



ENIGMA

NEWS AND VIEWS ON MENTAL HEALTH

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This newsletter was put together by the staff of the Otago Mental Health Support Trust.

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The opinions and articles expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily represent the views of the Otago Mental Health Support Trust or anyone associated with the organisation

We welcome your feedback on our newsletter. See above for contact details.

The Elephant in the Room

I think one of the problems with suicide is that we don't talk about it enough. There is certainly a stigma associated with it. Suicide is such a sensitive topic. In this edition we bring in a number of experiences from people who have felt suicidal to the loved ones of people that have suicided. The aim is to talk about it more as it is not an issue that is going away.

I remember the TV series MASH with the music that started each show. Words behind this music included the phrase "Suicide is painless." With my own experiences of feeling suicidal for me it was a way of ending intense feelings of distress. For me it wasn't about wanting to die, just ending the pain. My thoughts were certainly distorted at the time.

Sometimes it seems that the conversation about suicide is mostly about how to identify vulnerable people and ensure they have enough mental health support to minimise the possibility of someone suiciding. We can though tend to forget that suicide is a much wider societal issue. It is not just about waiting for people to feel suicidal then ensuring they have the support they need; it is also about promoting wellbeing for all of us. Issues of equity, employment, housing, relationships, purpose and value all contribute to our sense of wellbeing and promote resilience when we face those hard times.

The Mental Health Foundation 5 Ways to Wellbeing I think gives us hope as to ways we can promote wellbeing. They are:

Connect, Give, Take Notice, Be Active and Keep learning. For ideas on ways of using these go to

<https://www.mentalhealth.org.nz/home/ways-to-wellbeing/>

Grant Cooper - Editor

Can Mindfulness help...

"It may come as a tremendous relief to patients to discover that they do not have to fight their negative thoughts; that having such thoughts does not mean that they are stupid, worthless or going crazy. They are intrigued to discover that when they give up fighting with them or trying to suppress them, the thoughts may lose some of their power. If it is the case that such battles within the mind lie at the heart of the final common pathway for suicidal behavior, any approach that may help the person to deal skillfully when such battles are threatening to overwhelm them is worth exploring."

From: The Use of Mindfulness-Based Approaches for Suicidal Patients by J. Mark G. Williams and Michaela Swales

<http://www.oxfordmindfulness.org/wp-content/uploads/WilliamsSwales2004.pdf>

One Person's Experience...

What led you to thinking about suicide?

There are many factors that led me to thinking about suicide. For example there were some deaths of some family and friends. This occurred within a period of a year. I had also been back from overseas and was getting used to kiwi culture again. On top of this I broke my leg then two days later broke my wrist! My work was also stressful.

What were you feeling like?

Overwhelmed. It just felt like there was nothing to live for anymore. I was numb. Looking back in hindsight I didn't realise that I was depressed. I was trying to find a way to cope with each day. It came to a point of no return. I thought that I was a waste of space and that I didn't deserve to live. So I went ahead and attempted suicide.

After the suicide attempt what helped you to move forward in your life?

Knowing that there are people that love you. Appreciating each day as it comes and taking small steps at a time. My faith helped me. I kept a journal for a while – writing it out helped me. Learning to be kind to myself was also important.

What are the things that people said and did that wasn't helpful?

Some people were judgmental which didn't help. Making me feel guilty about attempting suicide wasn't helpful. People keeping on asking "Why did you do it?" wasn't helpful and made me feel ten times worse and that I had to justify my actions. Being angry with me didn't help.

How were people helpful?

People showing compassion for example accepting me for who I am. I was able to stay at a friend's place until I got my head together. My friend would carry on life as she always did and didn't walk on eggshells around me or check in on me every 5 minutes.

Looking back now, are there things you would have done differently?

Yea heaps! I would have had the courage to ask for help and not be so stubborn. Learning to ask for help before it gets to crisis point instead of hiding away and just thinking that everything will just be ok.

What did mental health services do that you found helpful or unhelpful?

Having someone with a listening ear helped. However there were too few of these. Feeling co-dependent on the system made me feel trapped and that I could not get out of it. Being around other people who were unwell was unhelpful because people talking about their own experiences just dragged me down.

What advice would you give people who are feeling suicidal?

Reach out to someone. Don't be afraid to ask for help. Ring your GP or nurse and if you have a compassionate and understanding support person – talk with them. You are not alone. I know what you are going through. People just need to know that someone cares about them and that they are there no matter what.

Anonymous

New Book in Our Library:

Artsenta: The First 30 Years, by Kath Beattie.

"Art, in a myriad of forms, is the focus at Artsenta, a supportive studio which has its beginnings at Cherry Farm Psychiatric Hospital (Otago). This lively account traces the history of those whose leadership and vision has successfully weathered 30 years."

Suicide from a bereaved mum's point of view.

I am not going to share this from a research point of view but rather from the heart.

Lessons can be learnt from our own experiences and I would like to think that all suicides are preventable. Can we give a suicide vaccination to our loved ones and prevent them from taking their own lives? Is that possible? Can love offer immunity to suicide? What if something out of our control happens? Can resilience play a role? What if they had asked for help and didn't receive it.

We can all play a role in preventing suicide but what if you do not know that someone is unwell because they are so good at wearing a happy mask?

What did I learn from our own experience?

- Keep careful records of everything such as unusual behaviour and then report that in writing to the case workers and psychiatrists.
- Ask for notes to be written collaboratively.
- Write to the staff if you feel you are not heard.
- Ask clinicians if your loved one is suicidal as they won't tell you. Ask your loved one if he is suicidal. If you are aware that your loved one has suicidal thoughts then you can actually prevent a suicide.
- Get involved in the care process to make sure the family stays engaged.

Recently family friends lost their son in the accident that killed 3 young men south of Perth. The ripples going through those communities are huge. We don't know all the details but one can only imagine how desperate that young man was when he lost his best mates. I took that opportunity to have the suicide discussion with my children to get their view on things as they knew the people involved. My advice to them was that they need to promise me that they would never do something on the spur of the moment. Think it through. What may seem like a very bad situation can sometimes turn out to be better than you thought. Time can be a great healer. Don't ever act on impulse.

In our bereavement support group we recently discussed grief, anger and guilt and how to deal with it. Life after a suicide is a struggle for those loved ones that are left behind. How does one move on after the suicide of a loved one? With extreme difficulty but it can be done with gentle support and guidance. Please feel free to contact Life Matters if you need extra support.

Moving forward can be done by taking little steps and by looking after yourself. Make sure you get plenty of sleep, exercise, a good diet and drink plenty of water. Be kind to yourself. Visit friends. Do something altruistic. When you are feeling down, performing a random act of kindness can do wonders for your mood and spirits.

kia kaha

Corinda Taylor (Life Matters Suicide Prevention Trust). Life Matters can be contacted at www.lifematters.org.nz or email lifemattersotago@gmail.com



Below is a list of some of the services available which offer support, information and help. All services are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week unless otherwise stated.

Lifeline – 0800 543 354

Depression Helpline – 0800 111 757

Suicide Crisis Helpline – 0508 828 865 (0508 TAUTOKO) (for people in distress, and people who are worried about someone else)

Healthline – 0800 611 116

Samaritans – 04 473 9739

Youthline – 0800 376 633, free text 234 or email talk@youthline.co.nz

What's Up – 0800 942 8787 (for 5-18 year olds; 1 pm to 11 pm)

Kidslines – 0800 54 37 54 (0800 KIDSLINE) (for children up to 14 years of age; 4 pm to 6 pm weekdays)

www.depression.org.nz – includes The Journal, free online self-help tool

www.thelowdown.co.nz – visit the website, email team@thelowdown.co.nz or free text 5626 (emails and text messages will be responded to between 12 noon and 12 midnight).

OUTLine NZ – 0800 688 5463 (0800 OUTLINE) (provides confidential support for sexuality or gender identity issues).

SPARX.org.nz – an online self-help tool that teaches young people the key skills needed to help combat depression and anxiety.

Common Ground – a central hub providing parents, family, whānau and friends with access to information, tools and support to help a young person who's struggling. www.commonground.org.nz

Mental Health Foundation – for more information about supporting someone in distress, looking after your mental health and working towards recovery

From SPINZ website: <http://www.spinz.org.nz/page/114-helplines-and-support-services>

Something to ponder...

The Paradox of our Time

The paradox of our time in history is that we have taller buildings, but shorter tempers; wider freeways, but narrower viewpoints.

We spend more, but have less; we buy more, but enjoy it less.

We have bigger houses and smaller families; more conveniences, but less time;

We have more degrees, but less sense; more knowledge, but less judgment; more experts, but more problems; more medicine, but less wellness.

We drink too much, smoke too much, spend too recklessly, laugh too little, drive too fast, get too angry too quickly, stay up too late, get up too tired, read too seldom, watch TV too much, and pray too seldom.

We have multiplied our possessions, but reduced our values.

We talk too much, love too seldom, and hate too often.

We've learned how to make a living, but not a life; we've added years to life, not life to years.

We've been all the way to the moon and back, but have trouble crossing the street to meet the new neighbour.

We've conquered outer space, but not inner space.

We've done larger things, but not better things.

We've cleaned up the air, but polluted the soul.

We've split the atom, but not our prejudice.

We write more, but learn less.

We plan more, but accomplish less.

We've learned to rush, but not to wait.

We build more computers to hold more information to produce more copies than ever, but have less communication.

These are the times of fast foods and slow digestion; tall men, and short character; steep profits, and shallow relationships.

These are the times of world peace, but domestic warfare; more leisure, but less fun; more kinds of food, but less nutrition.

These are days of two incomes, but more divorce; of fancier houses, but broken homes.

These are days of quick trips, disposable diapers, throw-away morality, one-night stands, overweight bodies, and pills that do everything from cheer to quiet, to kill.

It is a time when there is much in the show window and nothing in the stockroom; a time when technology can bring this letter to you, and a time when you can choose either to share this insight, or to just hit delete.

<http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/22242-the-paradox-of-our-time-in-history-is-that-we>



Women's Group is held on the last Friday of every month. This is a friendly informal meeting giving an opportunity for women to make new friends, and share experiences.

1-3pm meet at our rooms, Queens Building, 109 Princes Street.

(Image borrowed from Awakening 360 Women's Group)

We wish to thank the following for financial support:

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