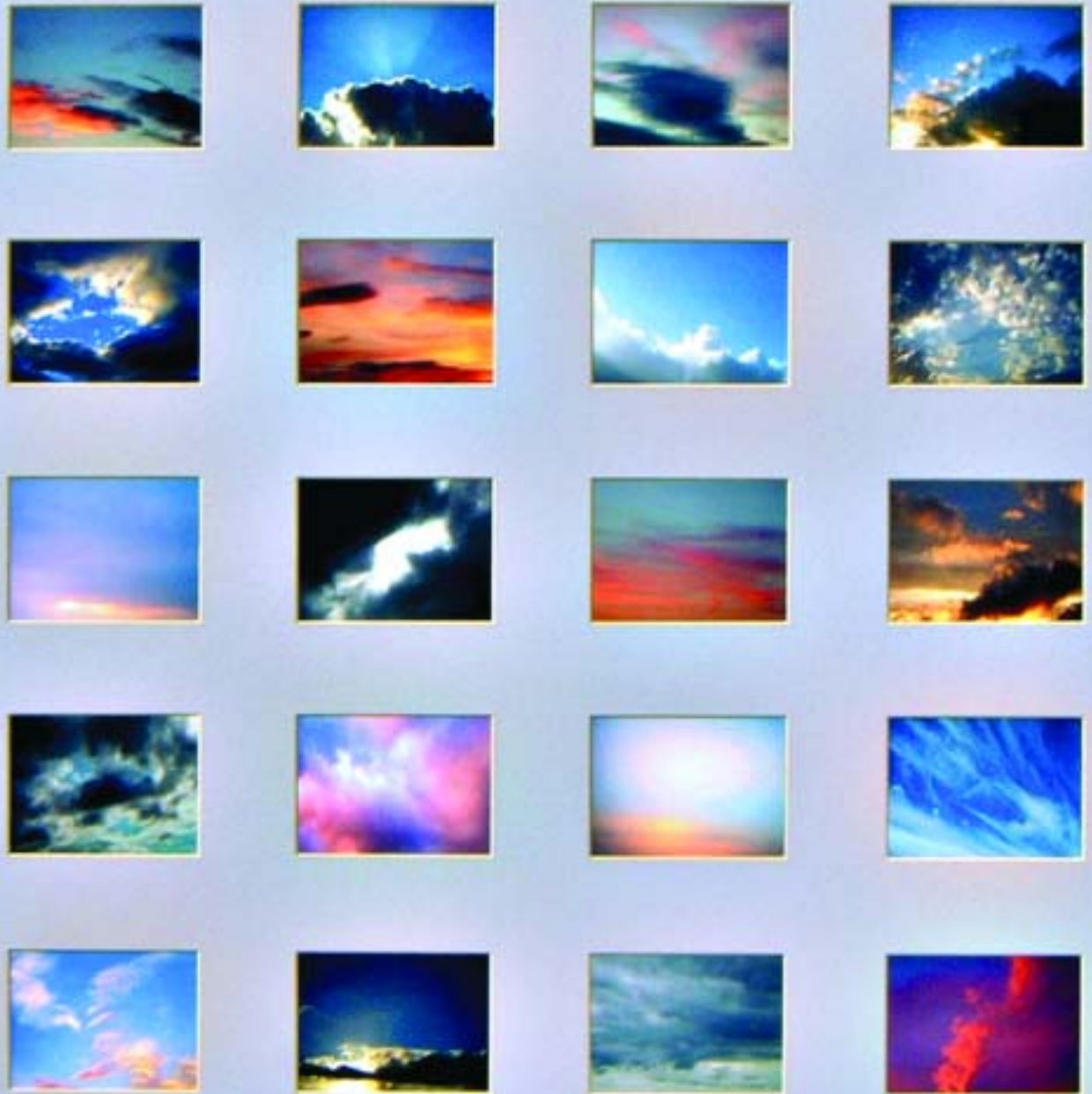


Issue 28 January 2005
Speak Up Somerset News



Transformation

10 tips on achieving well-being

The Importance of Images and Symbols in Self-Transformation

Enter Poetry and Photography competitions on theme Acceptance

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Front cover: Rona McIntyre

I am amazed at the variety of colours and patterns in the sky, yet it's the same sky. An individual's experience of recovery from mental distress also involves huge variety of colours and patterns, experienced as moods and feelings. So many moods and feeling, yet in the same person. Feelings, like the sky, change, have a process, sometimes changing slowly, subtly, sometimes quickly and dramatically. Photography as well as clay and paint, help me gain a different perspective on my emotions, help me recover.

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All the members of the news group have

Editorial

For 2005, Speak Up Somerset hopes to remain pro-active in promoting well-being. We are organising poetry and photography competitions on the theme Acceptance. We are also hoping, subject to funding, to put on a one-day event on Friday 7th October promoting Well-Being. Building on the very successful Art of Recovery event held last year, this hopefully will be an another life enhancing day celebrating the creativity of those affected by mental distress and helping us all find ways of promoting good mental health. Speak Up Somerset would like publicly to thank South Somerset Mind for their hard work on putting on such a great event last year.

The focus in this issue is Transformation - how we can turn our lives about.

We hope that people have a well 2005

We have new website which we hope to use to promote creativity www.artofrecovery.com

Choosing Health, the government's public health white paper published in November, focuses on mental ill health as one of the six priority public health issues, alongside obesity, smoking, exercise, alcohol and sexual health. Critics says that it should look more at the wider socio-economic causes of well-being rather than individual behaviour.

The Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry (ABPI) and sister trade associations around the world said all their major members, including GlaxoSmithKline, Pfizer and Novartis, had agreed to publicise their trial results.

NIMHE Knowledge Community NIMHE have set-up knowledge community about mental health on the internet. Go to <http://kc.nimhe.org.uk> to join.

Speak Up Somerset has received £10,000 from the South West Foundation to provide training, continue with our newsletter and help produce publications.

The New Economics Foundation have produced a well-being manifesto. This well-being manifesto seeks to answer the question "what would politics look like if promoting people's well-being was one of government's main aims?" To download document visit www.neweconomics.org

Mind in Taunton and West Somerset have moved into new premises at The Market Building, Canal Road, Taunton, TA1 1PN. They have also opened Mind Skills and Opportunity Centre. 19 - 21 Kingston Road, TAUNTON, TA2 7SA
Tel: 01823 289948 Email: mind.skills@virgin.net Website: www.mindskills.org.uk . Open Tuesdays 10 am - 4 pm, Wednesday 10 am - 8 pm & Thursday 10 am - 4 pm. The centre is open to the general public and is located at the south end of Kingston Road, Taunton, near to Taunton Railway Station. They offer information and signposting on topics such as Anxiety, Depression, Coping as a carer and Relaxation. The staff are on hand to assist people on downloading specific details from the internet and they can also signpost individuals to other relevant organisations. Support is offered to those who would like the opportunity to meet with a listener and an initial meeting can be arranged. For further details please contact or visit the Centre.

UK Independence Party say they 'will ban anyone with an acute psychotic illness, including schizophrenia' from representing its party in elections.

Speak Up Somerset have been invited to give a talk at the National MIND conference in Harrogate in March this year.

**Experience into Action Training Course
Training Mental Health Service Users and Carers to be Trainers**

South Somerset Mind ran a very successful free 10 week accredited course, through NCFE, in September for people who have used mental health services or been an informal carer.

Journal Of Hope

Speak Up Somerset has produced a 365 page a day journal of hope featuring quotes from famous people and others on how to cope with adversity. If you would like a copy please send a cheque made payable to Speak Up Somerset for £8.50 to Speak Up Somerset, PO Box 3484, YEOVIL BA21 5ZH.

Speak Up Somerset are putting on some free training

Presentation skills for the petrified part two Saturday Feb 19 Jill Kane

Desk-top publishing using QuarK Express Saturday Feb 26 Malvin

Markwick Centre, Yeovil, 10 to 3.00.

For more details contact Maureen Street on 01935 850979.

Thursday 21st July - Date for your diary South West service user conference at Exeter University on 21st July this is a chance to network with other service users and others interested in recovery and self-management. Organised by Simon Heyes for NIMHE South West who can be contacted on 01823 337879.

Enter a photo or poem in the Speak Up Somerset 'Acceptance' competitions. The closing date is 1 September 2005. For more details please contact Maureen Street on 01935 850979.

Closing date: 1 September 2005

First prize: £50

Second prize: £25

Third prize: £15

Rules:

1. Open to all
2. Poems/photos should be on the theme Acceptance and the title is up to the writer/photographer
3. Poems must not exceed 35 lines
4. Poems should be typed
5. Please provide your name, address, telephone number and age (if under 18)
6. The judges's decisions are final
7. Entries cannot be returned
8. By entering, competitors accept that Speak Up Somerset may publish entries and that entries may be exhibited
9. Results will be published and winners notified in advance and asked to attend prize giving at the Brewhouse Theatre, Taunton on 7th October 2005
10. Please feel free to photocopy and distribute this to others if you wish.
11. One entry per person for each competition

Send entries to:
Speak Up Somerset
PO BOX 3484
YEOVIL BA21 5ZH

For more details contact:
Maureen Street
Speak Up Somerset:
Phone: 01935 850979
speakupsomerset@talk21.com

**Speak Up Somerset
Photography and
Poetry competitions
on theme:**

Acceptance



the art of recovery

New Year Resolutions

We asked various people what healthy things they were hoping to do in 2005.



Tony Boucher
Gain weight



Julia D'Allen
Don't rush so much



Maureen Street
Not to answer phone after 9.00pm



Adrian Van Clute
To get more writing published



Jean Freeman
To pace myself



Simon Heyes
Look after my health



Martin
Stop drinking and smoking



Lynis Robshaw
To go forward not back this year



Norman Webley
To do one thing at a time!



Mick
Cut back my drinking

Jane Malet
I could read a book

Jeanette Pearce
Lose weight

Jeremy Pearce
Remember to walk more

Julie Chedroy
Not to bite my nails

Ruth Tayles
Try to stay alive and not kill myself

Maralyn Longman
To try and be more myself every day



Tony Sharpe
Give up smoking

10 Tips for Emotional Well-Being Until Spring Arrives by Simon Heyes

1. **Practice self-respect and have fun.** Laugh. Simple pleasures are stress reducing and very healing.

2. **Increase the relaxation in your life.** Learn some relaxation exercises or practice yoga, Tai chi, Qigong, or Pilates exercises. These gentle practices can be done almost anywhere, regardless of the weather.

3. **Learn to be tolerant in your personal relationships** to avoid vicious arguments that could separate you further from your loved ones and which can cause emotional damage. Learning to listen fully before responding is an important approach in healing conflicts. Know the difference between reaction and response.

4. **Get quality sleep.** Sleep involves both your state-of-mind and body chemistry. If you go to bed feeling stressed or laden with worries, even if you don't normally have insomnia, your sleep may not have the quality it does when your mind is relaxed.

5. **Nourish yourself by eating a balanced diet** with good quality foods, such as vegetables, whole grains, and fruit. Avoid the empty calories of junk food. Try to break food habits/abuses, to foods such as sugar, chocolate, caffeine, and alcohol.

6. **Exercise regularly.** This can mean taking a walk, going swimming and doesn't need to be too ambitious. Exercise can help to lower body weight, blood pressure, and cholesterol. And exercise makes your body, mind, and heart happy, and is a good prevention for depression.

7. **Take time for reflection.** The introspective nature of winter provides an excellent oppor-

tunity for greater reflection and self-assessment. Take an honest look at where you are. At the same time, be gentle with yourself. If you are somewhat depleted, you may also feel more vulnerable and more susceptible to illness. Your emotions may be high, or you may be more sensitive than usual. See if you are able to accept yourself more fully in as many areas of your life as possible.

8. **Practice self-forgiveness and moving forward in life.** Still being aware of what you have learned from your life experiences but not dwelling on past mistakes.

9. **Seek a larger connection.** A report in the Daily Telegraph said that the secret of health was relatively simple. Living in a community with a thriving Women' Institute, busy charity shop and active church choir is good for the heart. Research has found that neighbourhoods with the highest levels of voluntary work have less crime, better schools and happier, healthier residents than areas without community spirit.

The benefits of living in a caring community appear to have little to do with class or income, the researchers from Essex university found. The link was found in inner-city estates as well as home counties villages.

10. **Nourish others.** Notice how very deeply that nourishes you in return. Build giving into your life. Another important aspect of giving is remembering to keep reasonable limits or boundaries, so you don't feel swallowed up or depleted by your generosity. That brings us full circle to the idea of conserving energy at the end of winter, in preparation for the rebirth of spring. And let your sails fly free in the wind. Give yourself permission to live with passion and spontaneity.

Storm in the Heavens

The Lord is wonderful in the hearts of men!
The sky was whirling, the clouds grumbling
But a mortal woman comforted me
While God's hand was at work in the sky,
Rain and lightning was all I could see!

I lay quietly in my bed and prayed
To the great Creator of all things
Praying for friends and things,
Then on my hands and knees
Praying and watching and hoping
The Lord in his mercy
Would answer my pleas.

I believe in God, and as I said
The Lords prayer, the sublime words
Inspired and uplifted me.
He is holy and his son Jesus,
I am a humble, mortal man
But I am peace with Him!

I thought of the 'Rock of Ages'
And of the composer, and
King David in Israel, and psalm 21,
The greatest of them all!
I thought of the Bible and prayed
Just a while longer.

In the early hours of the morning
On my own and quietly waiting,
Hoping upon hope, my prayers
Would be answered,
I thought of the flowers
And plants in the ground
And about the rain
Pouring down upon the good earth.

Stuart Hellier

Next Issue:

Community

Next issue of Speak Up Somerset News

We welcome articles, poems, stories etc. on the theme of Community.

"Living in Community"

In the July edition of Speak Up Somerset we shall explore the idea of "community" - a word which is used a lot in the mental health services. There are many ways of looking at this subject and some of the following questions may prompt you to write articles or poetry, paint pictures or pen thoughts:

" What does "Care in the Community" mean to you?

Have you found a real sense of community in the place where you live or do you feel that "community" is very difficult to find and that it is therefore a very isolating concept?

" Have you ever lived in a healing or therapeutic community (or any other kind of community)?

What were the good or bad things about living with other people?
Was your experience helpful, and in what ways?
What were the challenges and what did you learn?

" If you have been on a hospital ward at some time (or perhaps have lived in sheltered accommodation) - did you have a sense of community with others?

If so, how would you describe this and how was it important?

" There may be communities of hope, communities of support or communities of acceptance in your life. If you have experienced any of these informal communities at any point, then what have they given you (or you to them)?

Could you say what difference they have made to your own strength and well-being?

" In your view, what should "community" consist of?

What are your dreams and how could they become real?
What sort of communities should we be trying to build?

We very much look forward to your contribution to this next edition. Please send articles by June 3rd to M Longman at Garail Cottage, Bladon Hill, Kingsbury Episcopi, Martock, Somerset, TA12 6BJ or by e-mail to: maralyn@longman1046.freeserve.co.uk. Additionally, messages may be left on 07816 468055.

The Most Tender Plant

Seen - yet unseen - -
For eight years I looked at it,
A small leafy tree, twisting and
turning,
Contorted, misshapen, relentlessly
growing,

Ready - yet unready,-
I, watching its progress, thick and
alluring,
Green and inviting - lush and so
calming
Like curtains protecting - hiding its
offerings.

Could this be - - -
Discovery - or even recovery?
The tree now secure in a window,
framed white
Enormous, yet invisible to all
accept me!
I sit in my chair and gaze in
delight.

Stiffly arising, yet with great ener-
gy
Inspired by the tree
So huge, yet invisible - discovered
and treasured
Now stored in my mind for when-
ever I need it.

Unheeded - yet needed,
There are many who need it,
Too busy, to notice all it can offer,
But I who discovered may one day
recover.

Maureen Street



Are We There Yet Mum?

A story of transformation by Rona McIntyre

Transformation is an appropriately long word, as in my experience it takes a long time. I don't think miracle transformations that happen in a moment are very common. My experience of transformation has been of a slow gradual change over many years. It's been a hard journey and one I may not have ventured on if I'd known what was ahead; like the mountaineer who may not have begun their adventure if they had known all the challenges they'd meet on the way, but when standing on the summit are pleased they persevered. I'm not yet on the summit of my metaphorical mountain, but I have scaled some scary walls to get where I am, and now benefit from the huge effort put in by myself and those who have helped me.

My scary walls were built in childhood and I've had three major attempts to ascend them in my life. I started out with counselling. I found caring, consistent people and a space where I could express my distress, but I now know it was not what would help me get beyond my terror as it's medium is spoken language. In this early part of my journey I was in such terror I couldn't think about my scary walls, and when they came close I went blank, unable to hold a conversation, and unable to form any understanding of how my past had created my present. I think counselling let me know there were some good people out there, prepared to help and stick with me, but overall, due to my intense fear, it held me in a state of misery that didn't help me move on.

A number of years later I experienced a transformational phase when I joined various psychotherapy groups. These were mainly residential and based on gestalt, reikian and core process psychotherapy perspectives. My transformation was brought about by me witnessing others able to move in and out of distressed states; in therapy sessions to be looking at their deepest fears, and later to be laughing and joking. Before this my experience of

distress had been that once in it I had a mighty long climb to get out again.

My most profound transformation came about through art therapy. Having had a negative experience of art at school it's amazing I chose art therapy, but I felt a strong pull towards it. This intuition proved to be right, and in art therapy I found a means of communicating that did not rely on words. I made raw, childlike pictures, papier mache 'bombs', clay monsters and effigies of significant people, baby dragons with potential to be fierce, and more - all potent with feeling. Emotional pain often seemed unbearable, and somehow the art I made 'held' some of the pain outside of myself, as well as the strong, consistent, patient, skillful holding by my art therapist that was so vital.

It was a long process and gradually the 'art' I produced changed, and so did my feelings and way of being. Of all the changes I've made, the most significant is my gradual acceptance and understanding of the injured parts of myself, and that although the injuries are deep, they are not all of me. For many years I'd be either in depression, unable to see any part of me that was OK, or in a terrified denial of having any problems at all. I feel more comfortable with myself now I've brought these parts of me closer together and I can see them both at the same time.

My sky pictures represent this - in the black stormy sky there is a breakthrough of the light behind, and in the sunrise there is a hint of the dawn to come. I am amazed at the variety of colours and patterns in the sky, yet it's the same sky. My experience of recovery from mental distress also involves huge variety of colours & patterns, experienced as moods & feelings. So many moods & feelings, yet in one person. Feelings, like the sky, change, have a process, sometimes changing slowly, subtly, sometimes quickly and dramatically.

Art therapy opened up a new way for me to communicate with parts of myself that were previously inaccessible. Alongside art therapy I have

found other things that help me - physical exercise to 'burn' off the effects of stress, meditation to access a quiet place inside myself, t'ai chi to help me take that quiet place to where I meet 'the world', and acupuncture to balance me when I'm finding balance hard to achieve myself. All these, and creativity, help me gain a different perspective on my emotions, help me find balance, help me continue my journey of transformation.

Rona McIntyre

Thanks to Malcolm Learmonth, Art Therapist, for giving so much and being such a fine human being.

Useful Resources

British Association of Art Therapists, 24-27 White Lion Street, London N1 9PD Tel: 020 7686 4216 Fax: 020 7837 7945 email: info@baat.org www.baat.org

www.insiderart.org

The T'ai Chi School of Living Movement, Mill Farm, East Week, Okehampton EX20 2QB Tel. 0845-1259731 email info@livingmovement.com www.livingmovement.com

British Acupuncture Council, 63 Jeddo Road, London, W12 9HQ. Tel: 020 8735 0400 Fax: 020 8735 0404 email: info@acupuncture.org.uk www.acupuncture.org.uk

British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy BACP House, 35-37 Albert Street, Rugby, Warwickshire CV21 2SG email: bacp@bacp.co.uk www.bacp.co.uk

Learn to Meditate (audio tapes & book) by Patricia Carrington, published by Element ISBN 1-86204-191-1

Feelings

When you're sad, some may cry
But others may just want to sigh.

When you're happy, some may laugh
But others may act daft.

When you're confused, you don't know;
It's like ten corners - what way to go?

Trust is a place of lending
But some people need a lot of bending.

Peace is when it's all quiet
Not like a major riot.

Fear is when you're very scared
Or when something happens when not prepared.

Stephanie Thorne

A gentle kindness
Mother natures Joy
The Papillon
She perches tenderly upon the edge of reason no boundaries.
Balanced perfectly upon a cloudy petal.
A splendour of beauty seated upon its petite stem.
A placid yellow creature.
Wild and free.
No home, just the open sky to explore.
What freedom.

Geoff Aitkens

Mental Health International Development (MHID) is a new not-for-profit organisation launched on 1st January 2005. MHID is registered in the United Kingdom.

MHID exists to empower people with mental health problems to take control of their own lives and contribute to the development of their local communities and society. As the name suggests, MHID is concerned primarily with an international perspective, working

It is concerned to provide support to community-based mental health care, promote deinstitutionalisation, campaign to end stigma and to ensure that people with mental health problems are accorded full human rights. And will achieve this through provision of support and development for self-help and advocacy initiatives, NGO capacity-building, promotion of inclusive mental health policy and ensuring the active involvement of service users in all aspects of mental health provision

As the name suggests, MHID has a global perspective and is currently focused in the areas of Central and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, Central Asia, parts of India and East Africa. Paul Cutler, Robert Hayward and Ray Rowden are the founder directors of MHID and together bring over 30 years of experience in the fields of mental health and international development.

To contact MHID please either email to MHIDDevelopment@yahoo.co.uk or write to:

Mental Health International Development
85 Lewin Road
London
SW16 6XJ
U.K. Telephone: 020 8516 8786

The Way to Recovery by Maureen Street

The land was flat and wet - stretching into the distance - frequently wreathed in fog. For the traveller the monotony was crushing. There were no trees or hedges to rest the eye - just the long, straight, narrow road with deep water filled dykes on either side. These were a constant danger for those that passed that way.

For the solitary traveller - aware of his loneliness and deep melancholy, it was a difficult journey to make.

He had never found companionship on this road - that was until he had heard about a community where everyone was accepted - just as they were. He put on one side the difficulties of his childhood. When the time came for him to leave he felt a new energy - he was ready for the next step.

They had told him about this place where he would no longer be ignored; no longer pushed on one side; he would be encouraged to join in local activities - make friends. But when he saw the way forward he was fearful. It was steep, gloomy - worn by the feet of many travellers each striving for recovery. Only one at a time could climb that way and some returned after only a few steps - maybe not to try again.

But he went back to the market place. He questioned some of the stallholders. Who round here had managed to climb to the top? He learnt that it was those who were friendly; had courage to have a go; would try over and over again; never give up.

Thus he returned and stood at the



foot of the great staircase, challenging, yet inviting a very lonely, solitary way.

But remembering the accounts of local people who had gone before, he seized the rail. After a few steps he rested, a bit breathless. But he felt better - ready to climb to the next stage. Momentarily he felt tempted to join a group entering a huge stone chamber to the right. He was not to be tempted.

But he had set his vision on the light that was streaming through an archway around the curve at the top. Instead of slowing down he went faster and faster - his enthusiasm increasing. He was almost so confident and happy as he ran through the arch. There were others - just like him - the TRANSFORMATION was overwhelming. He had known he could do it!

Positive Quotes

1. I no longer have problems I have solutions.
2. You fail only when you quit trying.
3. Before you put on your clothes for the day, put on a good attitude, everything will fit better.

4. If a problem lasts all month its only 1/960th of your life. Keep your perspective!
5. The secret of success is consistency of purpose.
6. Sometimes personal growth hurts. Have you ever heard the term growing pains? Try focusing on the growing part.

Joyce Passmore

The Importance of Images and Symbols in Self Transformation

A personal view of the cathartic effect of mental illness by Norman Webley

I believe that mental illness can have a cathartic effect by allowing one to work through personal problems and inner conflicts, and perhaps help to promote healing holistically, which couldn't be accomplished in any other way.

In 1994 I was referred to Rowan Place as a voluntary patient after 'freaking out on Prozac and experiencing an unending series of panic attacks. Whilst in recovery and on quite heavy medication; in a state of inexpressible dullness with an almost non-existent mental and physical capacity, I was persuaded very much against my will to join an O. T. Creative Writing Group. We were asked to imagine ourselves as a tiny seed; springing into life or perhaps as a small creature emerging from a cocoon. To my amazement I came up with, 'Sunflower'



I was in such a dispirited state that I think my personal ego had just melted away and the words just sprang up out of my inner being effortlessly and more or less verbatim as you see them now. I had absolutely no resistance to stop them.

Having to die to be reborn

I have since come to realize; and this is 8½ years later, that literally my relatively 'worthless' limited conditioned and confused self, or ego, is having to 'die to be reborn', and this to allow to allow an emerging awareness of my inner limitless soul nature to reveal itself. I am gradually learning through meditation, self-reflection, creativity and other pathways to inner stillness, to identify more and more with my true soul nature and being. At the same time learning to be more fully 'present' or 'mindful', so that negative conditioned patterns of thought can be gradually discarded.

My Life's True Purpose

I read the sunflower poem nearly everyday to remind me of my life's true purpose: the 'death of the ego' and the emergence of joy, laughter, inner peace, spontaneity and fun, with no loss of individuality. Incidentally this is what I believe to be the end purpose of all great world faiths and age old philosophies and which is only truly possible through inner surrender. So I still struggle on, recovering from yet another recent relapse of an Me/Fibromalgia and possible bipolar condition, brought on by trying to do too many things at a time, which I am still learning to self- manage. But the power of symbolism in the poem inspires me to continue on, and I believe my 'head will turn with the sun' once more as I

recover and hopefully learn to avoid further relapses in the future.

Stuart Planted His Seed

Below you see Stuart Helliier's giant sunflower grown from a tiny seed I handed out to him and others at the 2003 S.U.S conference on creativity .



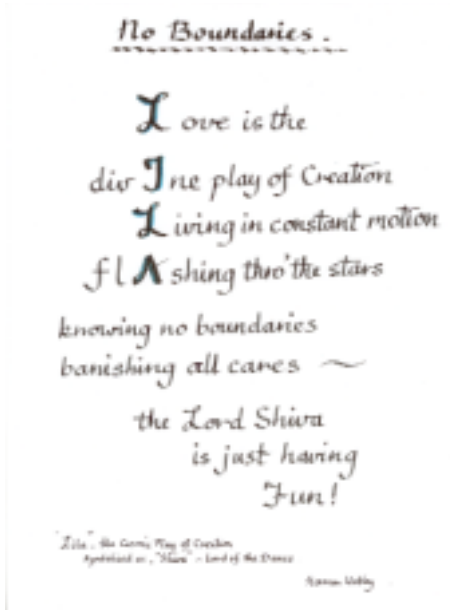
Stuart planted his seed - Cosmic Creative Intelligence did its work

Stuart, bless him was the only one to take up my invitation to plant his seed : 'frozen cosmic creative intelligence', springing into life!

Inner wisdom during a psychosis

In 2001, following a hip operation and five nights sleep loss, I developed a severe psychosis which was not treated early enough, through an unfortunate set of circumstances which I have described in an earlier issue of SUS magazine. After my subsequent sectioning when things had rather got out of hand, I eventually spent two weeks in recovery at Holford secure unit.

During this time, in the latter stages of recovery I wrote :



The symbolism reflected here relates to 'LILA' - the Sanskrit word for Cosmic Play of Creation and to 'SHIVA'.

Love Has No Boundaries

It has touched my heart personally and convinces me that love is the driving force of creation helping to bring into being all things by harmonising and balancing the play of opposites. Love is limitless, has no boundaries and banishes all suffering wherein it dwells, and it is that which can be discovered in the silent chambers of the heart. If, as a human being, we care to look there in stillness, it can always be found. Lord Shiva personifies the energy and intelligence that destroys ignorance and creates and recreates continuously, the whole dance of the cosmos (similar to the Christian concept of the 'Lord Of The Dance'.).

Personal Awakening

These poetic words which arose from my inner being, have had an immense influence on my spiritual journey or gradual 'awakening'. They suggest that if I am truly 'connected' with my inner being, or God, the source of all life - then life can be lived more spontaneously and can be more fun! I managed to inscribe this poem in clay during a South Somerset Mind sculpture project in the Autumn of 2003 and it is now cast in a panel of cement fondue beneath 'Introspection,' a giant sculpture, in Yeovil Community Park near the Octagon Theatre, created by Richard Langford and commissioned by South Somerset Community Arts.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SHIVA IMAGE



Curiously but probably by no coincidence, 'Shiva' came up as of key symbolic importance to me again as an individual, during a workshop attended on Core Energy Management and the 'Endorphin Effect', with William Bloom, indicating that my true inner nature was 'ABUNDANT', 'CELEBRATORY' and 'MAGNIFICENT'. Such is the power of symbols; and of course endorphins can be released through positive imagery and affirmations to produce that "feel- good" effect.

Nurturing the inner child

The third and final example of how a key symbol and powerful image has continued to influence and guide my journey towards surrender, acceptance and self awareness is represented by the sculpture:

'Nurturing the Inner Child'

It too was created during the series of South Somerset Mind sculpture and modelling workshops in 2003 led by Richard Langford. Then in creation ; sculpted from pure white chalk, it was something that just gradually unfolded within me - quite spontaneously, with no fixed image of what was to come or what it would be called! Some three months later I experienced another severe relapse which put me into a form of major depression where most of my higher brain function disappeared, and didn't begin to surface fully for another seven months. My personal 'Dark Night of the Soul', when my spiritual centre disappeared and everything, absolutely everything was just grey! I also have to cope daily with arthritic joints, severe back problems

and painful muscles.

Realizing what the sculpture symbolized

In the middle of the relapse: poor sleep, confused thinking, severe memory loss, time compression, blurred vision, fatigue, slurred speech etc, I suddenly recognized what the image was telling me. To be kind and patient with myself just to rest in the stillness that lay within me. To practice self nurturing, positive thinking, taking small steps to recovery; playing relaxing music, having exercise, doing meditation, keeping in touch with friends and family even if too unwell to actually make a visit, or carry out a meaningful conversation without feeling exhausted. Warm soothing baths, and lazy showers with scented soaps, and lavender on my pillow, with soft music to help me sleep. My doctor was very supportive too through this period and my nutritionist.
Now each day I look at this image, and



it reminds me to take things slow and easy, do one thing at a time, not to take over much and to practice inner stillness (freedom from mental noise) in a variety of ways. It is probably my equivalent of a serene Buddha, practicing mindfulness; and "The Power of Now" by Eckhart Tolle is my daily reading.

In conclusion

Personal images and symbols, often revealed during a time of mental distress can be powerful tools for recovery. I end with a most relevant quotation from J.K. Rowling, which aptly summarises what I have had to say:

"Understanding is the first step to acceptance, and only with acceptance can there be recovery."

J.K Rowling, 'Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire'

Integrated Restart Mission Report

The Introduction

Health is sometimes taken for granted when we have it. However, when life events and our reaction to them fails to come up to; not only our acceptable standards that we have set for ourselves, but to those that we love, we may need assistance to overcome them so that we (and that includes the autonomous self) can overcome them and progress (i.e. the pilgrim idea is still in tack) on our journey through life.

Whatever your health requirements you will be our consideration. This could be the Alternative Somerset Partnership NHS and Social Care Mission Report.

It is therefore the mission report of the Somerset Partnership to endeavour to assist those people who in the fact of the great adventure and mystery of life; life does and should demand that we will not only conquer the immediate problems but the goals set by yourself will be worthy of the highest endeavours of man, not forgetting woman. We acknowledge that the complexity of the human mind and its facilities are there for a purpose. The human mind is there not only to help you survive in life with all its ramifications that it brings but to enjoy as well. The human mind is a problem solver as well as a muscle that brings us the following in brand terms.

Five main conditions:

- 1 Joy, which includes happiness and contentment etc.
- 2 Pain, which includes discomfort, agony, dilemma etc.
- 3 Compassion, which includes concern, friendship etc.
- 4 Sorrow, which includes tears and by mistakes of ending, read on solutions pending etc.
- 5 Anger, which includes frustration, mobilization and an entrée to do, i.e. being in action.

At this stage there are some other, some would say esoteric or rarer states of mind. The mind is fuelled by what we eat or drink, therefore attention to this is a most prized source of information.

Agriculture/horticulture, Botany, Ecology provisions of and from the land is worthwhile undertaking. Even hydroponics has its interests in space, i.e. out of Earth's atmosphere.

Joy, pain, compassion, sorrow,

anger.

Rationality is but a critical faculty for recording our endeavour to succeed at the task that each generation passes on to the next. Not only is the mind in partnership with the brain, it is in partnership with the body. Therefore it is our duty not only to respect ourselves but to love ourselves for trying to believe not only in the dignity of man but the belief that mankind will ultimately triumph over all that stands between him: Objectives aside, the principles embodied in this mission report will not be removed lightly

Letters

For several years I have suffered with a chronic mental health problem, namely severe anxiety and depression. During that time successive G.P.s, Community Psychiatric Nurses and Psychiatrists have consistently deemed me unfit for paid employment.

Due to my unremitting health problem, I had to retire early and I am in receipt of a small occupational pension and Incapacity Benefit as my only sources of income.

Every two years the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) arranges a medical examination for me to attend and on every occasion the aforementioned professionals have informed the DWP that there has been no change in the state of my mental health.

Notwithstanding that fact, once again, I was recently summoned to attend another medical examination. Now I can well appreciate this is a statutory requirement, but for me it was a very stressful experience which precipitated a serious relapse.

For me this trauma raises the following questions. Who is best qualified to assess if a person is ready to return to paid employment? A person's own care team of professionals, who have a thorough knowledge of his or her mental difficulties, or the DWP Medical Services Doctor? The latter interviews a person for a relatively short period of time and is totally unfamiliar with the case. In view of this I am recommending that the final decision as to whether a person is fit and able to return to work should rest solely with the person's care team.

In this context, the present Government appears to have begun to target people with mental health problems. They want to get as many people as possible off Incapacity Benefit so as to be able to reallocate these financial resources. In my opinion it also wishes to project (for political purposes) an image of being tough on the shiftless and the work shy. The reality is that people with a genuine mental health problem do not fall into this category and therefore should not be penalised.

Richard Moore

Dear Editor

It write to convey the sad news of the death of John Maharg, aged 84, otherwise known by his family name as Tom Graham. Coming from the working class he had an arduous life as a building worker before turning to writing in his fifties. His novels, poetry, plays and short stories - one of which is printed in Change Charity's *Civilians At War* booklet (still in print) - undoubtedly established him as one of the greatest literary talents to emerge in Britain over the last one hundred years. All of us who knew him greatly miss him!

James Allen



I am 46 years old and my name is Joyce. I have been painting for three years.

In the past I suffered from depression, self-harm, anorexia and alcohol abuse, to which my paintings portrayed my moods which were dark and dismal.

Through the care and attention I had from various sources that are available I have overcome my problems to which I hope my pictures reflect my recovery.

Life Love Happiness Peace Zen (part two) by Adrian Van Clute

I made it through the 1980s and early 1990s. I went to visit family in San Diego in 1989 and visited San Francisco Santa Cruz Yosemite National Park San Jose. I took a train from San Diego to Los Angeles and then got another train to go to San Jose along the Pacific coastline, a very nice train journey. There was a dining care and a snack bar and a whole railway car for viewing the scenery from. San Jose is a very nice city. I stayed there with more family relatives and took trips into San Francisco going under the bay by Bay Area Rapid Transport. On the first day in San Francisco I visited Haight Asbury, a place I had always wanted to visit, it was famous in the 1960s and still famous for music: Janis Joplin, Jefferson Airplane, Steve Miller, Peanut Butter Conspiracy, Grateful Dead, Music Venues, The Fillmore and the Matrix. I loved the place it has nice Victorian house and very nice cafes and shops including book and record shops. I visited a very nice African restaurant for lunch the food was very nice. But later on something happened, I got off the bus near the Greyhound bus station and found my bag with passport, travelers cheques, etc was missing. I felt lost and nearly cried but got in touch with Mark and family in San Jose and he told me to wait there in the bus station till he got here. The cops were great as well very helpful. While I was waiting there I met a Vietnam Veteran who was living on the streets in a wheelchair, he was a very interesting person but sadly ignored by the country he fought for. Lots of people supported people like him but the others let him down the Vietnam war was bad. Mark arrived and took me home through Silicon Valley. I got more money very quickly and Mark gave me some money to buy a new camera. I went back into San Francisco and visited North Beach and Acatraz. I took a cable car down to Fisherman's Wharf it was very nice.

The next day I walked through Chinatown and went out to the Golden Gate bridge and after eating fruit from Chinatown I walked across the bridge for a little while, not all the way across as it is very long. North

Beach is very nice it has a very famous poetry bookshop called City Lights, owned by Lawrence Ferlingetti one of the Beat generation poets and writers. When I got back to San Diego I took the Greyhound bus to Los Angeles and then got another bus to San Diego.

Later on in the early 1990s, I went to New York and Boston with good friend of mine, Hugh. We hired a car and drove down to Boston from New York to stay with my niece Christine, that was a nice trip I also went up the Empire State Building and the Statute of Liberty and visited Ellis Island. I carried on feeling bad inside me and mixed up, my weight went up as well. I got a job working in the museum of South Somerset getting it set-up for opening. It was one of the best jobs I had and I even took part in an archaeology dig at a Roman pottery in Donyatt near Ilminster. Later on I worked in the Womad Shop in Crewkerne and at music festivals such as Cropredy and Sidmouth, Ironbridge and Bluegrass festival. I also worked at Pilton Glastonbury Festival.

Then in 2001 my mother got very ill, she had a stroke and was diabetic so I took time out to look after her ignoring my own health. I stayed up at night to help her took her out to lunch then in July 2002 Stella fell down in the garden and went into hospital in Yeovil. My good friend Hugh and myself had been trying to help her with alternative medicine which she believed in acupuncture etc. After Yeovil she went to South Petherton hospital to rest. Saturday the 13th July I went to London to see an art exhibition Picasso and Matisse then on Tuesday morning after seeing Stella on the Monday to give her some Art presents I got a phone call to say she had died peacefully monday night. I cried and cried and felt bad and lost I wanted to lock myself in the house and maybe join her but I told people and pulled myself together. I spoke about her at the service I had a musician friend of mine Julian Dawson play one of his songs Pilgrim. Then a few weeks later after my half sister Jenni had gone back to Australia I went downhill again until August 2003 when I met a very nice women called Ronni who gave me some crystal healing.

more in part three next time



Graham who until recently was selling the Big Issue in Taunton has had a book published. We featured Graham in Issue 26. Since then he has had a regular slot in the South West issue of the Big Issue. We understand Graham has moved north to Manchester. Previously he was in Yeovil.



Graham's book, Unsettled, is available for £5 including postage and packing from Graham Walker, c/o Flat 4, 23 Palace Avenue, Paignton, TQ3 3EF or from www.bigissueman.co.uk

Graham is donating proceeds from his book towards the Children's Hospice South West and the Big Issue

Media News: September - January 2005

(The following news items have been extracted from media coverage over the last few months. Approximately ninety percent of the overall items were negative. Those included here are some of the more positive, though even so, some of them are not!)

Milton Keynes PTC is piloting a new holistic approach to mental health which involves care for the poor physical health often seen in mentally ill patients. *Medoeconomics*

Disability organisations say a plan to penalise local authorities for poor take-up of direct payments is 'draconian'. *Care and Health*

A disturbing report into the state of Britain's psychiatric units by Mind shows that many patients feel threatened and unsafe in the very places where they are treated. *Observer and Independent on Sunday*

Nick Johnstone suggests that alternative remedies may not cure depression but they can be helpful in staving off the symptoms. He takes zinc supplements, magnesium, a banana every morning, avocados, peanuts and Omega-3 supplements. He puts lavender oil in the bath as well as clary sage and ylang ylang. "These days I bend but I don't break ... none of these natural, alternative supplements can prevent depression - but they can certainly help me to put up a fight". *The Guardian*

US researchers say psychotherapy conducted by telephone improves the effectiveness of anti-depressants in patients taking them for the first time. *General Practitioner*

The controversial "bad behaviour syndrome" is a serious childhood disease that increases the risk of mental illness later in life, doctors said yesterday. *Various sources*

Government proposals to reform mental health laws do not help people with mental health problems, the Law Society has said. *legal-uk*

Plans to replace approved social workers with approved mental health professionals from a variety of backgrounds were due to be confirmed this week. *Community Care*

Almost 1 in 4 mental health in-patients are sleeping in mixed sex wards. *Community Care*

The Royal College of Psychiatrists has reiterated in it's evidence to the pre-legislative scrutiny committee, its concerns that

the proposed mental health bill will alienate patients rather than encourage them to come forward for help.

Mentality has produced a guide offering advice to the Church of England on how to support parishioners with mental health problems. *General Practitioner*

The number of people who use drugs and have mental health problems has risen by more than 60% in five years, researchers say. *Society Guardian*

A mother's depression of forty years seems to have been cured by removing her mercury fillings. *The Guardian*

The American Health Association has designated the condition "Post Election Selection Trauma" to those people severely upset by the re-election of George Bush as president of America. *The Independent*

An 87 year-old reader praises the treatment he received for a nervous breakdown. *The Times*

Nick Johnstone says that TV programmes dealing with mental illness are "sensationalist and exploitative". *The Guardian*

Scrapping the draft mental health bill and starting from scratch would be "preferable" to piling amendments on to the "contorted and badly written draft", Rethink's Cliff Prior told a conference this week. *Community Care*

The Institute of Optimum Nutrition has surveyed 37,000 adults and has found that 90% of Britons eat such a poor diet that they are suffering from a range of health problems including mental illness. *The Mail*

A third of GP's time is spent with patients with mental health needs, whilst 12% of the NHS budget is allocated to services to those people. *Independent on Sunday*

There was a feature on how the Stigma Stop Watch Campaign in Scotland is combating offensive language about mental health. *Independent*

The impact of NICE guidance on prescribing, or improving quality of care by ending postcode prescribing, has been mixed a recent review states. *The Nursing Times*

According to a study at King's College London, more than 1 in 50 people have experienced psychosis. *The Sun*

The Government's Social Exclusion Unit has launched a new guide offering advice to employers and public and voluntary organisations on dealing with the stigma of mental health. *Various sources*

A nurse-coordinated cognitive therapy service has prevented psychosis development in more than 95% of patients, UK study has shown. *Nursing Times*

Transcranial magnetic stimulation, a technique to direct precisely focused electromagnetic pulses at the brain, appears to have amazing potential in treating a range of conditions, including mental health problems. *The Times*

Official figures show that around a million people in Britain are claiming incapacity benefit for behavioural disorders derived from stress. Around 166 million sick days are taken off each year but many GP's write sick notes on demand. *The Times*

Ruth Iveson, Human Resources Manager of Mersey care NHS trust, has encouraged people with a wide range of conditions such as long-term depression, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder and learning difficulties into meaningful work in the health service. She is thought to be the first HR manager in the country to work solely with service users and carers to help them into work and also to have a say in recruiting the very people who will be providing their care and services. *Guardian Unlimited*

Millions lie awake every night and worry about their jobs

Almost half the people in employment are awake at night worrying about their work and home lives, according to a survey published yesterday.

More than four in 10 Britons admit they sometimes have difficulty shutting out professional and domestic concerns when their heads hit the pillow. Among those with job the figure rises to 49 per cent.

One in eight adults, or 5.6 million people, has sleepless nights frequently or even daily. *Daily Telegraph*

And lastly -

Grumpy old men are far more likely to catch 'flu than those with a cheery disposition, researchers say. *The Times*

With thanks to Rethink's media service for much of this information.

South Somerset Mind Training

All run in the Training Room at South Somerset Mind, The Markwick Centre, Dampier Street, Yeovil. Please contact Diane Brodie on 01935 410138 for more details. **Cost: Half day costs:** £20 statutory; £10 for charities, individuals and students; free to service users/carers and South Somerset Mind volunteers (£5 paid deposit returned on attendance) **Full Day costs:** £30 statutory; £20 charities, individuals and students; £5 for service users/carers/South Somerset Mind volunteers for food.

Name of course	Time	Date
Personality Disorder	10 - 3.00pm	Wed 9th Feb
Learning to Relax	10 - 1.30pm	Tues 22 Feb
Schizophrenia	10 - 3.00pm	Wed 2nd Mar
Eating Disorders	10 - 1.30pm	Wed 9th Mar
Substance Misuse	10 - 3.00pm	Fri 18th Mar

Other events at the Markwick Centre Yeovil

Circus Skills every Saturday morning from 10am to 12.00 noon.
U in Mind every second Monday of the month from 6.15pm.

Fancy a challenge and a chance to raise money for Mind in Taunton & West Somerset
The following events are an exciting and challenging way to experience culture and fun while also raising much needed funds for Mind in Taunton & West Somerset.
Come cycle with us from London to Paris Cycle Ride in June 2005 and a Peru Trek 22 September 1 October 2005 the trip is suitable for people of all ages. For a free information pack please call 01823 334906.

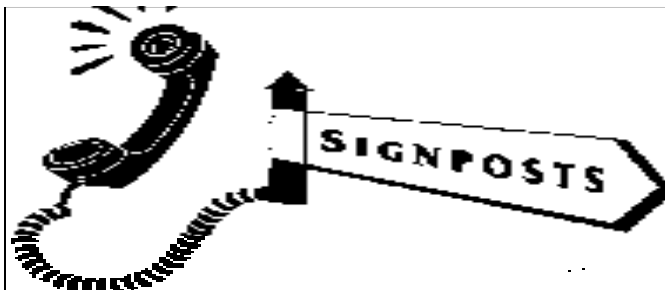
MindLine Somerset
Do you need someone to talk to?
Mindline is there Wed, Friday, Saturday and Sunday from 8pm-12midnight on 01823 276892.
Mindline is a service for anyone who is experiencing or has experienced emotional or mental distress. Mindline also offers help to family members, carers and friends. We are here to provide a friendly ear, to empower you to make your own choices. We can signpost you to other services or agencies that may be of help.
If you would like to know more, please call our Helpline co-ordinator on 01823 286001.

Somerset and Wessex Eating Disorders Association
Working with Comic Relief
For people 18 to 25 with eating disorders
Please CONTACT Nicky TO FIND OUT MORE on 01458 837900
Or nicky.linfield@btconnect.com
Or look up on the website
<http://home.btconnect.com/18-25>



Triumph Over Phobia (TOP UK)
Gareth Sharman
TOP UK
PO Box 344
BRISTOL BS34 8ZR
0845 600 9601
triumphoverphobia@blueyonder.co.uk
www.triumphoverphobia.com

West Somerset Inclusion Project
The West Somerset inclusion project aims to promote social inclusion for people marginalised as a result of mental ill health.
West Somerset Inclusion Project,
The Connexions Building, The Vennland Centre, Ponsford Road, Minehead, Somerset TA24 5DX
Tel: 01643 708765 email: mind.investsomerset@virgin.net



Somerset's Health & Community Care Information Service
FREEPHONE 0800 317220

Yeovil Outreach Project

If you are feeling down and don't know where to turn.
Call 01935 414170 and speak to Angela
Mental Health Outreach Worker for the Yeovil area

Somerset's Mental Health Participation Workers:

Project manager: Krista Felek 01278 423033

Somerset Coast: Post vacant

South Somerset: Julia D'Allen 01935 840137

Mendip: Kate Wilkins 01749 343481

Taunton: Alexandra Simson 01643 702853

PALS—Somerset Partnership & Social Care NHS Trust

Andy Jones has taken over the role of PALS officer, and will also work on patient information. His phone number is 01278 720222, and he can be contacted at Broadway House, Barclay Street, Bridgwater TA6 5YA.

New Directions

Broadway Park, Barclay Street, Bridgwater, Tues - Sunday inclusive offering a range of activities including Saturday and Sunday lunch Phone 01278 446935 for more details.

The Manic Depression Fellowship Somerset

A countywide organisation run for and by people who experience manic depression.
For further info contact Phil Cracknell on 01823 323363

Carers Voice is a group of mental health carers who advise on and facilitate carer involvement in Somerset's mental health services. Membership is open to any carer of someone with mental health needs, and Carers Voice helps ensure that carers are involved in decisions about how to plan, provide and evaluate the services. Contact Angie Gammon, c/o County Hall, on Mondays on 01823 356711

SUCH project offers complementary therapy treatment for anyone experiencing mental distress or carers, volunteers and people working within the mental health system. The project is based at the Mind Centre, Taunton phone no. 01823 331052 & website: www.suchproject.org.uk.

Somerset Autistic Support Group - Advice and Friendship line. If you are coping with problems on the Autistic Spectrum please do not feel alone, we are here to help. Contact our new Somerset Communication Line on 01823 324997, or write to Jenny Barnes, 35 Roman Road, Taunton, TA1 2BG.

Somerset Partnership Patient and Public Forum (PPI)

Contact Emma Westbrook Forum Support Co-ordinator on 01225 701120.

Commission for Patient and Public Involvement in Health (CPPIH) www.cppi.org or telephone 01392 332100

Manic Depression self-help group for Yeovil area. The group meets every three weeks in Yeovil on a Tuesday. For further information about the group and details about joining the next meeting, please telephone 01460 73932 (evenings).

Somerset Counselling Centre (Taunton) provides weekly psychodynamic counselling. Contact Somerset Counselling Centre at 38 Belvedere Road, Taunton, Somerset TA1 1HD, or telephone 01823 337049.

South Somerset Mind run a drop-in based in Dampier Street, Yeovil from 10 to 3.30 Monday to Thursday and Friday from 10 to 12.30pm. They also run a befriending & volunteer scheme. Circus Skills runs on Saturday 10 to 12.00. Call Peter Hill on 01935 474875.

Mind in Taunton and West Somerset run a day project Peace of Mind on Mon, Wed & Fri 9.30 - 3.30 for details phone 01823 327094. The Hope Group, a self-help group for people experiencing anxiety and/or depression meets Tuesdays at the Albemarle Centre, Albemarle Rd, Taunton, phone 01823 334906. MINDLINE 0183 276892- offering telephone support, Wed, Fri, Sat & Sun 8.00pm to midnight. The co-ordinator Liz Simmons can be contacted on 01823 334906 www.mindtws.org.uk Email: mail@mindtws.org.uk

Advocacy in Somerset Call Tim on 01823 324762

Mendip Advocacy Call 01749 683300

Taunton & West Somerset NSF group for carers

The group meets at 2 The Crescent, Taunton every second Tuesday of each month. 12-2pm. 01823 354879

U-In-Mind

An informal gathering of users, carers and others to discuss ideas and to share some food. We meet on the second Monday of the month at 6.15pm at The Mind Centre, Dampier Street in Yeovil. For details phone Maureen Street on 01935 850979.

Crispin Community Centre Street Self-Help Centre "We aim to help people help themselves" Drop-in Monday, Wednesday, Friday 12-3.00pm Thursday 6.30-9.30pm. Computer workshops & facilities for groups Phone 01458 447248 for more details

Release Support Group supports adult female survivors of child abuse. The group meets Wednesday at Sydenham Family Centre, Bridgwater from 2 to 4pm. Contact Kerry, the co-ordinator, on 01278 434023

The Wincanton Community Venture at the Balsam Centre, Wincanton have a drop-in open on Wednesdays 1pm to 3pm Call Brian on 01963-31842, or e-mail balsambrian@hotmail.com.

Speak Up Somerset

Speak Up Somerset is a county-wide coalition of groups and individuals interested in mental health issues. The group includes service users, workers, carers and others. Our email is speakupsomerset@talk21.com Our next meeting is our AGM on 20 April, in Wells. Provisionally at the White House. All welcome. Please contact Maureen Street on 01935 850979.