



“Korero Mai, What’s On & Whakaaro Pai” 23—February 2012

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

‘Mother of the Nation’ lends voice to suicide prevention...

Judy Bailey has spoken of her personal battle with depression when she fronted a new campaign to get people talking about suicide.

Now, like icon John Kirwan, Judy has stepped up to front a new Mental Health Foundation advertising campaign to raise the awareness of suicide, and to heighten a programme of suicide prevention.

With completed suicides in New Zealand being as high as 558 last year which is almost twice as many as the road deaths, at 288.

With New Zealand having the World’s highest female youth suicide rate, the third highest rate for young males, and very high rates for Maori and the elderly, the time for open thought provoking discussion is here.

In Taranaki, to these disturbing statistics, add middle aged, rural based men.

For too long there has been an un-warranted code of silence - a

silence that has stifled any meaningful dialogue, a silence that has minimised the problem of suicide and a silence that has subsequently led to a inadequate resources for suicide prevention.

Imagine what could be achieved if even 25% of the budget allocated for reducing road accidents was available for suicide prevention.

As a result of adverse publicity about New Zealand’s high youth suicide rates, Prime Minister John Key has gone on record as being keen to address this problem. Let us all hope that he does not restrict his focus only to youth, as there is a growing suicide and intentional self-neglect issue for our vulnerable elderly, for Maori and for rural communities.

There is a real need for some serious Government action involving all sectors of society. There are far too many people, of all ages, dying for lack of a coherent programme, funding and a sense of urgency.

“Reaching out to people, especially men, with information encouraging them to seek help is essential, as well as ensuring that mental health services are truly

responsive”, says Merryn Statham, former Director of SPINZ.

“Many suicides are preventable, and someone who attempts suicide is sending a clear signal to mental health services, families and communities that they are a person in need of support”, says Statham.

“Removing the stigma attached to mental illness was an important step towards preventing deaths.” says Mental Health Foundation Chief Executive Judi Clements.

In starting the conversation, let’s also include the debate on assisted suicide.

Suicide prevention is a huge problem in New Zealand. A problem that has been actively targeted by a number of individuals and NGO groups in Taranaki—with funding from the Taranaki Electricity Trust and the TSB. In Taranaki, very little support has come from Government sources—other than from Otago University.

Clearly, some sectors of the Taranaki community are keen.

Coming Events: February, 2011:

- Wednesdays:** “Real Arts” 2-4.30pm, Real Tart—Gold Coin only
- Thur: 2nd: “Mental Health Matters”—Access Radio 104.4FM 9.30am. Tune in—Hosted by Like Minds Taranaki
- Thur 2nd: NGO Meeting at Mt View Trust—11am
- Thur 2nd: “Turn the Page” Launch at Patea Library
- 14-15th: Right to Health Workshop—Wellington
- Thur 16th: Suicide Prevention Co-ord Mtg—1.30pm TDHB
- Thur 16th: Writer’s Support Gp, 2pm, at Like Minds Taranaki
- Mon 20th: WITT Orientation - ready for a great year.
- 22-23rd: Right to Health Workshop—Auckland
- Tue: 28th: Self Stigma Workshop for Providers of Services

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Turn the Page—Tahuri atu te Whārangī—Resources...

Taranaki Mental Health Sector Directory, 2011 Available at Like Minds Taranaki...

It has been a long haul, but Version 4 of this Directory is now available. This free 32 page Directory is sponsored by:

- Like Minds Taranaki
- Ministry of Social Development
- New Plymouth District Council
- Taranaki DHB - MH&A Services
- Taranaki Electricity Trust
- TSB Community Trust
- Tui Ora Ltd
- WITT

The Directory follows the same format as previously, however there is an extra section on Multi-Cultural and some additional info on countering stigma and discrimination.

Another Like Minds Taranaki Project

**MENTAL HEALTH SECTOR CONTACTS
TARANAKI**

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like minds Taranaki www.likemindstaranaki.org.nz
DECEMBER 2011
Celebrating Mental Health Awareness

TET Taranaki Electricity Trust
NEW PLYMOUTH DISTRICT COUNCIL
MINISTRY OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
TARANAKI DISTRICT HEALTH BOARD
WITT

This telephone/facsimile/email/website contact list has been compiled by Like Minds Taranaki. It is intended as a resource for people seeking in and supporting Mental Health Services in Taranaki. If, as a user, or potential user of this contact list, you would like to see additions and/or modifications, please contact Like Minds Taranaki Tole (06) 759 0966 or Email: mental.health@tra.co.nz

Health Navigator Aotearoa-New Zealand...

Are promoting themselves as a reliable, trusted health information centre for people with ongoing health conditions.

The site has been designed by doctors, nurses, allied health professionals and consumers, to link key information and resources in one place.

www.healthnavigator.org.nz

Smoking Ban in all public areas...please...

Sounds like a great idea...except that it may be an impossible thing to enforce.

Second hand smokers ruin many outdoor activities when their used smoke drifts across to non-smokers - often ex-smokers.

Smoking is not only a personal health hazard for the smoker, but their second hand smoke is also a health hazard to non-smokers.

Too few smokers have the courtesy to give consideration to how their habit, or as they see it, their pleasure, is affecting the pleasure of others.

Until smoker's health, or their family/whanau's health is affected - or the price continues to become prohibitive - non smokers will continue to be at the mercy of inconsiderate smokers.

Nice try Auckland DHB Health Promotion.

Mt View—Progress Report...

Local icons Chad and Bev Chadwick have decided to discontinue their long established and well respected supported accommodation and crisis respite services in Eltham. The sector is keen to learn what will happen to current residents and what **improved** services will become available to serve South Taranaki.

With the closures of Raumano Health Trust in Patea, Te Toka O Maru in Hawera and Campbell House in Opunake, South Taranaki—the South simply cannot afford to lose more services. To add additional concern to the mix - the South Taranaki District Council is reviewing its accommodation. Current indications are that some of their accommodation - popular with people on invalids' benefits - will be discontinued. **Not** having supported accommodation in South Taranaki would be like not having any residential care for older persons in the South—it simply cannot happen.

It is the time to provide *improved* targeted services in the South.

Life Skills Taranaki closes Hawera Office...

Due to a decline in the numbers of clients attending our Hawera centre we have regretfully decided that it is no longer cost effective for us to continue the present service. The centre closed on Friday Jan 20.

Like most organizations these days, we are operating under much tighter financial restraints and have had to re-evaluate the way we do things. There are some interesting new initiatives underway in other rural areas which we are presently assessing with the view to starting something new in the future. Meanwhile we are positive and remain committed to supporting disabled folk in South Taranaki—as we have done for 25 years.

John Leith GM.



Reprinted from the Manawatu Evening Standard

Mental health at work—myths and their impact...

The following are eight major myths and facts regarding the impact of mental illness on the workforce:

Myth 1: Mental illness is the same as mental retardation

Facts: These are two distinct disorders. A diagnosis of mental retardation is chiefly characterised by limitation in intellectual functioning as well as difficulties with certain daily living skills. In contrast, among persons with psychiatric disabilities, intellectual functioning varies as it does across the general population.

Myth 2: Mental disorders are just a figment of one's imagination.

Facts: Mental disorders are real. Mental illnesses and brain disorders provoke suffering, cause disability and can even shorten life, as is evident from episodes of depression after a heart attack, liver disease resulting from alcohol dependence or suicide.

In the year 2000, there was an estimated suicide death every 40 seconds. The underlying abnormal substructure of many disorders has been identified by images of the brain. Mental illnesses can be diagnosed and treated before it is too late. The symptoms are a sign of real illness.

Myth 3: Mental disorders are brought on by a weakness in character.

Facts: They are caused by biological, psychological and social factors. Research has shown genetic and biological factors are associated with schizophrenia, depression and alcoholism. Social influences, such as loss of a loved one or a job, can significantly contribute to the development of various disorders. Poor nurturing environments, whether the result of broken families or violence in the home or community, can result in an increased risk of mental illness.

Myth 4: Recovery from mental illness is not possible.

Facts: Long-term studies have shown that the majority of people with mental illnesses show genuine improvement over time and lead stable, productive lives. For many decades, mental illness was thought to be permanent and untreatable. People with mental illness were separated from the rest of society through institutionalization in mental hospitals.

As medications were discovered which helped to alleviate the symptoms of mental illness, there was a gradual evolution towards the provision of treatment and rehabilitation services in the community.

Myth 5: Mental illness only affects people in rich countries.

Facts: Mental and brain disorders are a concern for developed and developing nations. In a landmark WHO study of 27 developing and developed countries, no population was found to be free of schizophrenia.

Alcohol abuse is another common disorder that knows no boundaries. In Latin America, prevalence of heavy drinking ranges from 9.7% in Costa Rica to 35.6% in Paraguay.

Myth 6: Mentally ill and mentally restored employees (the term denotes when the disorder has been effectively treated) tend to be second-rate workers.

Facts: Employers who have hired these individuals report that they are higher than average in attendance and punctuality and as good or better than other employees in motivation, quality of work and job tenure.

Studies reported by US National Institute of Mental Health and National Alliance for the Mentally Ill conclude that there are no differences in productivity when compared to other employees.

Myth 7: People with psychiatric disabilities cannot tolerate stress on the job.

Facts: This oversimplifies the complex human response to stress. People with a variety of medical conditions, such as cardiovascular disease, multiple sclerosis and psychiatric disorders, may find their symptoms exacerbated by high levels of stress. However, the source of personal and job-related stress varies substantially between individuals.

Some people find an unstructured schedule to be very stressful while others struggle with a regimented workflow. Some people thrive on public visibility or high levels of social contact, while others require minimal interaction to focus and complete tasks. Workers with psychiatric disabilities vary in their response to stressors on the job.

In essence, all jobs are stressful to some extent. Productivity is maximised when there is a good match between the employee's needs and working conditions, whether or not the individual has a psychiatric disability.

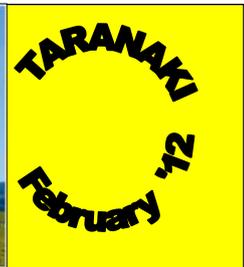
Myth 8: Mentally ill and mentally restored individuals are dangerous or violent.

Facts: The vast majority of these individuals are not dangerous or violent. Upon learning that an applicant has a mental illness, some employers may fear or believe that the individual is likely to become violent. This myth is reinforced by portrayals in the media of people with mental illnesses as frequently and randomly violent.

A scholarly review of the research literature by Cornell University [Ithaca, NY, USA] indicates that, "none of the data give any support to the sensationalized caricature of the mentally disordered served up in the media."

Original material from the Pan American Health Organization and the ILO/WHO publication, Mental Health and Work: Impact, Issues, and Good Practices.

Extract from: www.everybody.co.nz



Supported by the TSB Community Trust

WHAT'S ON NGĀ KAUPAPA O TE WĀ

Issue 55— *Compiled BY people on limited incomes FOR people on limited incomes...*
Please place on a notice board somewhere where people on limited incomes will notice it...

FEBRUARY 2012

- Until 29th Feb** **The Dark End of the Street Exhibition**—Real Tart Gallery—Portraits of those who are on the 'edgy' side of life by Taranaki artist John Sargeant. **FREE**
- Until 29th Nov** **Richmond Cottage**—Puke Ariki—11am-3:30pm on weekends and public holidays. Visit the historic cottage that was first built in 1853 and then rebuilt on its present site in 1962. **FREE**
- 4th Feb-16th Mar** **Anne Frank**—Lane and Wall Galleries, Puke Ariki. The Anne Frank travelling exhibition tells the story of Anne Frank and the Holocaust to people who are not able to visit the Anne Frank Museum in the Netherlands. **FREE**
- Thur 2nd Feb** **'Mental Health Matters' - Access Radio 104.4FM**—9:30—10am. Like Minds Taranaki are the hosts of this show discussing a wide range of special interest topics and topical events. Contact us at 759 0966 if you have any queries concerning any of the issues raised. **FREE**
- Sat 4th Feb** **Unofficial NZ Bike Trials Championship (Unicycles included)**—Wind Wand—11am-5pm. Entrants from all over the country ride over a course set along the Coastal Walkway. The trials are an extreme test of bicycle handling skills, over all kinds of obstacles. **FREE**
- Sun 5th Feb** **Old Genes Old Brain Talk**—Govett-Brewster Art Gallery—11:30. Len Lye Assistant Curator, Paul Brobbel speaks about Lye's theories on primal understandings of 'old genes' and the 'old brain' connecting to prehistoric origins of humanity. **FREE**
- Sun 5th Feb** **Pukeiti Conservation Walk**—Pukeiti Garden, 2290 Carrington Rd, 10:30am-2pm. Meet at the Gatehouse for a guided walk through the conservation forest past historic paintmines and the giant rimu. Bring a picnic, good walking boots, drinks and sunblock. This is part of the NPDC's Guided Walks Programme (moderate/hard.) Phone 0800 736 222. **FREE**
- Sun 5th Feb** **Women's MTB Ride**—Head out to Lake Mangamahoe for a women only guided ride over the cross country trails at Mountain Bike Park—suitable for all rider abilities. **FREE**
- Mon 6th Feb** **Waitangi Day Celebrations—Paepae in the Park**—Memorial Park, **PATEA**—9:30am. Hosted by the Patea Maori Club with national artists providing free entertainment. **FREE**
- Mon 6th Feb** **Exhibition Insight**—Govett-Brewster Art Gallery—11:30 and 2pm. Join staff for a walk and talk through current exhibitions. **FREE**
- Mon 6th Feb** **Western Wheeled Loop**—Ngamotu Beach Reserve by the oval car park, Ocean View Parade—10am—12pm. Join this guided bike ride along the Herekawe Walkway, Ngamotu Domain, Mangaotuku Stream, and more if there's time. Riders should be 10 years and above and you will need a mountain or off-road bike. Bookings essential 759-6060. **FREE**
- Mon 6th Feb** **Mitchell Cycles Road Ride**—Mitchell Cycles, 467 Devon St East, Strandon—5:30-7:30pm. A social ride and a great opportunity to learn techniques for safe riding in a group. **FREE**
- Fri 10th Feb** **Govett-Brewster Seniors**—Govett-Brewster Art Gallery—10am-2pm. Join Assistant Directory Helen Telford for an engaging conversation about the exhibitions. **FREE**
- Sun 12th Feb** **Sounds on the Sand**—Opunake Beach—1pm-4pm. Blues/country/sass band... **FREE**
- Thur 15th Feb** **Life Begins At 50 Expo**—TSB Hub, Camberwell Rd, **HAWERA**—10am. Stalls and main displays are in the upstairs lounge. Legal things worth knowing, future finances, fashions for the older figure, Sport Taranaki games and exercise, computers, community groups and much, more information available. Free tea and coffee. **FREE**

Public Holiday - Monday 6th February — Waitangi Day

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



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

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

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

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

Fri 17th Feb Wild West Bike Party—Huatoki Plaza—6pm—7:30pm. Bike jumping, bike racing, bike blinging and bike prizes. Spot prizes for onlookers and the best blinged up bikes. **FREE**

Fri 17th Feb Govett-Brewster Babes—Govett-Brewster Art Gallery—10am. Join in for a baby-friendly talk on Old Genes: Artists reading Len Lye. Morning tea is included. **\$5**

Sat 18th Feb Bike Fruit Salad—Wind Wand—12-2pm. On and off-road guided bike ride to Shepards Bush Orchard for a tour of the community orchard and fruit sampling. **FREE**

Sun 19th Feb Tropfest—TSB Bowl of Brooklands— 3pm-10:30pm. A showcase of the best short films from the 2012 Australian Competition. Each film is no more than seven minutes and the event will also include music and celebrity guests. **FREE**

Sat 25th Feb Americarna NZ Ltd—Taranaki wide. Saturday is the last day of the event and the opportunity for the public to not only view the vehicles on display at the New Plymouth Race course but also be treated to great entertainment and free rides for the kids. A family day where there's something for everyone. Contact Toni Fabish 06-759-0027. **FREE**

25 & 26 Feb RC Hydroplane Racing—Lake Cowley, **WAITARA**. 10am. Hosted by the Taranaki Model Powerboat Club, see boats reaching speeds of 90km per hour as they compete in heats. **FREE**

Sat 25th Feb Movies in the Park—Dallison Park, **WAVERLEY**—Starts at 12noon. Watch 3 movies on the big screen—Spiderman, Zookeeper and The Smurfs. **FREE**

Sun 26th Feb Sketch Like an Artist Workshop—Govett-Brewster Art Gallery—2-4pm. Join exhibiting artist Tessa Laird for a drawing workshop—basic drawing materials provided or BYO. **FREE**

Sun 26th Feb Methanex Family Fun Ride and Mayoral Challenge 2012—Ngamotu Beach—9am—11:30am. Join the Mayor for a fun morning of cycling and prize giveaways. Register at Mitchell cycles and get your bike and helmet checked out for free. Prizegiving at 11am. **\$2**

Mon,Wed BoxFit Taranaki Classes—50 Rimu St—5:30pm. Bring a towel and water. **\$3**

Mon&Thur Yoga at the Women's Centre—Every Mon at 5:15 pm and every Thur at 10:30am. **\$5**

Every Tue Tai Chi at the Women's Centre—Community House 32 Leach St.—1:30pm **\$5**

Every Wed Real Arts—2pm-4:30pm at Real TArt Community Gallery—a great opportunity for people with experience of mental illness or other disabilities, to participate in art and craft. Call Gordon on 759 0966. **GOLD COIN**

Every Thur O2 Project Thursday Ride—Wind Wand—6:30—8pm. Join the guys for an off-road guided bike ride. Rides alternate between an urban town ride and a trail ride at Lake Mangamahoe. The ride leaves whatever the weather every Thursday, all summer. **FREE**

Every Fri Creative Space – Art and craft for people with a disability—83 Hine St, 9am-4pm. **GOLD COIN**

Every Fri Whizzy Walkers— Meet at Plunket House at 10am. A walking group which has been formed specifically for caregivers who would like to join others in a brisk walk with their child and buggy for about an hour - a great way to make new friends while staying active. **FREE**

Modified Tai Chi Classes—Developed especially for older adults and made up of slow, gentle movements—the programme has proven to be effective in reducing the incidence of falls by improving balance, coordination, flexibility and lower leg strength. All classes are due to start early February and registrations are essential. Please contact Joelle Xavier at Sport Taranaki on 06-759-0930 ext 706 for more information. **FREE**

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

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

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



Self Stigma Workshop for Service Providers...

During Mental health Awareness Week, Like Minds Taranaki promoted Self-Stigma and Self-Discrimination workshops. These proved to be very popular with Service Users/Tangata Whaiora and we have since held a second workshop.

We also received a lot of interest from Service Providers and decided to hold a separate workshop especially for them.

We can now offer that 3 hr workshop on Tuesday 28th February, from 10-1pm at the Taranaki Disability Centre, 20 Young Street, NP.

We wish to limit numbers to 10 participants - so please, if you are interested, register with Like Minds Taranaki. 06-759-0966.

There is a \$20 registration fee to cover costs such as venue and morning tea.



Thought for the Issue:

Never miss a good chance to shut up.

Some of Max Cryer's thoughts...

Capitalism is man exploiting man; Socialism is the other way around.

Some people are born great and others achieve greatness. Some just grate.

I'm not tense, just terribly, terribly alert.

Gossip—someone with a great sense of rumour.

Diets are for people who are thick and tired of it.

Inside every older person is a younger person wondering what the hell happened.



Turn the Page...

Will be launched in Patea on Thursday the 2nd of February with the Patea District Library promoting the launch within their community.

Andrew Brock, one of the driving forces behind this project, was recently made redundant from Hauora Taranaki. A BIG THANK YOU Andrew for your foresight, enthusiasm and commitment to this simple, yet effective initiative.

The full book list is available on www.likemindstaranaki.org.nz and/or the STDC website

Alzheimer's Taranaki's Smart move...

They have shifted from the Taranaki DHB to the Smart Road Bowling Club and now operate two days a week - Tuesdays and Fridays.

Members are really enjoying the change of scenery and the lovely outlook from the new location. A hot meal is still being provided at midday along with a range of activities and entertainment. Transport too is available.

Contact the Coordinator, Delwyn on 06-751-0874

Employment : Taking the first step...

A guidebook for jobseekers with health issues.

Free copies available from Like Minds Taranaki.

For sale—12 left! "Seeds of Hope" Tee Shirts Top quality—Sizes L and 4XXXX \$10.00 only

Contact: Like Minds Taranaki. 06-759-0966 mental.health@xtra.co.nz

Coming Soon on Access Radio...



"Mental Health Matters"

December:

7th: Stress management (3)
14th: Surviving Christmas



9.30am every Thursday

Mental Wellness Groups

Like Minds Taranaki hosts regular support and discussion groups, where you can share your stories and experiences with others who are also on the journey to recovery. Enjoy a friendly, relaxed atmosphere and speak with complete confidentiality.

You can also benefit from writing and arts groups that allow you to tap into your creative side.

NEW PLYMOUTH GROUP TIMES AND LOCATIONS Contact Like Minds 06-759-0966

Discussion Group:

2nd & 4th Wednesday each month

10.30 am—12 pm

Taranaki Disability Information Center, Young Street, NP

Creative Writing Group:

3rd Thursday each month

2—3 pm

Like Minds Office

3rd Floor New Stirling Sports Bldg. Devon Street West

Post Natal Support Group:

Alternate Wednesdays

10 am

New Plymouth Women's Centre
32 Leach Street

Real Arts Group:

Every Wednesday

2pm—4.30pm

Real Tart Community Gallery
19 Egmont Street, NP



Taranaki Kowhaiwhai panel - The Hammerhead shark, Mangopare - 'keep positive, see it through'

Mindful Living

To many, this is viewed as “airy fairy new age nonsense” - of no value nor consequence. However if we all used Mindfulness in our everyday normal living, we would see the sense and the benefits of ‘Living Mindfully’.

Many people experience what one would see as insurmountable pain and obstacles throughout life, yet still they find purpose and some joyous qualities and richness in their life journey by living in the moment.

What is the Art of Mindful living?

It is a way of living in our world and being in harmony with the present moment rather than dwelling on what may have been, could have been, or might well be.

Next time you give your pet a meal just sit and quietly watch them. This was my light bulb moment. They enjoy each morsel of food and while eating they neither think about the past nor the future. They just savour the moment.

Try this next time you sit down to a meal. Breathe in the aroma coming from your plate, place a small morsel of food in your mouth and leave it there for a moment, enjoy the texture on your tongue and the burst of flavour when you bite on the food. Chew slowly and thoughtfully, just enjoying your meal - this is eating mindfully.

Living mindfully is the same; use your senses to smell the aromas around you, to experience the pleasures and the pain. We often fail to see the little things in life and these can be the things that actually make the world so beautiful. We are always busy and it seems as life moves along

we get even busier.

STOP! Look around you, Feel, Breathe, Touch, and Experience the thoughts and feelings you have.

Go outside and take a few brief moments to breathe in fresh air, think about the feel of your breath as it is drawn into your body through the nose and experience the release as you breathe out through your mouth.

Walk slowly over your lawn and as you walk feel the earth and grass beneath your feet.

As you place each foot down look at the ground, let your mind take in what you see. You will be surprised at all the little things we miss in our busy lives. When I take this exercise I see many different little grass plants popping through my lawn, dying twigs, leaves and flowers and new ones bursting to life.

Experience the feeling of the breeze, sun, cold air or even rain upon your face, such simple pleasures but so precious.

You have just experienced your first lesson in Mindful living.

Quote of the Day: Yesterday is History. Tomorrow a Mystery. Today is a precious gift to treasure and enjoy. That is why we call it the Present.

Karen Wehle



MINDFULNESS TECHNIQUES

Here are three ways in which you can find calm in the midst of disruptive and upsetting times. When the big picture of life seems overwhelming, focusing down on the smallest details can help to bring you back to peace.

BREATHING

Place your hand on your stomach and feel it rise and fall with each breath. Just feel the rise and fall of your stomach, and try to maintain focus on your breathing. Do this at least three times. If you find your breathing is restricted in the stomach, just be aware of the breath wherever it is most apparent for you. Use this technique regularly throughout the day.

STRONG EMOTIONS

When strong emotions arise, finding a sense of balance is important. Don't try to bury what you're feeling, take some time to acknowledge what you're feeling – fear, suffering, anger, sorrow – or maybe a confusing mixture of these and others. Tell yourself that it's ok to feel this way, and try to concentrate on how your body is physically responding to your emotions. Use the breathing technique described above. Remember, the goal is not to chase the strong emotions away, but to “ride out the storm” as best you can, being aware of the experience and not letting it overwhelm you.

WALKING

Walking is something we do without thinking, like blinking and breathing. But try this as a calming exercise the next time you go for a walk. Try and focus your attention on each footstep. Being aware of your body and simple movements can act as an anchor when there is chaos around you, or within you.



ECT

Mental illness is as old as the mind itself; so are its mysteries. In a sense, we're doing things backwards when it comes to treating mental illness; creating solutions, before we fully understand the problem.

There is a comprehensive list of psychiatric medications for almost every condition. Fortunately, we don't need to know, exactly, how many of these treatments work—it's enough to know that they do.

These drugs have improved millions of lives—a fact unchanged by our partial ignorance of their therapeutic mechanisms.

Another unfortunate fact, is that medication doesn't work for everyone. Electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) is a form of treatment which may benefit people beyond the reach of medication alone.

There is a level of controversy surrounding ECT, stemming in part from its history when the process was not as refined as it is today. There are also lingering concerns that the procedure may impair cognitive function and memory.

Popular culture has also contributed to this negative image, with ECT famously being portrayed as a tool of punishment in the novel *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* and its movie adaptation.

Fortunately, although there are

some reports that it has been abused, in the majority of cases the reality of ECT differs greatly from its portrayal in Ken Kesey's 1962 novel.

Although its roots can be traced back as early as the 16th century, modern Convulsive Therapy was pioneered as a treatment for mental illness by Hungarian neuropsychiatrist Ladislav J. Meduna in 1934.

Meduna mistakenly believed that schizophrenia and epilepsy could not coexist in a patient. By his reasoning, artificially inducing a seizure would be therapeutic for a patient with schizophrenia.

The first agents used to induce such a seizure were camphor, and then the drug metrazol. Using electricity instead of these substances was viewed as not only being cheaper and more convenient, but was also viewed as being less frightening.

Italian neuropsychiatrists Ugo Cerletti and Lucio Bini created electroconvulsive therapy in 1938. Its use became widespread during the 1940s and 1950s, and it has steadily evolved since its introduction.

Originally, the patient was sent into a seizure while fully conscious, which could result in both mental and physical trauma; fracture or dislocation of the long bones during convulsions was a rare but serious side effect of this "unmodified" treatment.

In most countries today, patients are given a muscle relaxant and short-acting anesthetic before ECT is administered—preventing

both convulsions and significant emotional distress. Some studies have found that the procedure is seen by many patients as being no worse than going to the dentist.

Electroconvulsive therapy has been proven to be an effective treatment primarily in cases of depression, and also mania and catatonia. But it is not without its detractors.

Like psychiatric medicine, ECT has also been shown to have possible side effects. Patients have been shown to experience memory disturbance and confusion upon waking after being given ECT. These feelings usually fade within half an hour, but it is common to lose memories of a short period before and after the treatment.

In some cases however, patients have reported feeling that their memory has been permanently damaged. Some also believe that their ability to process new information has been impaired.

Although there may be a degree of risk in receiving ECT, there are still many who believe that the benefits of the procedure outweigh any negative aspects.

For some people, medication simply does not work for the conditions they are experiencing; electroconvulsive therapy offers a degree of hope when other options have been exhausted.

Although science has yet to explain how ECT works, it still has the power to change lives.

Tony Spencer

"Korero Mai" is edited by Gordon Hudson, *"What's On"* by Stephanie Mapley and *"Whakaaro Pai"* by Tony Spencer—all from Like Minds Taranaki. Your news and views are eagerly sought. Like Minds Taranaki, P O Box 5015, New Plymouth, 3rd Floor, Stirling Sports Building, Devon Street West, NP, ph 06-759-0966 mental.health@xtra.co.nz. www.likemindstaranaki.org.nz
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