



# Supporting Families/Whānau Taranaki Newsletter

November 2016

## Suicide Prevention Day Success

The theme for this year's Suicide Prevention Awareness Day was 'Connect, Communicate and Care'.

Suicide Prevention Taranaki, a collaboration of local NGOs, Not-for-profits and other interested individuals, used this theme as a basis for developing activities to boost awareness- notably a silent auction for cakes kindly donated by bakers and local businesses: Humdinger Cakes, Novotel New Plymouth, Chaos Café, Momo for Cakes, Public Catering Company, Robert Harris, Green Door Café, and Shirley Vickery (from SF of course).

The event raised \$600 for suicide prevention activities, created a resource display and provided an opportunity for people to connect. It is estimated that over 100 conversations were had with people in need of advice and support within the 6 hours the display was at Centre City.



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## Wanted: *Experiences of mental health care*

*Campaigners are endeavouring to get the Government to hold an inquiry into the crisis in mental health services in Aotearoa, by providing a new platform for people to publicise their experiences of the system.*

Mike King and Kyle MacDonald have joined forces to create the People's Mental Health Review Campaign. MacDonald said there are signs the mental health system is in crisis, and he has backed the call of the Green Party and others for the Government to establish a national inquiry.

MacDonald said: "For the last six months, I have been talking to people, had phone calls from professionals and colleagues expressing concern at what's going on in their local areas, which is why it seems to feel out of step with what we are hearing from the ministry and the Government... I hear so many stories of people struggling to access services, not being able to see a therapist or a psychiatrist, from consumers and clinicians that I thought it was important to bring those voices to the public."

He and King, with not-for-profit group Action Station, are creating a website to publish the stories of anyone involved with mental health care - patients, their families, and health-care practitioners - on a purpose-built website, **public-mentalhealthreview.nz**.

"The [people's] review is founded on the belief that those calling for change don't need more statistics," MacDonald said. "Instead, stories will help personalise the problems within the system, galvanise popular support and force the Government to take notice and hopefully provoke a royal commission of inquiry or ministerial inquiry ..."

Emergency calls show mental health system overwhelmed. Information released to the People's Mental Health Review shows that calls made to Police Communication Centres ("1-1-1" calls) have been steadily increasing over the last five years, and for the financial 2015/ 2016 up 50% on 2011/ 2012, from just over 30,000 calls to just over 45,000 calls. This represents one call every twelve minutes, every day of the year in New Zealand.

The Police communication centre can only assign one code to each call, and these figures represent those calls primarily coded as either "mental health" or "attempted suicide".

(Continued on page 2...)

Given there are a wide range of reasons people with mental health needs call the Police, these numbers likely also under-represent the volume of mental health work that the New Zealand Police are asked to do.

“It seems like yet another red flag amongst many, and frankly comes as no surprise” says Kyle MacDonald. “Our submissions are showing a clear trend of people being unable to access services in a timely manner,” says MacDonald, “and of a workforce feeling overwhelmed by demand. It makes sense the NZ Police would also be seeing increased demand.”

Just last week the Police issued a press release outlining increased training for their communication centre staff to enable them to better deal with mental health calls. These figures now explain why this measure is needed.

“I think it’s a great initiative, anything that improves the services that people experiencing mental illness gets has to be a good thing. But it’s also another sticking plaster on a gaping wound, once again other services are picking up the pieces because our core mental health services, especially acute and emergency services, are unable to meet demand. In our view this is yet further evidence of the need for a comprehensive, independent National Review into Public Mental Health services” says MacDonald.

**For more information on The People’s Review of the Mental Health System:**

**See: [publicmentalhealthreview.nz](http://publicmentalhealthreview.nz)**

**Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/>**



## Tips for Coping with Having a Family Member who has a Mental Illness...

1. You cannot cure a mental disorder for a family member.
2. Despite your efforts, symptoms may get worse, or may improve.
3. If you feel much resentment, you are giving too much.
4. Separate the person from the disorder. Love the person, even if you hate the disorder.
5. No one is to blame.
6. It may be necessary to renegotiate your emotional relationship.
7. It may be necessary to revise your expectations.
8. Success for each individual may be different.
9. Inability to talk about feelings may leave you stuck or frozen.
10. The family relationships may be in disarray in the confusion around the mental disorder.
11. Grief issues for siblings are about what you had and lost. For adult children the issues are about what you never had.
12. Strange behaviour is symptom of the disorder. Don't take it personally.
13. Don't shoulder the whole responsibility.
14. You are not a paid professional.. Work with them about your concerns.
15. Maintain your role as the sibling, child, or parent of the individual. Don't change your role.
16. Mental health professionals, family members, & the disordered all have ups and downs when dealing with a mental disorder.
17. Forgive yourself and others for mistakes made.
18. If you can't care for yourself, you can't care for another.
19. The needs of the ill person do not necessarily always come first.
20. It is important to have boundaries and set clear limits.
21. It is natural to experience grief, guilt, fear, anger, sadness, hurt, confusion, etc.
22. Eventually you may see the silver lining in the storm clouds: increased awareness, sensitivity, receptivity, compassion, maturity and become less judgmental, self-centred.
23. You are not alone.
24. The mental disorder of a family member is an emotional trauma for you. You pay a price if you do not receive support and help.

\*Adapted from the NAMI Sibling and Adult Children Network <http://www.mentalillnesspolicy.org/coping/coping-tips-mentally-ill.html>

## Family Connections Reflections

*Another round of Family Connections has come to a close. This was the third time Bernie and I have run the 12 week course, designed for family members of people with Borderline Personality Disorder (or emotional dysregulation), and the second round for New Plymouth.*

Developed in the U.S by Dr Alan Fruzzetti and Dr Perry Hoffman, the course provides family members with information and research on BPD, teaches coping skills based on Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT), and connects families with shared experiences with one another (what more could a Family/Whanau Support Worker ask for!).

Out of the program, family members may gain education around BPD, relationship mindfulness skills, family environment skills, validation skills and problem management skills. Research data documents that the family members who have participated in past Family Connections training are less burdened by grief and depression and feel more empowered.

Each round of the program that we have run (two in New Plymouth and one in Stratford) have had an average of ten participants. Feedback from these group members since we began running the courses last year include comments such as:

*"the information is relevant and important"*

*"understanding what BPD is was very enlightening for me- nice to know my (family member) and their behaviour actually "fit into" something I can learn about"*

*"I enjoyed having a chance for us all to discuss our weeks and challenges"*

*and "I now have a better understanding of how to interact with my family member".*

Due to the positive feedback from families, Bernie and I intend to continue running Family Connections courses throughout the region next year, to give other families a chance to take part and get better informed and connected, as well as for those that feel like taking part again to continue trying to improve their understanding and relationship with their loved ones.

What would be great in the future courses however would be to have more partners or other family members take part. This occurred in the Stratford group which ran earlier in the year, and most of the group was made up of pairs- husbands and wives, mums and daughters, and was really great to have more than one person come along to learn about their loved one and improve their relationship.

Throughout the previous courses what became clear is that



it is really beneficial in families with a member who experiences emotional dysregulation to approach support as a 'united front' i.e. the family or people involved in their emotionally dysregulated loved one's life all being on board and working together.

The majority of those that have given their time to learn the skills required to improve relationships with their family members have been mothers of adult children. And although they provide feedback that they feel more equipped as the courses run, once they step out of the group they are often working to validate their family member alone and in an environment which is invalidating and has the potential to undo all their hard work.

So, speaking to those people who may take part in future Family Connections, I urge you to consider dragging your partners if you must; or encouraging your other children, siblings, parents or whoever you think could do with learning more about what is going on for your loved one for their benefit and the benefit of your family member (or friend), so that you can go fourth and validate together, and make this environment a little less invalidating.

Family Connections is a research-based, 12-week course for family members with a relative who has either Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) or one or more of the symptoms listed:

- Strong reactions to fear of abandonment
- Unstable and intense relationships
- Chronically unstable sense of self or self-image
- Impulsive acts that can be self-damaging
- Recurrent suicidal behaviour, gestures, or threats, or ideation
- Intense and frequent moodiness and irritability
- Chronic feelings of emptiness
- Inappropriate, intense anger
- Paranoid thoughts or sever dissociative symptoms

We endeavour to have dates planned for the next course(s) in early 2017. Feel free to call to register your interest.

- Gareth Andrewes (*North Taranaki Fieldworker*)

## Student Corner

### Exercise and Mental Health

I'm no clinician, but I do truly believe that there is a direct link between Mental Health and exercise. As a Personal Trainer I have seen people with Mental Health issues thrive once they have gotten into a good exercise regime. I've seen people with anxiety start (and continue) to get out and about and I've seen people with depression start (and continue) to feel more energized and determined to fight back.

Exercise is practically free, the only exceptions being gear to use (e.g. running shoes, top and pants/shorts) and/or a gym membership (if you're wanting to go to a gym). The world is full of options for different exercise ideas. Road running, trail running, swimming, body boarding, road cycling, mountain biking, trampolining, yoga, Pilates, weight lifting, walking, surfing, netball, rugby, soccer, martial arts, dog walking, kayaking, jogging, race walking, dancing (e.g. Zumba, ballet, hip hop etc) to name a few.

When talking about fitness/exercise, common responses are: "I don't have time", "not fit enough", "nobody to do it with", "I don't like gyms", "no point, it does nothing", "it's too hard". These are all valid and fair comments, not everyone likes a gym, and not everyone enjoys exercising by themselves. Sometimes you need to try something else to make it work and it can be hard. But if everything in life was easy, we'd all eventually get bored. "I don't have time" is a very real obstacle, but with a little bit of schedule shuffling it is possible for anyone to do it. It can be as little or as much time as you want. It could be a walk to the dairy instead of a drive; it could be a stroll outside or in the mall during a 15min break. It could even be as easy as turning the day to day house tasks into a workout (e.g. instead of just holding the rubbish bag while taking it to the rubbish bin, do some bicep curls with it while taking it to the bin). Simple, easy things like that will have some positive and effective results in time.

As for not being fit enough, that is one reason why we do exercise. To get fit you need to start somewhere, doing nothing is going to get you nowhere. True it takes time to get fit, it takes time to build a regime and it takes time to figure out what suits you – everyone is a unique individual, what works for me may not work for you and visa versa. But that's all part of the journey. "Getting fit" is just one benefit in a vast world of benefits from exercise. Other benefits include, but aren't limited to: getting stronger, getting faster, slimming down (for those wanting to), bulking up (for those that want to), toning, flexibility, balance, breathing improvements, better nights of sleep, more energy, more motivation, more concentration, positivity, less injury prone etc I could keep adding more to that list.

Exercise doesn't need to be hard, hated or lacking in fun. It can be easy, loved and full of fun. If you don't want to do it by yourself you could include your family or friends. You can also look around for local walking, running, cycling, tramping etc groups. There are some in new Plymouth (e.g. New Plymouth Joggers and Walkers club, New Plymouth Tramping Club etc...) You could even start your own group with the support and help of others around you.

Exercise has a powerful impact on how we feel. Everyone is different; it impacts us all in different ways. Examples of how exercise impacts us are: if we are stressed it helps us to relieve that stress, if we feel overwhelmed or panicked it helps us to feel more relaxed, if we are angry or upset it helps us feel calm and collected, if we are feeling down it helps us feel more positive (this is believed to be due to a release of the chemical serotonin which helps release feelings of positivity, energy, motivation etc...) and if we are tired, as contradicting as it sounds it can help us feel more awake and energized.

For reasons like the above, I truly believe in the link between Mental Health and Exercise. I've seen it happen and felt it happen. I've experienced it, gone through it and still swear by it. There are 6 doctors that are the best in the world; everyone has access to them and I'm yet to meet anyone who claims otherwise. These Doctors are: Diet, Sunshine, Exercise, Rest, Air and Water. I've seen all 6 and work with all 6 and I truly stand by them. Especially Exercise.

- Kay Kowalewski (Mental Health and Addiction Certificate)



### Meditation 101

We are surrounded by noise, stress, worry and doubt. The world is full of it. No matter where we go it doesn't seem too far away, or it tends to follow us wherever we end up. This puts our minds in a constant state of alarm and unease, whether we notice it or not.

This constant state of alarm creates stresses, worries, doubts and irritabilities that don't do our brains much of a favour. It hinders our ability to cope with day to day life. Stress is like a silent assassin, one day it doesn't seem like its there, the next day it gets you in your back when your not looking. Fortunately there are ways to beat this assassin. One of these ways is through meditation.

Meditation has been around for centuries. Meditative techniques are said to have been developed by Philosopher called Plotinus way back in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Century. It has been around for a while and is still being widely used all over the world. Meditation has been proven by many to be effective and helpful to them. I know it certainly has helped me on more than one occasion.

Meditation focuses on calming the mind and relaxing the body. With practice you can train your mind to be happy, calm or even relaxed during some of the more difficult times. It has some good health benefits too such as helping with high blood pressure, depression, reducing and anxiety. It's difficult to meditate for minutes on end (especially if your new to it) but with practice, even if its only 2 – 5 minutes a day, it will get easier and you will slowly find yourself meditating longer and longer.

Your mind will probably wander and that is natural when you're new to it. Acknowledge the thought (smile to yourself) and bring all your focus back to your breathing. It will get easier and easier with practice. It's not something you'll instantly become an expert at. I'm still getting the hang of it myself. Enjoy the moment and enjoy the time to yourself it brings. Your body and mind will thank you for it.

- Kay

## Pet Therapy for Students

*Research and science supports the practice of dogs on campus being a calming influence. Especially in times of stress and high anxiety such as exam week. Students and staff report that stroking the dogs and simply hanging out with them reduces their stress and anxiety levels.*

This practice is becoming increasingly popular here in New Zealand on our university campuses and in the secondary school environments, during end of year high intensity study and exam times.

The accompanying photo is of our Supporting Families social work placement student (Hayley) in the New Plymouth WITT library with Samoyed dog Breeze. She has been brought in for students to interact with during their exam week. The students enjoy, stroking her, talking to her, and having their photo taken with her.



And while they interact with Breeze they are talking with Hayley about study, exams being a student and their own animals or animal experiences. It is a lovely beneficial experience all round. Hayley Burwell, (social work student). the two links accompanying the article are nice New Zealand articles highlighting the wonderful calming effects of dogs on humans. And their usefulness in a variety of settings.

<http://www.stuff.co.nz/southland-times/life-style/83424406/High-school-hounds-like-Mocha-the-spug-help-students-steady-exam-time-nerve>

<http://www.radionz.co.nz/national/programmes/afternoons/audio/201816852/reading-to-dogs-in-libraries>.

-Hayley Burwell (*Social Work Student*)

## *Current SF groups on offer...*

### **Eating Disorder Family Support Group– New Plymouth**

Wednesdays-fortnightly 6.30pm—8pm  
SF Taranaki Office

### **Family Support Group- New Plymouth**

1st Mon of the month 5:30—7.30pm  
TSB Community Trust House  
21 Dawson St. NP

### **Family Support Group- Stratford**

1st Mon of the month 7-9pm  
Stratford Community House  
52 Juliet St. Stratford

### **Touched by Suicide- Hawera**

2nd Thurs of the month 7pm  
Summit House, High St.(opp. Warehouse)

### **Touched by Suicide- New Plymouth**

2nd Thurs of the month 7pm  
TSB Community Trust House,  
21 Dawson St.

For more info on any of these groups please phone **SF Taranaki: 06 757 9300**

## **World Suicide Loss Day**

*Have you lost family or friends to suicide?*

Touched by Suicide and other supporters in attendance



Saturday November 19th  
Churchill Heights 2.30pm  
Cutfield Road (next to Westend Bowling Club)  
New Plymouth

*Our Mission:* Families and whanau experiencing mental illness are listened to, included, informed and connected.

## MEMBERSHIP & SUBSCRIPTION APPLICATION

First name:

Last name:

Postal Address:

Work Phone:

Home phone:

Mobile Phone:

Email:

PLEASE TICK TYPE OF MEMBERSHIP (Note: Subscriptions are annual)

Family Membership \$35

Single Membership \$25

Community Services Card Holder or Student ID \$15

Would you like to add a donation to your subscription? Yes  No

Amount: \$ Do you require a receipt?

Please return payment to PO BOX 8291, Central New Plymouth, 4243

Or Online Banking TSB 15-3942-0414737-01/ref SUBS

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS PLEASE CALL US ON 06 757 9300

OR EMAIL [Manager@SFTaranaki.org.nz](mailto:Manager@SFTaranaki.org.nz)



Hours Mon to Fri 8.30am- 5pm  
06 757 9300

Crisis Team: 0508 277 478  
Te Puna Waiora: 0508 292 4672

<https://www.facebook.com/SFTaranaki>

A Coffee morning will be held on  
the 1st Tuesday of every month,  
10am at the Disabled Peoples Craft Centre, 83  
Hine Street, New Plymouth.



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