



# ENIGMA

## News and views on mental health

### WINTER 2017 EDITION

This newsletter was put together by the staff of the Otago Mental Health Support Trust. Editor: Grant Cooper

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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

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

### What is Wellbeing Anyway?

Wellbeing is talked about a lot in mental health. The question is what keeps people well? Our mental health system is based on the philosophy around diagnosis of mental disorders. A mental health professional may do an assessment of a person by looking for symptoms then come up with a diagnosis. This may take a period of time. The aim is then to either eliminate or minimise the symptoms. Wellbeing though is not just about eliminating or minimising symptoms. Medication is often given. A tranquiliser may well eliminate distressing symptoms in the short term but I would argue that wellbeing is about a flourishing life which I believe can certainly occur even in the presence of distressing symptoms. In my own experience I thought that waiting for my meds to kick in would solve all my problems. In other words I would be happy. The meds did reduce my distress in the short term but did not resolve why I was unhappy. The meds had a masking effect - a painkiller if you will - which required much deeper soul searching than a tablet could give. The biggest changes for me occurred when I was supported to feel the distress and work through it. Too often I believe we are encouraged to take pills because it is easier. So apart from working through my distress I needed to look at what I wanted out of life. What was important for me? At times I had no idea especially in times where I felt numbed to the world.

I remember feeling encouraged by the 5 Ways to Wellbeing that the Mental Health Foundation have promoted over the last few years. It is based on work done by the New Economics Foundation in London which looked at a number of happiness studies and asked the question "What do these studies tell us about happiness?" The 5 most common answers have been paraphrased by the Mental Health Foundation below as: Connect, Give, Take Notice, Keep Learning and Be Active. In this edition we reveal some great ideas the Mental Health Foundation put together (see [www.mentalhealth.org.nz](http://www.mentalhealth.org.nz) for more ideas!) I hope you can feel as encouraged by these as I have been...

Grant Cooper - Editor

### FIVE WAYS TO WELLBEING



**INTRODUCE THESE FIVE SIMPLE STRATEGIES INTO  
YOUR LIFE AND YOU WILL FEEL THE BENEFITS.**

Mental Health Foundation  
mauri hū, mauri o'ra  
OF NEW ZEALAND  
[www.mentalhealth.org.nz](http://www.mentalhealth.org.nz)

## **CONNECT... Talk and Listen, Be there, Feel Connected**

- Become involved in groups; join your local craft, sports, choir, hobby or book club and enjoying singing, sewing, playing a card game, visiting gardens or croquet on the lawn together.
- Organise a baby photo competition with friends or colleagues – guess who the baby is!
- Host a potluck dinner, or have a street BBQ, with neighbours or friends/family and bring kai from different cultures.
- Gather some friends for a DVD evening; ask people to share a film they like.
- Smile at a stranger – you may be surprised by the smile you get back!
- Find more opportunities for humour in the home by starting a family joke collection.
- Connect with the whenua; grab some mates and get into the great outdoors - go on a bush walk, go surfing or mountain bike riding.
- Take time to read your local newspaper or newsletter – find out what's going on in your area, such as music or cultural performances, then organise a group outing.
- Have a family WIFI, TV and text free day and bring out the old board games you have – you may be surprised at how much fun they still are! Contact a friend you have not seen or spoken to for a while and talk, talk, talk!

## **GIVE... Your time, your words, your presence**

- Join or start and develop a neighbourhood Time Bank.
- Take opportunities to support and advocate for groups, friends, family or neighbours in need.
- Give a smile away!
- Organise or promote random acts of kindness days at school, work or when you're out with a group.
- While driving, stop to let a car into the traffic.
- Offer to mow the grass verge of your neighbour.
- Join a community clean-up day - could be a local stream, river, beach or park - or a tree planting project with friends or family
- If you have fruit trees pop your excess fruit out on the street with a "help yourself" sign.
- Donate old toys, books, sports equipment, clothes etc to a local charity.
- Help with school working bees and fundraisers.
- Offer to help an older neighbour with their wheelie bins on rubbish/recycling days.
- Give a compliment – acknowledge what someone in your life has done well.

## **TAKE NOTICE... Remember the simple things that give you joy**

- Learn useful techniques for becoming more aware of life as it is happening. Stop for a while; take 10 mindful breaths in and out, calming the body and mind, then simply rest where you are noticing everything that is going on around you. This practice incorporates four keys aspects of mindfulness training: **Stopping – Calming – Resting – Noticing**. Together, these four steps are innately healing. Use an everyday environmental cue (the phone ringing, email alert etc) as a reminder to pause and breathe for three breath cycles, and take notice of the world around you.
- Learn yoga or meditation, or have a mirimiri (massage) to sooth and relax your body.
- Be mindful of the first mouthful of food you eat. See if you can really pay attention to all the flavours and textures of the food, the act of chewing and the act of swallowing. During the following meal, see if you can be aware of the first two mouthfuls of food, and so on.
- Take the opportunity to sit quietly in a busy place like an airport or a mall and notice the interactions between people
- Try to get out of your work environment during breaks. Go for a walk into a nearby park, being mindful of your breathing, your footsteps and the environment around you.
- Climb your maunga, swim in your awa or moana and korero karakia with tangaroa.
- Spend time gardening or create a green space in your home or office where you could grow a few small plants, such as herbs, on a windowsill.

## **TAKE NOTICE... continued**

- Take notice of the night sky. Be aware of what phase the moon is in and how the visible constellations change throughout the year.
- Go for a bush walk, try to identify the different animal and plant species you see and photograph them while taking the time to really notice what you are photographing.
- Practise gratitude; keep a diary by writing down three things for which you are grateful on a daily or weekly basis. Take the time to give a special thank you to people who support you everyday.
- At the end of the day ask friends, family or colleagues what the best thing was about their day and listen with interest when they respond.
- Begin meetings with a karakia (prayer) or short reflection (e.g., an inspiring quote) followed by a brief silent period, allowing people to breathe mindfully and bring their full attention into the room. End in a similar fashion.

## **KEEP LEARNING. Embrace new experiences. Surprise yourself**

- Learn something you don't know about the area in which you live by checking out the local notice boards for interesting talks and events.
- Write your bucket list – then try something you have always wanted to do but never actually done!
- Start learning a musical instrument. How about the French horn or the harp?
- Find and try out a new recipe for a meal, cake or dessert.
- Commit to identifying a new plant every day for a year – in Maori and Latin.
- Visit the local public library and see what new books, mags and talks they have.
- Discover the name of the iwi, hapu, maunga and awa of the place you live.
- Memorise a new word every week. Practice using it among friends and family.
- Learn another language. E korero ki a koe Maori? Parlez-vous francais? Talar pu islensku?
- Put your hand up for a new challenge/training in your workplace to broaden your knowledge.
- Pass on any of the latest research you find that relates to your profession or sector.
- Get your colleagues to bring their favourite non-fiction book to work for a book swap -learn about a new topic and your colleagues' interests at the same time.

## **BE ACTIVE. Do what you can. Move your mood.**

- Bring activity into the everyday, e.g. use the stairs instead of the lift, walk to colleagues to talk with them instead of phoning, and get off the bus one stop earlier than your stop.
- Try a 'Have a Go day' with a local sports group. Look out for what's on offer, as often, free equipment and tuition is provided.
- Take a family walk after dinner, or a longer one on the weekend. Let family members take turns to choose where to go.
- Hold a family dance-off with different members picking the music.
- Organise or participate in walking tours of local places of interest in your community or suburb.
- Participate in a fun run/walk to raise money for charity.
- Encourage senior students to put together a Top Town-style event for the junior school with wacky, fun activities that everyone can participate in.
- Start or join a walking bus for school children.
- Try tai chi classes for strength, balance and mental wellbeing.
- Go swimming or join a water walking group at your local pool.
- Join a sports club to be active and meet people at the same time - tennis, bowls, touch rugby, netball, there is so much to choose from!
- Find out the most popular sport among your colleagues and then organise a match or tournament for staff.

## How do we know we make a difference?

Our staff will be asking people that access our service how well we do our work. We got together with some people who access our service to decide what questions to ask.

So what will we be asking?

When I am with OMHST workers: (you can answer from 1(never) through to 5 (always) or 2, 3 or 4 inbetween  
I feel understood

I feel safe to share

I feel hopeful

As a result of being with OMHST: (you can answer 1 (strongly disagree) through to 5 (strongly agree) or, 2, 3 or 4 inbetween

I am moving towards where I want to be

I am better off as a result of this relationship

In what way does this relationship make a difference for you? (You can type in your answer).

Every 3 months we will be asking these questions which you can answer on the staff member's mobile phone. After you answer the questions you click on "submit" and the answers are added to an online database. The peer support worker does not see your responses. Your answers are anonymous as they are collated together with no names attached. Your responses should take no more than 5 minutes. We will use the answers to give us an idea if we are making a difference. These collated answers will be sent to the SDHB who is our major funder. Once again the answers will be anonymous.

### Welcome to Emma Simmers

Emma joined us in May in an administration and peer support role. Emma is new to working in Mental Health and is enjoying the transition from 25 years of lived experience with bipolar disorder and the challenges that come with that. Emma is looking forward to working alongside the team at the OMHST, getting to know everyone, and working in a positive learning environment.

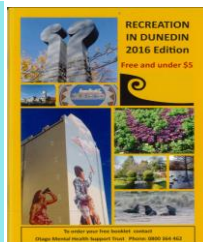


### Having your Voice Heard at a National level

Nga Hau e Wha is a group of people with lived Experience of mental distress who meet every 3 months in Wellington and meet with national organisations such as the Ministry of Health. Our aim is to "ensure the consumer voice is engaged with and heard at all decision making levels."

So if you have issues you want talked about from a consumer experience let us know. For more information you can go to [www.nhew.org.nz](http://www.nhew.org.nz) or email Grant at [grant@omhst.org.nz](mailto:grant@omhst.org.nz) or phone Grant at Otago Mental Health Support Trust

We still have copies of our "Recreation in Dunedin - \$5 and under" book. Contact us to get your FREE copy.



**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.**

**We wish to thank the following for their financial support: Bendigo Valley Trust, COGS Coastal Otago/Waitaki Dunedin Casino Charitable Trust, Dunedin City Council, HealthCare Otago, Lotteries Otago/Southland Community, Ministry of Social Development, Otago Community Trust, Southern District Health Board**