



SPRING EDITION September-October- November 2014

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

Editor: Grant Cooper

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OTAGO MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT TRUST

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- Advocacy, Consumer Networking
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DISCLAIMER

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

Fighting Shadows



In this edition we are looking at self stigma. Self Stigma can be defined as “a process whereby a person with a mental health problem is aware of public stereotypes of mental health problems or mental illness and in an implicit manner applies these stereotypes to himself/herself resulting in low self-esteem and a lack of hope.” My own simpler definition is that the person with experience of mental distress takes on the negative and prejudiced thoughts, attitudes and comments about mental illness resulting in lowering of self esteem.

With my own experience of mental illness I had taken on some of the messages given to me. For example I was told that “You won’t be able to work full time again.” This hit me hard because I felt that somehow I was less of a person and that sunk any hope that I could work more in the future. What helped me to throw off this self stigma was the support of family and friends who encouraged and supported me to look for fulltime work. When I did get fulltime work, they celebrated with me. I have been working fulltime for the last 10 years!

Another comment made to me was “You just have to accept that you will be on medication for the rest of your life.” I struggled with what I was told and believed this health professional for a long time. What helped me to challenge this was my doctor who asked how long I had been on my antidepressants for. I told him a number of years and he asked me if I had considered lessening this with the aim of coming off the medication. I was hesitant but decided to gradually wean myself off the medication monitoring my mood as I did with support of my family and my doctor

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My doctor reassured me that if there was an issue I could go back on the medication. So I did slowly decrease my medication until the point where a year ago I came off it completely. My mental health remained stable throughout this weaning off time and right up to the present!

Now just to clarify I am not against medication but to be told you will be on them for the rest of your life does not allow for any possible breakthroughs in your lifetime in terms of therapies or other supports that could prove to be as effective or more effective than medication.

Below is a review of the Book "Madness Made Me" by Mary O'Hagan. I find the title to be interesting. The title implies that some value was gained from the experience of madness. One of the stigmatizing attitudes about mental illness is that it needs to be an experience that should be solved and put behind you as quickly as possible. There is often little value given to seeing your experience of mental illness as an opportunity to grow and develop as a person and that it can add value to your life. This is not denying the pain of the experience. One of the values of mental illness is the opportunity to be supportive to others who have "been there, done that." The term used is peer support has made a difference to my recovery.

- Grant Cooper

Book Review: Madness Made Me
by Mary O'Hagan

This book, 10 years in the making, is a very compelling read. Mary writes of her personal journey through the New Zealand mental health system over several years. Initially upon diagnosis she was told she would never have a big career or work fulltime and that having children would not be the best option since she had an ongoing disability. This biological theory was far too reductionist to help her make sense of such pessimism. Mary went on to initiate the user survivor movement in New Zealand in the mid '80's and became a consumer advocate. She is a mental health revolutionary with her belief that madness has value. Mary believes that mental illness shouldn't be a puzzle to solve but that recovery is what matters. She doesn't bag all traditional treatments or the use of medication. Later Mary went on to become a Mental Health Commissioner in New Zealand and an advisor to the United Nations and to the World Health Organisation. Since 2007 she has been an international consultant in mental health. This book gives insights to the reader on how consumers were treated in New Zealand prior to deinstitutionalisation and the impact of seclusion. Readers will learn a lot and be entertained along the way.

Reviewed by Denise Andersen

This book can be borrowed from the Otago Mental Health Support Trust library.

A Big Thank you to all those people that took part in our survey on the service that the Otago Mental Health Support Trust provides. Louise phoned 50 people randomly who have accessed our service for their comments on how we are doing.

We were very encouraged by the feedback. If you have any comments about our service, please feel free to contact us whether it is a compliment or an issue; we really appreciate your thoughts!

The anonymous survey results were sent to Planning and Funding at the Southern District Health Board

**World Suicide Prevention Day
Commemorative Service**

7pm Wednesday 10th September
St Paul's Cathedral Dunedin

Every Life Matters

Everyone is welcome

To unite in our concern for every life that
is lost

To honour and remember those who
have taken their own lives

- Guest Speakers
- Information and support
- Remembrance tree

Organised by
Life Matters Suicide Prevention Trust

Otago Mental Health Support Trust will be **closed for
Staff Training on Tuesday September 16th**

Ways to challenge self stigma

- Identify people who are positive and supportive in your life and spend more time with them.
- Take less notice of those who run you down.
- Make an effort to notice and value your strengths.
- Do things that help you feel good about yourself.
- Notice your negative internal voice or feelings and challenge them with positive ones.
- Voice your positive feelings. E.g. "I am a worthwhile person!"
- Further educate yourself about self stigma. "Education is argued to be helpful in reducing as well as preventing, self stigma" (Watson and Corrigan 2001).

Taken from Victoria University Disability Services Resource Card #4



The Otago Mental Health Support Trust will soon be running some free Peerzone workshops. These are a series of 90 minute peer led workshops where people explore recovery and whole of life wellbeing. Themes of the workshops include:

- Understanding ourselves
- Empowering ourselves
- Working on our wellbeing
- Connecting to the world
- Exploring our unique identities

If you would be interested in attending or have any questions, please phone Grant at the Trust on 477 2598 or 0800 364 462

Resources on Self Stigma

Fighting Shadows – Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand. Research on people's experiences of self stigma in New Zealand

Downloadable at

<http://www.mentalhealth.org.nz/file/Policy-Advocacy-etc/PDFs/Fighting-Shadows-doc-20-06-08.pdf>

Stepping out of the Shadows: Insights into self-stigma and madness Edited by Dr Debbie Peterson and Sarah Gordon. The experiences recounted in this book illustrate the varied paths that the authors have travelled in terms of overcoming their own self-stigma. This can be order for \$30 at

<http://www.mentalhealth.org.nz/shop/item/view/1/257/>

Self Stigma Resource Card. Victoria University. Available to download at:

http://www.victoria.ac.nz/st_services/disability/publication/s/downloads/studentguides/Self%20Stigma%20e-version.pdf

Like Minds, Like Mine newsletter, No 29, 2007 on Internalised Stigma

<http://www.likeminds.org.nz/assets/LMLM-Newsletters/lmlm-29.pdf>

Pushing back: a pilot study of self-stigma in Scotland

2012. Danion, L., & McArthur, A. (2012, June). Edinburgh: Scottish Recovery Network.

<http://www.seemescotland.org/latestnews/475-pushing-back-self-stigma-in-scotland>

A quote from this study states:

"With self-stigma frequently contributing to loss of hope, low confidence and self esteem, withdrawal and social isolation and unease sharing their experiences or issues, the impact of self-stigma can be far reaching, often blighting lives and holding back recovery. **However through support and understanding about self-stigma from frontline staff and health professionals**, the report found that people were able to find coping strategies that helped them mitigate self stigma and move forward on a recovery path."



Incite is a group of interested people who use or have used mental health services. We discuss and take action on issues of interest to consumers. We meet monthly in Dunedin. *For more information phone 4772598.*

Women's Group held on the last Friday of every month. A friendly informal meeting giving opportunity to make new friends, and share experiences. **1-3pm meet at our rooms, Queens Building, 109 Princes Street.**

Mental Health Awareness Week

Mental Health Awareness Week is from 6th to 12th October. In Dunedin there will be a number of activities on including:

- Events on at the Apartment (A PACT service) on Dowling Street. Check with Ray Leckie on 453 5555 (home) or at the Apartment on 477 7638 for what's on and when.
- The Southern District Health Board Mental Health Services will be running a Mental Health information stall at the Dunedin Public Hospital from Monday 6th to Friday 10th October. Mental Health organisations are welcome to have their information at the stall and help man the stall if they wish. For further information contact Johnnie Potiki (Consumer Advisor) of Maryse Stanton (Family Advisor). Ask to be put through to them by phoning the Public Hospital on 474 0999.
- Wednesday 8th October there will be a number of bands playing at the McMillan Stage in the Octagon with the theme "Music Moves your Mood." There will also be a free sausage sizzle run by Supporting Families Otago. A number of mental health organisations will also have stalls promoting their services. If your organisation would like to have a stall in the Octagon, please phone Ray Leckie on 453 5555 (home) or at the Apartment on 477 7638 by Monday 22nd September at the latest.
- Wednesday 8th October from 4.30 to 7pm The Artsenta will be running an Artypants event. Called Artsenta goes POP! Includes music, games and fun. There is also a design an album cover competition. For details, ring the Artsenta on 477 9566.
- On Wednesday 8th October Koputai cottage is having an Open day from 11am to 4pm. Mosaic creations and other works will be exhibited in the garden. Koputai is located at 68 George Street in Port Chalmers.
- On Sunday 12th Tapestry Clubhouse in conjunction with the Otago University Students Association (OUSA) will be holding a Mental Health Awareness Week Wellness Walk and Health and Well-being Expo with the theme of "5 Ways to Wellbeing." For further information or if you are interested in being a stallholder on the day, please contact: Bernie Aitken (Team Leader at Tapestry Clubhouse) on (03) 455 1873

We have tried to ensure event details are correct at this time but please contact the above people and organisations closer to Mental Health Awareness Week in case there are any changes to events

Nationally the Theme is "Keep Learning." You can find out more about this AND ORDER FREE POSTCARDS and POSTERS NOW at the Mental Health Foundation website