



# TE RAU ARA      July 2014      THE NETWORK



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Well the shortest day has come and gone and the few tourists left in the North are using phrases like “pardon your slip is showing” and “is this the Lake District”.

The last few weeks have been tough for us living in the North. Issues like flooded homes and roads, coping with badly insulated houses, inability to pay the power bill or buy food for our families have all made the past few weeks a real test of our resilience and our ability to smile in the face of adversity.

One of the things that helps the members of The Northern Consumer Network to rise above these difficulties is the spirit of comradeship and encouragement that have developed through the groups that run at 73 Water St. Groups include: Consumer Education with its sharing of knowledge; the Singing Group with its’ music, dancing and fun; the informality of the Friday Forum get together; and, of course, the Happiness Project with its ability to draw a smile from the everyday things around us.

As the Networkers for mental health and addiction service users, Richard and Graham see the worth of these programs and also the value of the members meetings that are held around the north. At these meetings we gather feedback on how services work (or not) for those of us who use them. We also see that none of this would work if it wasn’t for the willingness of our members to speak up for themselves and to be involved with each other for the betterment of all concerned.

Long may it last!



## View from the Top

### *No matter where I go, there I am. (Confucius)*

Those words have helped me strengthen my responsibility for myself and for my own mental wellbeing. So using this saying I have journeyed to a workable level of recovery. I moved out from under the dis-ease of mental dysfunction. I accept that I am not at the top and I don't believe any ever reach the top, but looking back down at my thirty plus years of climbing, I feel I am a very, very long way up.

My mountain is manic depression. I've ridden the roller coaster ride through a privileged life of skill gaining and discipline strengthening — events that have made me accountable for myself to myself. Of course there have been casualties and numerous regrets that are now part of that scenic walk. (Breathes a heavy sigh; Heart tells Brain to stop before memories become painful feelings; Brain goes into automatic mindful awareness of noticing the breath; Inhales to the count of 3; Exhales to the count of 4.) So many changes; so much to take in; so much more able to reset back to calm.

Rhyme is a God gift that visits me when I express myself in writing. While I was thinking of what to write for this article the following poem evolved.

**Beat**  
To gain an awesome view from an elevated altitude  
I accessed the workable attitude of honesty and gratitude.  
**beat**  
Keeping it solid with commitment and disciplined intention  
I refused to give in to the desires for life abdication  
**beat**  
Commitment to avoiding the "false High" triggers  
Which elevate the mood to the sky - so free.  
Avoiding destructive thoughts of the "poor me" woes  
Which wear dark holes in the fragile network of reality  
**beat**  
Acknowledging the lies of dysfunctional thinking  
That can change darkness into light.  
The disordered, distorted views from this planet  
Lead into the darkest night.  
**beat**  
Distorted thinking,  
Dysfunctional actions,  
Racing mind can't recognise  
Sensible reactions.  
I learned the word STOP.  
**beat**  
Repeat it to myself  
**beat**  
Stored it in my heart to signal back to my head  
Before feelings overwhelmed me, risking rolling up dead.  
**beat**  
My best friend, my beating heart  
The rhythms of life pulse well for me.  
Gratitude for even lesser things  
Has helped life become a grand event to see.

Breathe on, Namaste.

**Beth**



## Focus Forum Report

In 2013 the Northland Consumer Network was commissioned by Northland District Health Board (NDHB) to run a series of Tangata Whaiora Feedback Focus Groups to get feedback and service development ideas from consumers. These forums were co-ordinated and facilitated by Arataki Ministries Consumer Networkers **Richard Dick** and **Graham Johnson**, ably supported by **Kay Poppen**. The following is a brief summary of the final report.

For those who took part in the forums a full copy will be made available at members meetings or by contacting Graham or Richard at the Northland Consumer Network.

**Helen Ware** listened and transcribed all the recordings of the meetings. Her sense of the major points for follow-up include:

- *Respite needs to be available in all areas,*
- *Transport to and from activities is essential for participation. Funding for transport for consumer is a problem.*
- *More free activities with less structure i.e. crafts, arts, literacy, budgeting, self-care, cooking, self-esteem, gym and other sport activities. Transport assistance is essential. Some felt the school like structure of what is currently on offer was not helpful.*
- *Consumers experience problems with medical professionals, Doctors, nurses and others, including:*
- *The constant changing of medical professionals and their individual preferences in medicating.*
- *Lack of concern for the living arrangements of their patients.*
- *No notice taken of those caring for children and if a medication change will affect that family as a whole.*

And an additional observation from Helen was:

- *The forums have become a safe and secure place for consumers to express their personal stories and share their individual problems within the Mental Health Systems.*

**Te Tai Tokerau Whai Ora Network Member Denise Caltaux** summarised the transcripts and wrote the report. Her sense of the most important thing identified by attendees was:

- *Having people they could call family – albeit family/whanau, being part of an agencies “family” or just friends – and having them involved.*
- *Having a sense of belonging and connection.*

**Graham and Richard**, Arataki Consumer Networkers, who facilitated each meeting made the following comments:

- *When people feel stressed or unwell they want to meet with and be supported by their peers.*
- *When clinicians give information (diagnosis, medication benefits and side effects) people are often confused and overwhelmed. It is important to take time with the client, and to give supporters the same information so they can revisit it together later.*
- *Clients get dissatisfied when a “care system” is imposed on them rather than being listened to with sympathy and responsiveness.*



## **Ch ch ch changes at Water St**

We would like to thank TTTWON members in Whangarei for the way they have accepted our new smoking policy. The decision to move the smoking area from the back of the building to the front area was not one that anyone was very happy with, but in the interests of being good neighbours it was a decision we had to make. We appreciate that the new area is not as comfortable, especially in wet weather, but everyone has acknowledged the change with good humour.

An interesting thing to note about these changes is that there seems to be a flow on effect to people's smoking patterns. Both of the networkers have made the decision to quit smoking and there are a number of TTTWON members who have stopped smoking or reduced the amount that they smoke. Well done all those who are making the effort. We feel sure that you will see some pay-offs start to happen – in health benefits, in financial benefits, and in the way you feel about yourselves.

Another change we have made is to our opening hours. From now on 73 Water Street will not open until 10.00am from Monday to Thursday and not until 11.00am on Friday. This will allow the networkers to have some time to do other tasks. It just puts a little more structure and organisation into the way we can plan our work day and we can have a little time to be prepared for the manuhiri who call in to see us and the groups that have their base at 73 Water St.

One thing that we would like to point out about our whare at 73 Water St.— although many people think of it as a 'drop in centre', that is not our purpose. We encourage people to call in and exchange news and views with us and participate in the activities as this is one way in which we can network with tangata whaiora.

We would like to thank everybody for their understanding around the changes.

## **Networking in Kaitia**

The network has stepped up its presence in the far north. Consumer Networker Richard Dick has started working one day a week in Kaitia and will be available most Fridays at the community house in Puckey Ave. If you would like more information about the Northland Mental Health and Addiction Consumer Network, or, you have any issues or queries about mental health and addictions or mental health and addictions support services (including Family/Whanau support) please call in at 12 Puckey Ave.

## **Singing Group - wet days and all.**

At the tail end of the worst storm of the year (so far), when everyone is cutting a track for shelter, it was rather surprising and very gratifying to have thirty people turn up at 73 Water Street for our Thursday singing group. This group has far and away the best attendance of all of the happenings at the Networks rooms. It is a chance for people to catch up with friends, sing and dance to a karaoke style setup, and just let off some steam in a warm and accepting environment. It is also a chance for the networkers to make contact with a lot of people easily, some of whom are hard to make contact with for various reasons.

The stated hours are from 1pm to 3pm but people start turning up from about 11.30, willing to help with the setup or perhaps just happy to be there. By the scheduled start at one o'clock there are usually about fifteen or twenty people ready to go. Clare O'Brien, DHB Occupational Therapist, acts as the director of the proceedings making sure that people get their favourite song played and encouraging people to participate. Old songs and new music make up the program and enthusiasm is the order of the day. Four microphones ensure that everyone has a chance to make their voice heard and two hours pass very quickly. Time sure flies when you're having fun. And fun is what the singing group is all about!

## Consumer Education

I can't believe its July already! Nigh on half the year over! We have been storming along with Con Ed in Whangarei and Kaikohe.

We have been having a number of philosophical conversations around the continuum of 'What is Mental Health?' It appears to be the consensus of the group, that 'mental illness' is something that every human being experiences at some time, throughout their lives. It is to what degree and how they cope that seems to define whether or not the person comes to the attention of mental health services or not. With the advent of the DSM 5, every single person on this planet could get a diagnosis!

So, in comes the Recovery Toolkit - maybe it should be called the 'Life Toolkit'! I am busily putting together a kit that is personalised to each individual. It will contain a number of resources to help put the individual firmly in the driver's seat of their recovery. It is the culmination of the work we do at Con Ed. I am very excited about it as I can see the kits having the potential to gain, maintain and enhance our recoveries, as long as they are used!

So two thoughts to sign off for this newsletter on:

.... You only get out of life what you put in

.....and 10 September 2014 will be Con Ed's 2<sup>nd</sup> birthday! So look out for a party!

Kirsten

## *Deep Relaxation*

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Deep Relaxation has been an on-going group now for nearly a year. Most of those who have been regular attendees have, I believe, obtained considerable assistance in their health and daily lives with the introduction of Relaxation exercises that assist with their journey to wellness.

I have given those who requested a personalised CD for their use on a more regular basis at home and they have given me feedback about how helpful and useful this is in their personal journey. Once you have attended the course then the home CD's are an offer that comes as you learn the process of relaxation though guided meditation.

Over the next month or two Deep Relaxation will be on hold as the winter grips us in its frosty core, so there will be no Deep Relaxation Group from the **9<sup>th</sup> of July 2014**.

The Relaxation Group will restart on Wednesday the **1<sup>st</sup> of October 2014**

I would like to thank all those who have supported me in the bringing together of this group and hope that with the new beginning in October we can bring more members of TTTWon into the group to offer this inspiring and helpful way to wellness.

For the coming two months, be safe, be well, be strong, and above stay relaxed.

Regards

Helen

## SUPPORTING FAMILIES in NORTHLAND

Hi my name is Kenny Fletcher and I work as an Alcohol and/or Other Drugs (AOD) Fieldworker for Supporting Families Northland. This is a new service which has recently been rolled out in Northland and it provides, directly and through other agencies, information, education, support and advocacy for the whanau/ family of people with AOD problems.

When family members or loved ones abuse alcohol or drugs, it affects everyone they know,. But the experience and strength of families who are affected by a loved one's use of substances can provide a powerful voice for change. As a start, there is no question that gaining a greater understanding of alcohol, drugs and addiction will help you to better handle the situation. For family and friends it is important to recognize your own feelings and reactions when dealing with a loved one who is abusing alcohol or using drugs.

If you need help with supporting a family member regarding any issue surrounding mental illness or drugs and alcohol, please do not hesitate to contact us — we're here to help. In the September I will be running a free 6 week Family Support Group in Whangarei for those who have loved ones with addictions. If anyone is interested in attending or need more information regarding this please ph. 0800789134.

In addition Supporting Families Northland now facilitates an adult suicide bereavement program called WAVES. Our aim is to help people with the opportunity to participate in a psycho-educational program that offers an experience of healing and community by connecting them with other people who have been bereaved by suicide. The purpose of WAVES in this context is to help adults learn more about grief and suicide, find meaning in their experiences, learn to manage emotions, reduce stigmatization and feelings of isolation, and assist them to move forward. WAVES is an eight week program that consists of one 2 hour session per week. For more information or to register please contact your Northland Branch on 0800 789 134

Supporting families Northland also offers a free two day educational program for children aged 8-12 years of age, who have a parent with a mental illness. This kid's club workshop is run between normal school hours, either school holidays or weekends, and morning tea and lunch is provided. The aim of this workshop is to learn about and de-stigmatizes mental illness, to validate individual experiences, and to learn and understand coping strategies. The workshops will be available throughout Northland, for more information and to register please contact our Northland office on 0800 789 134.

Our service provides both personal, emotional, educational, advocacy and informational support to families who have a loved one with mental health and/or addiction issues. Our opening hours are Monday to Friday from 8.30am – 5pm. We offer online social media support via our Supporting Families website forums [www.supportingfamilies.org.nz](http://www.supportingfamilies.org.nz) free to Northland residents.



## **Happiness Project – Follow up**

The Happiness Project involved taking a photo everyday of something that makes you happy, brings you joy, or that you are grateful for. The project has lasted several months (100 days) and there will be an opportunity to make the photos up into a book or some other creative form. The books will provide a personalised resource that people can look back on when they are struggling and be reminded of things that have brought them happiness in their daily life. The goals of this project are to help people focus on the positive things in life rather than dwelling on negative thoughts. The project is hoping to present some of their images publicly during Mental Health Awareness Week. This project has been a real success and the decision has been made to continue with the project in the meantime

### **Dawn's story**

"Trying to find out what makes you happy makes you think hard about these things. Taking photos even though they didn't mean that much to me at the time, other people see them differently and this enabled me to see the positive in them. This makes you aware that you can be happy, gives you a positive focus on life.

As the project progressed, I found it easier to find things around me that make me happy. Now that the project has finished I find that I have a more positive outlook on day to day life."

### **JJ's story**

"The Happiness Project has been going for 100 days. When I first started the group it made me more aware of happy moments in my life. This has been very therapeutic, seeing other people's photos of their happy snaps. I look forward to the next 100 days with the Happiness Group."

### **Andy's story**

"Feeling bored one day and looking for something that would interest me, I asked my friend what she does to pass the time. She said she was part of a photography group at TTTWON. She also said that it might be something I might like because of my artistic abilities

I arrived there with the idea of learning about how cameras work, how to take photos and how to print them. Well I was so wrong. I sat there watching and listening as people had their photos displayed and they were talking about their feelings of happiness and joy from the photo displayed. I thought "Wow, that's very different to what I imagined and very interesting!"

I had not experienced true happiness for many, many years. To me, being happy was all about getting drunk and stoned and the feelings that I related to most easily were anger, sadness and negativity.

After this first group I felt that I really wanted to give this new way of looking at things a good go. This was more than just taking a heap of photos and looking at them. It was expressing my feelings of happiness and joy which was the reason I took the photo. It became something that I practised every day. Since I have been with the group for a while I have met people who are genuine and through them, their photos and sharing, I have got to know a lot more about them.

I am a lot happier than I have ever been in the past. I understand that happiness can be found in lots of things around me and usually it is just the simple things – like a photo – that can put a smile on my dial."

### **Onlooker's story - outside looking in**

"I wasn't a part of the project but I was privileged to be around when the group got together to load the photos onto the computer and discuss points and issues that had come up for them. The discussions quickly widened in scope to include subjects such as 'the nature of happiness' and 'what is joy'. With many of the participants, this project has changed the way they view the world and their place in it. And then there are the photos and the way the simple act of recording something, brings you happiness again and again long after you press the shutter button. I think everybody should have a chance to be a part of a 'Happiness Project'. It has such a restorative effect on the soul and all because somebody asked: 'What makes us happy?'"

**The Happiness Project is set to continue on from its' first 100 days. The place and the day are to stay the same – 73 Water St on a Tuesday, but the time has changed. The group will now meet from 12.30pm to 2.30pm and new participants are more than welcome to join the group and start recording their happy moments.**



## TTTŪWŌN

### TE TAITOKERAU TANGATA WHAI ORA NETWORK

#### Programmes at 73 Water St. July – Sept

- Monday**    **Consumer Education** – Recovery principles from a consumer perspective  
**12.30-2.00pm**    Informative, interactive interesting
- Tuesday**    **Happiness Project.** Exploring concepts of happiness through photography  
**12.30-2.30pm**    New participants welcome – come see what its about
- Wednesday** **Peer Support Group** – AoD focus  
**11.00am-1.00pm**    (**closed group**) see Richard or Graham to participate
- Thursday** **Singing Group** – a Karaoke style singalong, all welcome  
**1.00-3.00pm**    with Clare and Kirsten – loads of fun, very popular
- Friday**    **Friday Forum** Check out our library or talk over the week with friends  
**12.00-2.00pm** - Plan an adventure over tea, coffee and bikkies

Programs may be subject to change

The Deep Relaxation program on Wednesday evenings is on holiday until 1<sup>st</sup> October  
See article inside this newsletter for more information

**For information on any of these programs contact**  
**Richard 021 818 785    or    Graham 021 717 181**  
**Or call the office at 73 Water St 09 438 4115**

**We have changed the hours that we are open – they are now as follows:**

**Monday**    **10am - 4pm**  
**Tuesday**    **10am - 4.30pm** then Band Practice until 6.30  
**Wednesday** **10am - 4.30** (closed between 11am and 1pm for AoD Group)  
**Thursday**    **10am - 4.30**  
**Friday**    **11am - 4pm**

