



RECOVERY TIMES

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Offering Hope, Love and Inspiration

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About Recovery Times

The Mission Community Advisory Committee, in partnership with Centennial Place, is very excited to launch the first edition of the Recovery Times newsletter. The mission of the creators of the newsletter is to expand opportunities for people within the Mental Health and Substance Use community to share their voices.

One of our best means of reaching out to people and connecting is by sharing our own healing experiences, stories of recovery, and the art that our recovery has inspired. Regardless of background, we are stronger healing together; these are our stories, our art, and you are our inspiration...

A New Hope

Hi, my name is Haley Cooper. I have been living with mental health issues since age 12. I am currently diagnosed as living with Schizo Affective Disorder. I see a psychiatrist once a month to touch base, check on my symptoms and get medication. Symptoms of my illness include depression and mania, visual and auditory hallucinations, paranoia and delusions.

My last hospitalization was in spring 2015 at Abbotsford Regional hospital and was a month long. While at the hospital a Peer Support worker named Clo came and told me about Centennial Place. I was released from the hospital in June and was still very sick, though most of my symptoms were being controlled by the new medications. It was not until October of that year that I would visit Centennial Place. I was lonely, depressed and unmotivated. I continued to attend groups even though I really did not feel like it. I used to attend workshops on wellness skills to find strategies and ways of coping with my illness. I would recommend them to anyone needing support or struggling with a mental illness. I also enjoy coffee with friends from Centennial Place and attending the Community Kitchens cooking program. I have learned skills to help me prepare healthier meals for my family. They are grateful and have commented on how my cooking has improved.

I like to think of it as a journey to mental wellness and Centennial Place was definitely a positive and important part of becoming a healthier and happier person. I still have down days but they are fewer and farther between. Maintaining stable mental health is the number one priority in my life because without it I cannot look after my family or myself.

- Haley Cooper

Does the STIGMA surrounding mental health bother you? You can do something about it!

Here are some strategies that you can start using today:

1. Educate Yourself

Mental health is everybody's concern and we all need to know how to separate the myths from the facts. There are many resources available to help you become more aware of the realities of mental health including books, websites, videos, and journals. The heretohelp.bc.ca website is a great place to start for accurate information.

2. Educate Others

Once you have educated yourself and freed yourself from any outdated beliefs about mental health that you may have been carrying around with you, take the opportunity to share your knowledge. You can do this by passing on accurate information and by challenging ideas that present myths and stereotypes. If you see or hear people misrepresenting mental health issues, you can gently change the conversation and invite people to re-examine their assumptions.

3. Stop Labeling

When we label people, we are saying that one behavior or illness defines their whole self. By defining someone in this way, we miss out on learning about who that person really is as a unique individual. Instead of painting everyone who has experienced a mental health issue with the same brush, take the time to see people in all of their beautiful diversity. Labels can hurt and dehumanize so it is important that we choose our words carefully when speaking about mental health.

4. Talk About It

If you have a mental health issue, talk about it and seek help and support - you do not need to go through it alone. Although it can be scary to admit that you are feeling this way, remember that it is not your fault and that many, many of your fellow human beings have been there. If you have a friend or a loved one who is experiencing a mental health concern, be a good listener and let them talk about it. Talking about mental health and bringing it out into the open is essential to reducing the fear of embarrassment and shame that deters so many from seeking help.

Poetry Corner

Just Me

Do not look upon me with a wary eye
It is just me, I cry
Within the cloak of invisibility
There is the underlying me
You label me with the word illness
Inside there is a place of wellness
Do not judge me by my actions
I am not my reactions
There is a personal I
You should not deny
It is just me
Struggling to be free
In my separate reality
I think, I feel, I see
You can call me different
But are you free of judgment?
You can point me out in a crowd
But I have a dignity that must be allowed
And I will tell my story
But not for the vain glory
It is all just me
And my discovery

Michael R. Linburg
Fraser Valley Poets Society
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*"Dare to love yourself
as if you were a rainbow
with gold at both ends."*

- Author-Poet Aberjhani,
*Journey through the Power
of the Rainbow*

The Centennial Place Art Program

An open time for people of all levels of artistic abilities to try their hand at something creative.



Clay pot with owl –
Pascale Deslavriers

The focus of the group is not instruction and perfection, but rather gentle encouragement towards finding a creative outlet that feels healing and exciting to the individual.



Clay rose bouquet –
Azlinne Shears

Among the options available to dabble in are acrylics on canvas, watercolours, pastels, pottery, wood burning and various crafting supplies. Featured here are some clay figurines created and painted by members of Centennial Place.



Clay turtle –
Anonymous

Recovery Stories

It's My Life

Where do I start? I had a rough, abusive childhood, which started to show itself as deep seeded feelings of abandonment and fear, and soon, became uncontrollable anxiety and withdrawal. These thoughts started to manifest themselves during middle school, and especially, high school. This made me an easy target for bullying. By grade nine, I started to skip school and by grade ten I was mostly a no-show. I thought this was the life; no accountability, no school, no bullies, no problems.

Eventually my parents separated; this traumatic event quickly manifested itself into a future diagnosis of 'generalized anxiety disorder'. As I continued through my early 20s, having already been well practiced at 'mood managing' my condition, I became a workaholic. I kept myself busy and didn't take any time to look at my problems. I had loads of energy, mostly from the anxiety. Rarely did I sleep and I was good at it! But as the years went by, there were cracks starting to emerge in my life. I knew I needed a change. This was the first time that I really took personal responsibility.

I left my old life behind. It seemed that everything was going great. I had become a business owner. "Get out of my old city," I thought, "this is what I need." But yet again my old life started to haunt me.

I found myself one day walking down the street crying uncontrollably.

This was the second time I took personal responsibility in my life, but this time, this time it was going to be different! I educated myself, and realizing I needed real help, started seeing a therapist. He gave me hope and the strength to move forward with my life; taught me how to control my anxiety, but most of all, gave me the skills to become an appropriate and responsible person in the management of my own life. Eventually I sold my business, gathered myself up again, and changed careers. There were some ups and downs along the way; but as of today, I am happy. I run groups; teaching young and old on how to manage their own wellness. It has been a long journey, but as a friend once told me, "everything happens for a reason."

- Briant Grossmuck

"People take different roads seeking fulfillment and happiness. Just because they're not on your road doesn't mean they've gotten lost."

-The Dalai Lama

Poetic License

My journey begins in 1983 as a student who just got the job necessary to become a registered industrial accountant. In 1985 after I got the required two years of experience I gained my professional status. Then the work ran out in 1987.

On November 8th, 1988 the label paranoid schizophrenic was stuck on me. At the time I was not hospitalized and only had delusions. I was told not to expect to get better. In 1989 I took a program of recovery and a course in computerized accounting. I had taken on the job of finding a job but the ghosts of the past came to haunt: too shy, lacking confidence and not enough experience.

Somewhere around 1990 I retired from the society of management accountants. From 1990-2000 I was receiving social assistance and living at home. On October 19th my mother died and I moved out.

In 2001 I had my second break from reality. After having been forced to move due to my illness I found my present place of residence in 2003. In 2008 I started doing volunteer work for the Friends of the Abbotsford library. In August of 2013 I had an emotional awakening and regained my ability to write poetry after a lapse of 25 years.

In 2014 I became a member of the clubhouse, Centennial Place which became my second home where I do work as a receptionist. I also joined the Fraser Valley Poets Society. I was published in their anthology, Encouragement and in two newsletters.

In 2015 I had a book of my own poetry in the Clearbrook Library. I went on to be published in Spirit Path and O Canada which made for my 4th year in a row. I had continued to get my poetry out there to different places including the Reach and Kariton galleries. Now, in 2018 I can safely say I am out of the woods. It has been 17 years since I saw the inside of a psychiatric ward.

-Michael R. Linburg