



“Korero Mai”

for those interested in the provision of mental health services

WHAT'S ON

providing educational and recreational activities for \$5.00 and under

Whakāro Pai

for Service Users/Tangata Whaiora by Service Users/Tangata Whaiora

Issue 38 MAY 2013

Kia ora, Talofa lava, Kia orana, Malo e lelei, Fakalofa lahi atu, Talohani, Bula vinaka, Ni Hao, Namaste, Greetings...

Parting thoughts from a departing manager



By GORDON HUDSON

I have loved my time as Manager of Like Minds Taranaki.

There have been so many inspirational people overcoming, sometimes on a daily basis, hurdles that I cannot imagine having to live with. Wonderful stories too, of people making remarkable recoveries – stronger, more resilient and with a great deal more understanding of their own and others’ mental wellbeing. It is all these people who provide the reason and inspiration to do what we do – to promote mental health, to demystify mental illness and to counter stigma and discrimination whenever and wherever it occurs. This has, over the years, involved just about every Government agency possible, politicians and of course local mental health services – primary, secondary and NGOs – usually with positive outcomes for all concerned.

Continued Page 2

Help now at hand for mums

Women experiencing post-natal distress can seek support from those who have been there.

The Like Minds Taranaki Post-Natal Support Group has been restarted by three women who want to reach out to others.

These organisers say this “glorified coffee group” is a safe, caring and supportive place for women to come and share with others.

The trio also says meeting like-minded people can be extremely helpful on the journey to wellness.

This support group meets from 10am to 12 noon on the first and third Wednesday of each month at the New Plymouth Women’s Centre in Community House, next to the YMCA. Child care is available.

For more information about this group, please contact Like Minds Taranaki on 06 759 0966 or 0800 454 536 or email mental.health@xtra.co.nz.

Coming Events: MAY 2013

- Every Wed: Real Arts at Real Tart, NP, 1-4pm
- Every Thur: “Mental Health Matters” Access Radio 104.4FM, 9.30am
- Wed 1 & 15: Post Natal Support Group at NP Women’s Centre, 10am-12 noon
- Thur 9: Peer Support Group at Stratford Community House, 10am
- Wed 8 & 22: Focus Group at Like Minds, 10.30am-12noon
- Mon 13 & 27: Peer Support Gp, 164 Princes St, Hawera, 10am
- Thur 16: Writers’ Support Group at Like Minds, 2pm (this month’s subject: The Time Machine)
- Thur 30: Mates Men’s Meeting, Progress to Health, 15 Dawson St, NP, 2-4pm

In this Issue:

Gordon’s farewell thanks (contd)	2
Taranaki Rural Support Trust contacts	2
Call goes out for respite care	3
Dress for Success helps women	3
Immunise for winter	3
We want your stories	3
‘What’s On’ for MAY– Issue 69	4
Keys provides affordable homes	6
ABC of loneliness	6
Same-sex marriage counters discrimination	7
Local Support groups in Taranaki	7
‘Sleeping well’ —article by Tony Spencer	8



Check us out and LIKE us on Facebook [Like Minds Taranaki](http://www.facebook.com/LikeMindsTaranaki)



Farewell thanks from Gordon Hudson

Continued from Page 1...

Years ago, I attended a national seminar where the 'catch phrase' from Service Users was "Nothing about us without us". This is as relevant today as it was some 15 years ago.

As Manager of Like Minds Taranaki, I have extended that philosophy to include one where we do not undertake any project without first seeking the support of other like-minded agencies – professional, social, political, commercial and, of course, mental health.

As a team at Like Minds Taranaki, we have been able to follow this philosophy because of the mandate determined, and the freedom given, by dedicated Trustees – so ably led by our Chair, Kelvin Stephens.

Along the way, Like Minds Taranaki has been able to gather a wonderful team of people, past and

present, who started by volunteering with us and then slowly became part of the paid team. I owe a huge debt to them... as I embarrass them all by telling them. Often.

I want to pay a special tribute to the large number of volunteers who so generously use their experiences of mental distress to ease that of others – volunteers who facilitate our weekly Real Arts group, our fortnightly Wellness Support group, our fortnightly Post Natal Support group and our Creative Writers Support group. And an ongoing tribute to Tom Gibson for his dedication in ensuring the support group in Hawera is successful to the point of bursting.

Cultural safety and support has always been important to me and to Like Minds Taranaki and in this regard, I cannot express my gratitude enough to the Rangatira and whanau of Tui Ora Ltd and to many other kaupapa Maori services for all their manaakitanga and aroha.

Project highlights have been many indeed, and have often centered around Mental Health Awareness Weeks and/or a specific group's needs.

There is no other region in New Zealand that has such direct input from the whole sector into Mental Health Awareness Week as does Taranaki. Each year, a fantastic team of mental health service representatives and volunteers plan up to a dozen projects to promote mental health during that week – or in the case of Taranaki – weeks.

There have been so many highlights: the poroporoaki after the annual social/barbeque in Hawera, where about 100 service users let their hair down; the wonderful Recognition Awards, where service users acknowledged those who had helped them towards recovery; the

joint public presentations, with the Taranaki DHB's Mental Health and Addiction Services team; the art exhibitions and auctions; the 'active sports/recreation' events; the launch of 'Turn the Page'; the media publicity, and sharing of personal stories – and so much more.

Of real interest to me has been the work associated with special sectors such as rural Taranaki, the elderly, new settlers and the disadvantaged.

I think the amazing response to workplace bullying has been a major highlight too, where much more needs to be achieved. It occurs in all sectors of society. Anyone experiencing workplace bullying is feeling acute stress.

'Another major issue is suicide prevention.'
— Gordon Hudson

Another major issue is suicide prevention. At last this is being recognised as a major concern – now much more than talking needs to occur if our appalling numbers of deaths by suicide are to decrease.

For the most part, mental health and addiction services in Taranaki, both in the hospitals and in the community, are well managed and we can have a great deal of confidence in the future. However, in the process of supporting Tangata Whaiora, there have been rare occasions when it has been necessary to provide feedback about services that could improve. Unfortunately, this may sometimes have been received as criticism – which was not my intention.

My time at Like Minds as manager has been devoted to promoting mental health, and the work of mental health services, and to encouraging Tangata Whaiora and those supporting their recovery – whether through Korero Mai, Whakaaro Pai, booklets, brochures, public presentations, radio, print media or word-of-mouth.

Succession planning has taken almost a year, but now the sector can feel confident that with our new manager, Virginia Winder, at the helm, the kaupapa of Like Minds Taranaki will continue, albeit with new ventures into areas utilising new technology to reach a wider audience.

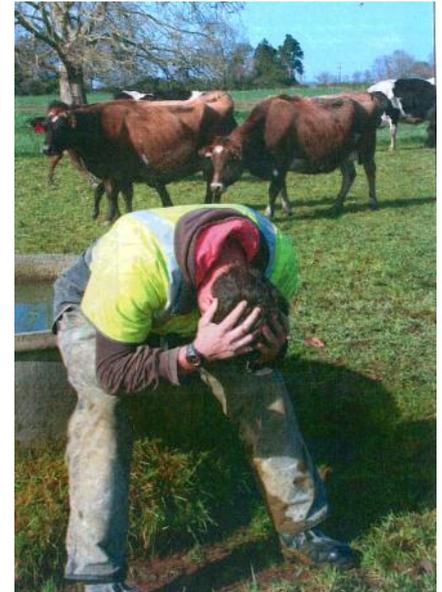
Our wonderful national leadership provides a great deal of flexibility to respond to local needs, and I hope that this support will continue.

And finally, a big thank-you to my partner Jan. She has always been behind the scenes as a volunteer at Like Minds Taranaki. I am looking forward to spending more time with her in the years to come. I would like to express, through Korero Mai, what a privilege and pleasure it has been to work with so many dedicated and talented people, involved personally and professionally with the promotion of mental health.



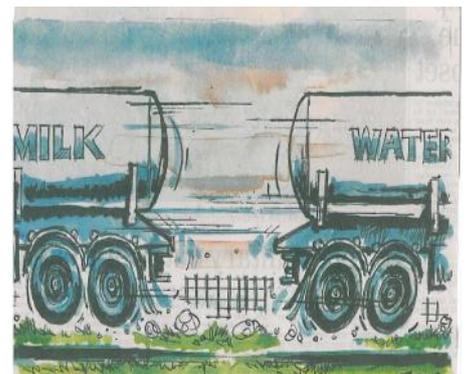
**Farmers helping farmers...
and doing it well.**

"When circumstances beyond your control lead to a rural crisis—be it financial, climatic or personal—The Taranaki Rural Support Trust is ready to assist."



All trust members are rural people with local knowledge and experience...

Harvey Leach	06-764-8333
Derek Gibson	06-752-7642
John McMurray	06-756-7099
Graeme Hight	06-754-4404
Hannah Dent	06-757-3423
Paul Bourke	06-761-8895
Blue Read	06-752-3698
Katrina Knowles	021-831-944
Dave Hopkins	06-757-3423
Office:	06-757-3423



Courtesy - Manawatu Evening Standard

Call goes out for respite services

Request for proposals (RFPs) for Mental Health & Addictions Crisis and planned Respite Services for Adults and Youth are under way.

At long last, planned quality services in these areas are happening. This initiative is a response to reviews that found a lack of service provision for youth and adult crisis and planned respite.

Services sought include:

- Adult crisis/planned respite for North Taranaki – based in New Plymouth.
- Adult crisis/planned respite for South and Central Taranaki.
- Youth crisis/planned respite for Taranaki.

Given the complex range of socio-economic factors that contribute to health inequalities for Tangata Whaiora, funding and planning are seeking a co-ordinated approach. A strong collaborative approach to working is expected.

The RFP process is thorough in detailing expectations for much-needed quality services. The RFPs close this Friday (May 2) and the services are expected to be operational by July 1.

If the financial expectations and implications can be met by a successful proposer, then Taranaki will indeed have age-specific planned/crisis respite services that will cater for the needs of Tangata Whaiora in their own region. Let us hope this is the outcome.

Don't let the flu knock you - Get Immunised

No one wants to get influenza this winter, so go now to your GP and get your flu vaccine.

To develop immunity after the vaccine it can take up to two weeks so get immunised as soon as possible.

For high-risk groups who are more likely to get complications (like pregnant women, those with chronic health condition and those 65 and older) influenza immunisation is free - ask your doctor.

Dress for Success enables women to look their best

Women in need of a job interview makeover have help at hand – for free.

Dress for Success New Plymouth has a collection of work-ready clothes and stylists available to give women a boost when they are heading into an interview situation, says programme manager Marie Eagle.

The women must be referred to Dress for Success by an organisation and only when they have a job interview. "They can't just walk in off the street," Marie says. "The women can go through any training provider, support group, Work and Income, Citizen's Advice."

Like Minds Taranaki is one of the organisations that can refer women. Marie says there is a real need for Dress for Success because women who have been out of work for long time often don't have work-appropriate clothing.

That can be because of their financial situation and also because mothers often put everyone else in their household before their own needs.

To be referred to Dress for Success, someone from an organisation needs to phone and book a time with a personal stylist.

The woman will then go to their one-on-one session, where they try on items of clothing until they find an outfit they feel comfortable in. "When successful in getting the job, they can mix and match items to get them through their first week until their first



Marie Eagle: Women need to be referred to Dress for Success.

pay day, so they don't have to stick to that one outfit," Marie says. "We want them walking out of here feeling confident about how they look."

Another bonus is the women get to keep the clothes.

Because of that, Dress for Success New Plymouth always needs more clothing donations.

"The clothes to date have all been donated by word of mouth," Marie says.

People wanting to give clothes or to make a referral, can contact Marie on 06 769 5292 or email her at newplymouth@dressforsuccess.org



If you are not eligible for free vaccination some employers pay for it, otherwise the cost is around \$25. For free health advice call Healthline 0800 611 116. For advice about influenza immunisation visit www.fightflu.co.nz.

Seeking stories

We want to hear stories about your journey to wellness.

The first of an ongoing series of features about people with experience of mental illness was launched in the *Taranaki Daily News* on Saturday, April 27. There will also be articles from experts, who will share tools and tips.

If you have a story to share, please contact Like Minds Taranaki manager Virginia Winder on 06 7590966, or 0800 454 536 or email mental.health@xtra.co.nz.



We are you... Photo: Taranaki Daily News, Cameron



Supported by the TSB Community Trust

WHAT'S ON NGĀ KAUPAPA O TE WĀ

Issue 69—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...

MAY 2013

- Wed May 1** **Photogram Workshop**—Taranaki Research Centre, Level 2, Puke Ariki Library—6-8pm. Make photographic images without a camera. Join Ruth and Charlotte as they take you step-by-step through this fascinating process and help you create some amazing images to take home. Places are limited and bookings are essential—phone 06 759 6060. **FREE**
- Wed May 1** **May Day—Disability May Affect You**—Barretts Lounge—TDHB—10am-2pm. Come and meet some of the disability aid dogs in Taranaki plus information displays from a wide range of local disability organisations. Register your attendance on the day and be in to win a gift hamper. **FREE**
- Thur May 2** **'Mental Health Matters' - Access Radio 104.4FM**—9:30-10am. Cecily Bull interviews the new manager of Like Minds Taranaki, Virginia Winder. **FREE**
- Thur May 2** **Storytelling**—Waitara Community Library—**WAITARA**—2-3pm. Come on into the library for a bedtime story with Tanya Batt. Listen to the magic 'Abracadabra Bed', a lively tale, created by Helen Baconand. There will be a craft activity to finish. **FREE**
- Fri May 3** **Hui-A-Toi: Knitting**—Puke Ariki—10am-12pm. Come and get crafty with like-minded people and learn new skills. These free regular sessions take place the first Friday of every month. All welcome, whatever your experience level, and all materials are supplied. This month gear up as it starts to cool down by joining in for morning tea and knitting. Bring along your own unfinished project or get started on something new. **FREE**
- Fri May 3** **Storytelling**—Inglewood Community Library—**INGLEWOOD**—2-3pm. Come into the library for a bedtime story with Tanya Batt. Listen to the magic 'Abracadabra Bed' created by children's illustrator Helen Bacon. Hear a lively tale of princesses, ice-cream and dinosaurs with a craft activity to finish. **FREE**
- Sun May 5** **Tupare—Elizabeth Garden Design Project 1**—Tupare Gardens, 487 Mangorei Road—2-4pm. Design and planning—this is the first workshop in a practical series in which we will redesign an area of Tupare. **FREE**
- Tue May 7** **Assistive Equipment Expo**—Blind Foundation Rooms, 129-131 Vivian St. 10am-2pm. Come and see the display of equipment and aids for the less able. View, watch a demo and talk to the experts. Find out what you can access now or in the future. **FREE**



Bite-Size Law—Autumn Series

Every Tuesday from May 8 until the June 11 (inclusive) at: Taranaki Community Law—65 Devon St West. You are invited to attend a series of free informative bite-sized sessions. Speakers will vary each week. Due to limited spaces please register your interest at least one week in advance of each seminar, you can register for as many as you want at a time. Contact: Angela or Alexa on: 06 759 1492 or email alexa.tcls@xtra.co.nz or angela.tcls@xtra.co.nz. **FREE**

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|---------------|------------------------------------|----------------|-------------------------------------|
| May 7 | Trial Periods in Employment | May 14 | Redundancy |
| May 21 | Tenancy/Renting and the law | May 28 | Relationship Property |
| June 4 | Consumer Rights | June 11 | Discrimination in Employment |

"What's On" is emailed to almost 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—Held at Tui Ora Ltd, 164 Princes Street **HAWERA**—10am-12pm, Monday and 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. This month's meetings are May 13 and 27. **GOLD COIN**

Peer Support Group—Community House, 52 Juliet St, **STRATFORD**—Every second Thursday, (May 9) 10am-12pm. For people and families with mental health and/or addiction issues. This peer-led group provides an opportunity to meet with other people who have shared similar experiences. Come and talk, listen to each other, have some fun and offer each other coping strategies towards recovery. For further information, please text or phone Mihi at Tui Ora Hawera office 06-278-6603 or Kevin at Tui Ora NP 06-759-4064. **GOLD COIN**

Post-natal Support Group (Peri-natal)—1st and 3rd Wednesday of each month from 10am—12noon. This group is open to all mothers experiencing post-natal distress and is held in the Women's Centre, Community House, 32 Leach Street (at the end of the car park next to the YMCA) Child care is available. For more information on this group contact Like Minds Taranaki on 759 0966, or TDHB Peri-Natal team: 753 6139. **FREE**

MATES Men's Meeting—Groups held at 45 Regent St, **HAWERA** on the 1st and 3rd Thursday of the month 7-9:30pm and at TDIC, 28 Young St **NP** on the 2nd and last Thursday of the month 7-9:30pm. There is also a group aimed at men living with the challenge of mental health issues and held on the last Thursday of every month at Progress To Health, 15 Dawson St, **NP** 2-4pm. **FREE**

Thur May 16 **Understanding Life Through the Quantum Veil**—St Mary's Peace Hall, Vivian St (opposite St Mary's Cathedral)—7:30-9:30pm. Dr Roger Hanson will present a beginners guide to quantum physics, its associated bizarre phenomena, and its role in life and the environment. He will explain why quantum physics will be responsible for a new technological revolution as far reaching as the computer revolution. Dr Hanson is a gifted presenter who so ably brings science alive for his listeners. **\$5**

Sun May 26 **Rare and Endangered Plants Workshop**—Hollard Gardens, **STRATFORD**—2-4pm. Hollard Gardens works alongside the TRC Biodiversity Department to propagate local rare and endangered plants—learn more and see how you can help too. **FREE**

Wed May 29 **Photogram Workshop**—Taranaki Research Centre, Level 2, Puke Ariki Library—6-8pm. Make photographic images without a camera. Join Ruth and Charlotte as they take you step-by-step through this fascinating process and help you create some amazing images to take home. Places are limited and bookings are essential—phone 06 759 6060. **FREE**

Thur May 30 **Tea and Topics: Remembering World War II**—Puke Ariki—10-11am. Enjoy a cuppa and a bikkie while picking up some top tips from local experts in their field. Takes place the last Thursday of every month. This month Brian Clark shares his memories of wartime. **FREE**



Every Mon **Tai Chi for Beginners**—Labour Party Rooms, Tukapa St—10:45-11:15 **\$2**

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

Every Tue **Active in Age Programme**—TSB Stadium—10am-12pm—Tai Chi session 11-12pm **\$3**

Every Wed **Real Arts**—1pm-4pm at Real TArt Community Gallery—an opportunity for people with experience of illness to participate in art & craft. Call Virginia oh 759 0966. **GOLD COIN**

Every Fri **Tai Chi**—Stratford War Memorial Facilities Room, Miranda St, **STRATFORD**—9:30-10:30 **\$5**

Every Fri **Whizzy Walkers**—Meet at Plunket House at 10am. A walking group specifically for caregivers who would like to join others in a brisk walk with their child and buggy for about an hour. **FREE**

Every Sun **New Plymouth Joggers and Walkers**—Pukekura Park Cricket Pavilion—8:30-9:30. All ages and abilities catered for with the different groups that head out for an hours walk or jog. **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 or email us here at Like Minds Taranaki at mental.health@xtra.co.nz*

The next "What's On" will be in late May for June



Group provides key to affordable homes in region

Keys co-ordinators Diana Watson and Annie Beale continue to be busy supporting people into housing in both North and South Taranaki.

Referrals come from many outside agencies, service providers and groups in the community.

In the last three months, Keys has had great success in making a difference in the lives of 44 people, doing its best to ensure that these people accessed affordable housing in the community.

Keys work closely with many private landlords, rental property agents and Housing NZ.

Keys is not only about finding a home; the organisation can also support people to access the correct entitlements at Work and Income, set up power connections and assist people to obtain suitable furniture/household items for the home.

Recently, Keys has been involved in producing the "Housing in Taranaki" booklet – A guide to short-term housing.

This booklet has been produced by the Taranaki Housing Coalition Group, which Keys is a part of.

The main purpose of the booklet is to provide information on the process of renting, where to go, to what to expect, and what to do if a problem arises.

This informative publication also gives information on accommodation options, an overview of the Residential Tenancies Act (in easy language), rights and responsibilities, and the steps to take that may arise in tenancy situations.

The official launch of the booklet is planned for sometime in May, so watch media for details.



ABC of loneliness...



Acceptance, Belonging and Connecting are key requirements for social inclusion.

Social inclusion is the topic of this year's Like Minds National Seminar in Auckland being held in early May. It is timely and topical – particularly as winter approaches and sometimes making the effort to be and stay connected is just that much harder.

In Taranaki, the Bishop's Action Foundation has been looking at some of the issues of loneliness – particular loneliness in older age.

Research from the UK reveals a sudden upsurge in declared loneliness. This is surprising, as many people would normally shy away from admitting anything like being lonely.

At the risk of being accused of seeing stigma and discrimination wherever I look, I too want to add my concerns to the plight of too many older people, particularly those who have lost their partners and have had to come to terms with learning to socialise on their own. Some find that task too difficult. Sometimes this is because their partner was the main social

organiser and, with the partner's loss, the remaining partner may have forgotten those basic social organisational skills that are needed to be socially connected.

However, loneliness affects people of all age groups. Research undertaken by Statistics New Zealand, presented in 2011, found that loneliness is a bigger issue in youth (18%) than in the 30-64 age group (16%) and in people older than 65 (14%). Women are more likely to feel lonely than men. The report said loneliness and mental health were strongly related across all ages. The same can happen to people with experience of mental illness. So many people, rather than face the wider community, and sometimes their friends, choose to socially isolate themselves, to struggle with their recovery on their own – making such recovery that much more difficult and possibly not nearly as successful. Hopefully, Like Minds Taranaki will be a little more aware of the issues after the upcoming national seminar and will follow up these comments with updated research and suggestions.

By Gordon Hudson

Congratulations goes out to...

Shane Smith – Pathways new Service and Relationship Manager – a new post within Pathways, with more responsibilities.

Helen Frank, Angela Gates, Cheryl Gyde and David Hopkins have been appointed to Team Coach positions at

Pathways.

Leanne Penn has been appointed Manager for Progress to Health's Taranaki operations.

These are all wonderful promotions from within their respective organisations, which is great news for all.



Passing same-sex marriage bill shows political courage

The passing of the same-sex marriage bill is another major step forward in countering stigma and discrimination.



Whatever your thoughts about the pros and cons of marriage between same sex couples – the fact that most politicians chose to support Louisa Wall's proposal for legalising same-sex marriages indicates a degree of political courage that was not totally expected.

Without doubt, the majority of the community would have preferred a more conservative approach. This did not deter politicians from acting on the principles of anti-stigma and anti discrimination and taking away another burden to equality.

Like Minds Taranaki has a significant role in countering the stigma and discrimination associated with mental illness and addictions and we see this move as yet further evidence that New Zealand is indeed becoming a more tolerant accepting place, celebrating differences.

By Gordon Hudson

Coming Soon on Access Radio...



"Mental Health Matters"
May
Every Thursday 9.30am

Virginia Winder
In her new role as Manager
Like Minds Taranaki



9.30am
every Thursday of each month

Thought for the Issue:

"When the door of happiness closes, another opens, but often times we look so long at the closed door that we don't see the one which has been opened for us." - Helen Keller

Hawera support group:

The venue at Tui Ora Ltd at 164 Princes Street, Hawera, is ideal, if a little cramped... (the down side of success!)

Next meeting— May 13

Held alternate Mondays 10-12 noon, and ably facilitated by Tom Gibson— 06-764-6417. Give him a call...

STRATFORD SUPPORT GROUP...

For people and Families/Whanau with mental health and/or addiction problems.

Every second Thursday (May 9)
10am-12pm. Contact Mihi 06-278-6603 or Kevin 06-759-4064.

Held at the Stratford Community House, 52 Juliet St., Stratford.

Employment:

Taking the first step...

A 64-page guidebook for jobseekers with health issues.
Free copies available from Like Minds Taranaki.



Your experience as a mental health consumer has value—you could help improve the quality of care provided not only in Taranaki, but throughout New Zealand.

If you're interested in making a difference, why not join the Taranaki Consumer Advisory Group?

Meetings held from 12.30-1.30pm, at room 11, Mental Health Outpatients unit, Taranaki Base Hospital, on the last Thursday of each month.

For more information please email:
tcag@hotmail.co.nz
or call Tony Spencer on:
759 0966

Expressions of interest for...
Self-stigma and Discrimination
2-hour workshops

Contact Cecily Bull at
Like Minds Taranaki
06 759 0966 or 0800 454 536

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 noon

Like Minds Taranaki Office
3rd Floor Brougham House
50 Devon Street West

Creative Writing Group:

3rd Thursday each month
2—3 pm

Like Minds Taranaki Office
3rd Floor Brougham House.
50 Devon Street West

Real Arts Group:

Every Wednesday
1—4.00pm

Real Tart Community Gallery
19 Egmont Street, NP

New Support Group...

Post-natal Support Group (Peri-natal Support Group)

10-12noon

*1st and 3rd Wednesdays
of each month*

At the NP Womens Centre

*This is a supportive non-clinical
group offering support.
Child care available.*

For more information contact:
Like Minds Taranaki 06-759-0966
NP Womens' Centre 06-758-4957
TDHB Peri Natal Team
06-753-9815



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

SLEEPING WELL

Thanks to technology, we are now living in a world that provides activity and stimulation 24 hours a day; it can sometimes seem like an inconvenience to take time out to rest. Sleep remains something we have a tendency to take for granted.

While science doesn't yet fully understand how sleep works, you don't need to be a scientist to have an idea of its importance. It doesn't matter if it was because of social activities (preferably ours and not a neighbour's), a restless mind, or that "one last level" which turned into an all-night gaming session that kept us awake; we often notice that our level of functioning has been impaired after a night without sleep.

Living with this (often self inflicted) sort of "mental hangover" seems to be a fact of life for many in their teenage years, but it's something we seem to grow more sensitive to as we get older. As the pressures of life increase with age, so too does the importance of performing to the maximum of our ability.

To use a metaphor, sleep is like a tree. Early on in life we pick its fruit without paying too much attention to maintaining it, but eventually the tree may suffer and struggle to feed us. We later see sleep as something that should be nurtured rather than exploited.

How can we place a greater emphasis on healthy sleep?

Caffeine can have a negative effect on sleep onset and quality, so it's a good idea to restrict your intake during the day, and refrain from drinking any coffee or caffeine-containing beverages for at least four hours prior to bedtime.

Computer screens emit a spectrum of light similar to daylight which may delay your brain's sleep impulse. Therefore, it's a good idea to stop using a computer about an hour before bed.

One important way we can help improve our sleep is to follow a routine, getting up at the same time every morning, and retiring to bed at the same time each night. Try to restrict your sleep to these times, without taking naps during the day or sleeping in on weekends. This helps to "program your body's clock" so you get used to sleeping and waking at the same time each day.

Similarly, it's a good idea to try to program your mind to associate your bed and bedroom with relaxation and sleep, which means avoiding using it for activities that may cause you stress.

If mental chatter is a contributing factor to your inability to sleep, then mindfulness exercises may be able to help you to channel it out.

One great exercise is to focus on

your breathing, slowly inhaling and exhaling using your full lung capacity and diaphragm, and concentrating on nothing else but the sensation of each breath you take. This is a way to both clear the mind and relax the body.

Unfortunately, technology hasn't created a "magic bullet" when it comes to getting a good night's sleep; as much as we may wish it would be so, it's not a matter of just getting a prescription for sleeping pills.

CHECKLIST FOR A GOOD SLEEP:

- Invest in a good quality mattress.
- Have blackout curtains in your bedroom.
- Keep your bedroom at a comfortable temperature.
- Establish as quiet an environment as possible.
- Wait to go to bed until you're tired.
- Don't try and force yourself to go to sleep.
- Try not to go to bed stressed or worried.

Some people find it easier to sleep with some sort of soft background noise. If you have an iPod or iPhone, one App that is available is called Sleep Pillow, which is capable of playing a number of ambient soundtracks.



Tony Spencer

"Korero Mai" is edited by Virginia Winder, *"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, PO Box 5015, New Plymouth, 3rd Floor, Brougham House, Devon Street West, NP, ph 06-759-0966 mental.health@xtra.co.nz, www.likemindstaranaki.org.nz

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