression.

This includes the National Depression Helpline (0800-111-757); the youth focused interactive website www.thelowdown.co.nz and the www.depression.org.nz website which contains "The Journal", a self-managed programme for people experiencing depression.

The Helpline support services are being well utilized. By the end of April 2011, 15,509 New Zealanders had registered for "The Journal" with 90% of those completing the programme.

"The Journal" is promoted at any suicide prevention or mental health workshop/seminar where possible.

The Nutter's Club...

Mike King's Sunday night radio show on Radio Live "The Nutter's Club" has just become a book.

Well known personality Suzie Crooks says the new self-help book "The Nutter's Club: Helping nutters from the inside out" demystifies what people with experience of mental illness go through and highlights what they can do to recover. Each story describes a different issue such as depression, alcoholism, and bi-polar affective disorder.

The book is available from all good booksellers for \$39.95—or borrow a copy from Like Minds Taranaki.

For a review—go to: www.mentalhealth.org.nz/page/882-news#secrets



New info on website:

Self-Stigma and Self-discrimination

"What's On - Whakaaro Pai - Korero Mai" July 2011

Taranaki MH Sector Directory—Updated.

"Taking the First Step" towards employment—Updated
Civic Emergencies—How to Cope

Access Radio—Like Minds Taranaki Programmes

Like Minds Taranaki Support Groups



www.likemindstaranaki.org.nz

Murray Cochrane signs up again...

He is District Inspector for Wellington, Wairarapa, Hawkes Bay, Manawatu, Whanganui, Tairāwhiri and Taranaki regions.

He is still based in NP and still has his lunch at Billings, the lawyers at 7 Young St., NP.

Congratulations Murray. You do a great job.

Touched by Suicide...

Offering care, support and confidentiality amid the toil of suicide grief and fostering growth, strength and hope for the future.

Supporting Families in Mental Illness have two groups operating in Taranaki.

New Plymouth:

3rd Thursday each month 7-9pm

South Taranaki:

1st Thursday each month.

Contact Facilitators through:

SF Taranaki—06-759-0966

Victim Support—06-759-5519

Like Minds Taranaki—06-759-0966

Promoting mental health, demystifying mental illness, countering stigma and discrimination

Another Like Minds Taranaki Project

You are here: Like Minds » Home

Taranaki Mental Health Sector MIHI

Service User/Tangata Whaiora
Family/Whānau & Support
Kaupapa Māori Mental Health Services
Conditions & Treatments
Medications
Suicide Prevention
Problem Gambling
Alcohol and other Drugs
Child and Adolescent Services
Mainstream Adult Service Providers
Services for the Elderly
Legislation Relevant to Mental Health Services

“ One of the biggest barriers to recovery is discrimination. That is why stopping discrimination and championing respect, rights and equality for people with mental illness is just as important as providing the best treatments and therapies. ”

Blueprint for Mental Health Services in New Zealand, November 1998.

CRISIS?
Click here for more information

Like Minds Taranaki gratefully acknowledges the financial support of this website by The Ministry of Health

Feedback is always welcome
Like Minds Taranaki, 06-759-0966, email: mental.health@xtra.co.nz

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Resources and Newsletters
Employment Matters
Rural Communities
New Settlers
Media Articles
Tell a Friend Today

Employment : Taking the first step...

A guidebook for jobseekers with health issues.
Free copies available from Like Minds Taranaki.

Thought for the Issue:

Some people hear voices. Some see invisible people.
Others have no imagination whatsoever.



*In NZ...
being gay...
and having a mental illness...*

Last issue we adapted an article by Chris Banks. It was from the MHF's Mindnet, Issue 15, Summer of 2009.

It rang true for some people. Others wondered why it was put in the newsletter.

The story spoke for itself.

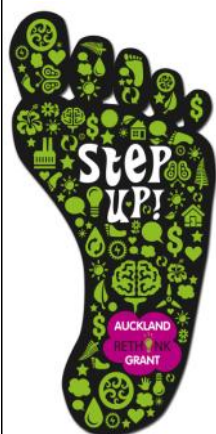
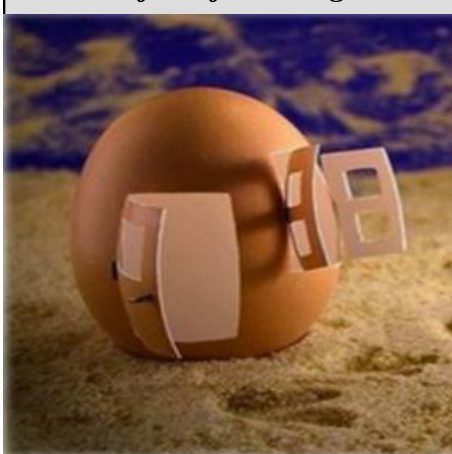
Like Minds has launched a new video story of Vaughan Meneses, General Manager of Outline NZ—a free, confidential telephone counseling service for NZs gay, lesbian, bi-sexual and transgender (GLBT) communities.

He talks about homophobia and how it affects the mental health and wellbeing of GLBT people.

"Mental illness is often invisible and so is being gay, or being lesbian, or being trans; it's not until you get to certain points of confidence that you can actually start sharing that you have mental illness or that you may be gay or lesbian, or, heaven forbid, if you are gay or lesbian that experiences mental illness."

If you are interested—you can view Vaughan's story by going to: www.likeminds.org.nz/page/232-doubled-up-with-stigma

Some food for thought...



Service-Users!

We want the world to know what YOU think.

The *RETHiNK Possible Worlds Youtube*

Competition is on its way and it is time to get thinking! Help us show New Zealand that mental unwellness is simply part of the reality that 'We Are All Human Beings Navigating the Maze of Life.'

Put your ideas on film and your work could be shown as part of the *RETHiNK Possible Worlds Youtube Competition* shows during Mental Health Awareness Week in Auckland. You can get together in a group or enter as an individual – all you will need is a bit of creativity and access to a handy-cam, a computer and an internet connection (so you can submit your work). Keep an eye on www.theliteratti.com for updates and calls for submissions.

Service Providers!

The *RETHiNK Possible Worlds Youtube Competition* is an opportunity for your staff and service-users to explore a more positive understanding of mental unwellness and share it with the world. Entry guides and the call for submissions will be posted soon, so check in regularly at www.theliteratti.com to make sure you don't miss any updates!

For more information:

Contact Christian Jensen,
Creative Director, The Literatti,
Ph 021 187 9660 | Email
theliteratti@gmail.com |
www.theliteratti.com

Claire Anderson's remarkable book ...

"One Step at a Time"...

Triumph over difficult circumstances is the crux of her compelling story of courage, determination and achievement.

Sexual assault, depression and a myriad of other challenges did not deter Claire from achieving her latest goals of completing an ironman event and publishing her book, "One Step at a Time".

"When I was sick I thought it was every one else's job to fix my life". Now I have a newfound belief that I have the power to control my future."

Claire's biggest hurdle was reaching out and asking for help. *"I felt that if I needed help I was a failure. I didn't want to admit that I couldn't cope with life. So there were many times when I pushed my family and friends away and tried to block them out of my life."*

Friends and family however, were fundamental to Claire's recovery. *"As soon as I was open to being helped, they stepped in and did everything in their power to help me."*

Read the book review:

www.mentalhealth.org.nz/page/933-e-bulletin+book-review

Other food for thought...

Light travels faster than sound. That is why some people appear bright until you hear them speak.

Evening news is where they begin with "Good evening", and then proceed to tell you why it isn't.

A bank is a place that will lend you money, if you can prove that you don't need it.

You do not need a parachute to sky-dive. You only need a parachute to skydive twice.

Labeling

Mental illness. It's a subject you don't often hear about.

When you do hear about it, it's usually not in a positive light. This is understandable, given the fact that more often than not; mental illness is an invisible thing. It's usually only during episodes of serious illness that there's any discernable difference from the "average person."

With the right treatment; there is really no way of distinguishing between someone with a mental illness and someone without. The image of a normal, apparently healthy person may be at odds with the stereotypical picture of someone with such a condition; but it's the truth.

Despite the fact that we are all complex, individual human beings; many take comfort in being able to feel that they are a part of a larger group or community. We categorize ourselves as such, and it seems to be human nature to want to identify others in the same way.

This is not always helpful. This tendency to group people together; means that there are often groups of people that are seen as "outsiders." We sometimes focus too closely on the differences between people, and discount the many things they have in common with everyone else.

Regardless of what state of mind they're in; people with mental illness are still people, first and foremost. Like everyone else; they have their own hopes, fears, strengths and weaknesses. They deserve to be treated as individuals; realizing that illness itself is only a small part of who they are.

Labeling isn't necessarily always a bad thing, though. It's all a matter of perspective—who is using the label?

Comedian Mike King's 'Nutter's Club' is an example of taking ownership of what would otherwise be considered a derogatory term, and removing much of the stigma that would usually go along with such a word.

It could be argued that a psychiatric diagnosis itself is similar to a label; and in this case the label can be put to a positive use, because it identifies the symptoms a person is experiencing. Without such a label, it would be difficult for people to receive the right medication and treatment; and to learn more about the condition they have.

Learning is important, especially when it comes to a subject like mental illness. People have a very real fear of the unknown, and the same applies to this subject; regardless of whether the person in question is a mental health consumer or not. The more you know, the less daunting the topic becomes.

Recent years have seen the topic of mental illness brought out of the shadows somewhat, with media campaigns ran by the likes of Like Minds seeking to educate people that it can happen to anyone—even the best and brightest of us.

Former All Black John Kirwan is the first such example to come to mind, after he took the brave step of speaking publicly about his experience of depression. Seeing such a role model speaking about something that is usually not discussed, encouraged many people to seek help for their own condition. This is a very positive thing—and hopefully it is just the beginning.

The perpetuation of stereotypes, relies on ignorance and misinformation. We live in a time when it has never been easier to inform ourselves about virtually anything—thanks in a large part to

the internet. Not only has technology changed; but it seems as if our attitudes are beginning to change—for the better.

People who once may have been shunned by society—excluded and institutionalized due to an inability to understand or really treat them—are today given the chance to participate in society as equals. Old prejudices are fading away, being replaced by the perception that people with mental illness, are for the most part just like everyone else.

It's said that good things take time; and it will be some time before we live in a society where mental health issues will be considered a mundane topic of conversation. The curtain is, however, slowly lifting.

A conservative estimate is that twenty percent of New Zealanders will experience mental illness at some point in their lives - one in five people. It does not discriminate; unlike people, it does not take sides. It could affect friends, family. Yourself. Perhaps for that reason alone, it makes sense to learn more about the subject.

When we are prepared to look beyond labels and stereotypes, we see people—just like everyone else. Just like us. And in the case of mental illness it just makes sense to do so: because one day it could actually be us.

Tony Spencer



Picture by Bronwen Fordham

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