

People share their stories of mental health recovery in work and life

panorama

Monthly Issue **November 2023 #91B**



**Recovery
is My Jam:
Freestyling in
The Park**

**Install a New
Autopilot: Turn
Your Intentions
Into Habits**

**The ACDC
Project**

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About us

Flourish Australia is committed to walking beside people with a lived experience of mental health issues as they progress along their recovery journeys. We passionately believe in mental health recovery, and are committed to providing the best possible support and encouragement to people so they can achieve their recovery goals. We offer this help across all 70+ of our services in New South Wales, Southern Queensland, Australian Capital Territory and Victoria.

Contact Flourish Australia!

1300 779 270 or
flourishaustralia.org.au

Chair: Prof Elizabeth More AM
Chief Executive Officer: Mark Orr AM
Chief Development Officer: Peter Neilson

About Panorama

Founded in 1996 in one of Flourish Australia's predecessor organisations (PRA), Panorama has grown to become a lifestyle magazine dedicated to informing and encouraging the recovery journey of readers. Panorama is written, designed and produced almost entirely by people with a lived experience of mental health issues.

The faces behind Panorama...



Warren Heggarty



Grant Everett

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Disclaimer

Panorama's content is not intended as a substitute for the advice of any specialised or qualified professional. The views expressed herein are those of the authors, not necessarily of Flourish Australia, or any associated enterprises, their staff, management, employees, or service recipients

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COVER: Gloria Wulf, enjoying herself at the latest Freestyle Jamming In The Park event at Maryborough! PHOTO FROM TERESA MAREE

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Inspire
YOUR
Community
WITH YOUR STORY

You don't need to be a writer to share your story with Panorama's readers: we can help you to write your story. We especially like recovery stories from people with a lived experience of mental health issues.

Email us at: panorama@flourishaustralia.org.au



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Flourish Australia acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land, sea and waterways upon which we live and work.

We pay our respects to their Elders past and present, and recognise their strong and continuing connection to land, culture and spirit.

Panorama magazine would like to acknowledge all people who live with a mental health issue, as well as those who encourage and support loved ones. Our universal right to lead full and inclusive lives is the driving force behind why Panorama exists. We also acknowledge the strength it can take to share our stories. The impact of reading about people's journeys cannot be overstated. Sharing our experiences has the potential to change lives and we hope by reading true recovery stories, it gives hope, optimism and support to our readers, especially those on their mental health recovery journey.



FAMILY & CARERS

At Flourish Australia, we understand the important role many families and carers play in supporting someone with a lived experience of a mental health issue to stay well and part of their local community.

When someone comes to us and asks for support we discuss with them the involvement of their family and other important people in their lives, and what supports they provide. If we are able to obtain that information we will record it so our staff know who is important to the person and their recovery. We will also make contact with you to check what supports you may need to undertake your important role and discuss your involvement and communication preferences.

Other Organisations

Sometimes families and carers want more information and other contacts. There are a range of organisations that provide specialist supports and information for carers. A list with contact details can be found on our website at: flourishaustralia.org.au/family-and-carers

Carer Gateway: carergateway.gov.au

Mental Health Carers NSW: 1300 554 660

Arafmi Queensland: (07) 3254 1881

Private Mental Health Consumer Carer Network: 1300 620 042

Mental Health Carers Australia: 1300 554 660

Kids Helpline : 1800 551 800

COPMI: Children of Parents with Mental Illness: copmi.net.au



DIG THAT DIRT! AND GARDEN YOURSELF TO WELLNESS

By Warren Heggarty



'No plant is perfect unless it is fake.'
PHOTO BY WARREN HEGGARTY

As you know, gardening and growing crops are good for you.

Gardening means movement, usually out of doors. Sunshine is good for you because it promotes vitamin D among other things. Being amongst beauty and nature is good for you too. In fact, some researchers have formed the opinion that common bacteria in dirt and dung can be good for your immune system. When it comes to mental wellbeing, there is very little not to like about gardening. Here are some wise observations that Panorama has collected from far and wide.

'Gardens and children need the same things- patience, love and someone who will never give up on them.' *Nicolette Sowder.*

'Everything that slows down and forces patience everything that sets us back into the slow circles of nature, is a help. Gardening is an instrument of grace.' *May Sarton.*

'A garden is a grand teacher. It teaches patience and careful watchfulness; it teaches industry and thrift; above all, it teaches us trust.'

'Studies have shown that just looking at trees and plants reduces stress, lowers blood pressure and relieves tension in muscles.'
- *Saga Magazine, Saga.com.uk*

'Watching things grow from a tiny seed instils a sense of achievement and self esteem. It gives an opportunity for a gardener to take care and responsibility for another living thing.

'Your mind is a garden Your thoughts are seeds. You can grow flowers Or you can grow weeds.'
- *Ritu Ghatourey*

'I like gardening. It's a place I find myself when I need to lose myself.'
- *Alice Sebold*

'A garden is a great place to outgrow limitations.'
- *slogan of Trellis Horticultural Therapy, Atlanta Georgia USA*

'A society grows great when old men plant trees whose shade they know they shall never sit in.'
- *Greek proverb*

'Gardening adds years to your life and life to your years.'
Anon. (See guyaboutthehome.com for more great gardening quotes)

Mental health issues have a way of isolating us from other people and disconnecting us from nature. Gardening, whether as a 'therapy' or for its own sake, can reconnect us to people and nature in a way that is interactive, inclusive and empowering. It also helps you stay physically active. Saga Magazine presents the following figures to show how much energy you use up

round the yard, so you can imagine how much better you will sleep:

- Half an hour of digging and shovelling uses 250 calories
- Half an hour of mowing the lawn uses 195 calories
- Half an hour of weeding uses 105 calories
- Half an hour of raking uses 100 calories. (SAGA Magazine, 2022)

Now in recent years, researchers have wondered why the incidence of depression and anxiety and allergies has been increasing in the industrial world. One of the theories is that we do not have enough exposure to good old outdoor dirt.

According to some research done by The University of Colorado at Boulder, people in general have become 'overscrupulous' about cleanliness. This research claims that physical contact with the natural environment can have 'anti-inflammatory and immune modulating benefits.' (CU Boulder Today, 2017)

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SAGA Magazine. (2022, May 9). How many calories does gardening burn? Retrieved from Saga Magazine: saga.com.uk

What is Supported Decision Making, and Why Does Flourish Australia Value It?

By Grant J Everett

As making our own choices in life is at the very core of self-determination, "Supported Decision Making" (SDM) can be a vital component in living how we want to live.

SDM is becoming common practise in the psychosocial disability sector, and it's a straightforward concept: it means providing a person with the support and resources they need in order to choose to live how they want to live. Of course, how much support and what kind the person needs can greatly vary.

We all have the right to make decisions that affect our lives, regardless of age, and to have those decisions respected, and it is vital

that people understand their rights. A person's choices must be made with their own free will, according to their preferences and rights, without risk of violence, abuse, neglect or exploitation. Supported Decision Making can be particularly important when a person is figuring out what support they want from their NDIS funding, as this is uniquely tailored to each person.

Supported Decision Making closely aligns with Flourish Australia's values of recovery-oriented practice, and it also relies on engaging in reflective practices, one of the Three Vital Behaviours that Flourish Australia champions in everything we do. Other major organisations and bodies, including the Disability Royal

Commission, have had a strong focus on SDM for the last few years, and it's been formally supported by the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities.

Assisting a person with Supported Decision Making often involves forming plans step by step, setting goals, figuring out how a person's existing resources and supports can get them to where they want to be, and empowering the person to take more control over their lives, as opposed to just doing what they're told. It's good to outline what both parties can contribute to each plan, and to recognise potential barriers. Supporting participants to develop their skills and knowledge, as well as the skills and knowledge of the support person, can also make a real difference.

Do You Want To Know More?

Learning about the applications of Supported Decision Making can help us to better support people who live with a psychosocial disability to make their own choices. If you want to add this useful tool to your kit, the Mental Health Coordinating Council (MHCC) has developed free e-learning modules that go into depth about how SDM can best be utilised. These modules are accessible to everyone, including staff working in the psychosocial disability sector, mental health and human services sectors, as well as people with a lived experience, their carers, family, peers and all other support people.

In addition to teaching the key concepts and practices of SDM, these modules contain interactive elements such as flip cards, questions, videos, scenarios and more to keep things interesting. If you're interested in learning more, each of these modules can be completed in under an hour, at your own pace.

SOURCES:

Introduction to Supported Decision-Making MHCC

NDIS Supported Decision Making Policy

ABOVE: Who you involve in your decision making is up to you!
PHOTO FROM PIXABAY



Install a New Autopilot

Turn Your Intentions Into Habits

By Warren Heggarty



Something like nine out of ten of the decisions we make are 'automatic.' They are the result of habit, impulse and previous practice. They are our default position. Some of our 'default' habits may not be good for us. Then again there are some new habits we could adopt that WILL be good for us. To change from the old to the new habits requires us to override our 'automatic' decisions with intentional ones.

Let's look at an example. If you don't ever have breakfast, this is your 'default' position. You may decide that you would like to have two eggs for breakfast each day. Deliberately introducing breakfast into your life will be disruptive, but unless you persist, you will go back to your old habit of not having breakfast at all. To change a habit, you need to override your autopilot continually over a period of time. Some say it takes 21 days to form a new habit- but we are all different.

Here are a few things relating to eating that you can try to establish as habits. Not all of them will suit all people, but they are the sorts of things that most people might benefit from. The idea here is to PRACTICE BEING DELIBERATE ABOUT CHOICES. You might be able to think of other habits that you need to change.

Examples

Problem (automatic behaviour):

I LOSE CONTROL OVER MY EATING WHEN I'M WATCHING TV.

Suggestion (intentional action):

Decide not to eat food in front of a TV or computer screen.

Problem: I GET REFLUX DURING

THE NIGHT. **Suggestion:** Decide not to eat food before bed.

Problem: I SKIP BREAKFAST AND GET REALLY HUNGRY BEFORE LUNCH .

Suggestion: Decide exactly what you will eat in advance, for example 'I am going to have two eggs for breakfast every morning.'

Problem: I DON'T WANT TO EAT HOT CHIPS EVERY DAY BUT THEY ARE SO TEMPTING.

Suggestion: Cooking meals in batches on the weekend can help.

Problem: I SPEND SO MUCH ON SNACK FOODS!

Suggestion: Decide to cut out snacks, try going four hours between eating.

Problem: WHEN I AM BORED I EAT CHOCOLATE.

Suggestion: Decide not to eat when you are bored, decide to do something else.

Problem: I EAT A LOT WHEN I AM DEPRESSED.

Suggestion: Rather than 'comfort eating' try 'comfort walking' or 'comfort lifting weights' or 'comfort working with your hands.'

Higher level things

You might think that you have a lot of unhelpful habits that need overwriting. You might ask yourself 'why can't I completely override all of my habits?' In fact, the number of things we can cope with intentionally is limited. We actually NEED to do most things automatically because we would be paralysed by indecision otherwise.

To illustrate this, driving a car consists of 90 per cent automatic actions that are HABITS. (eg. 1. Blinker 2. Check rear view. 3 check wing, 4. Check blind spot, 5. Pull out from kerb if all clear.)

A learner has to deliberately THINK these five steps, but experienced drivers will (or should) be able to do them automatically out of habit. All skills work a little like this. Once you become used to it, most of it becomes automatic. This allows your mind to concentrate on 'higher level' things.

ABOVE: Pilots still need to control their autopilots.

PHOTO BY imcockpit /PIXABAY



Doing What Needs to be Done

By Raymond Walter (as told to Grant J Everett)

In the last twelve months, Raymond has kicked goals in his recovery. Finding paid work, making a whole bunch of new friends and signing up for the support he needs are just three examples of what Raymond has recently managed...

A social worker helped me to connect with Flourish Australia's Flowerdale Cottage service at Liverpool, and I greatly enjoyed taking part in a number of activities.

I found the art group was really good for occupying my mind, because when you're colouring in or painting or whatever else, it helps you to focus on something outside of yourself. The men's group was really helpful in gaining an awareness of myself and my needs

and drives as a guy, and the group outings were always a good time. I particularly enjoyed the BBQs, and I'd often help prepare the food. But the BBQs were about more than a sausage sizzle: they were a great social opportunity to spend time with other people. I made a lot of friends at Flowerdale this way.

I still attend Flourish Australia's Flowerdale service one day a week, and I recently started receiving my NDIS funding through them. On the subject of NDIS, I'm also arranging to see a psychologist to work on a few things.

The Benefits of Employment

After separating from my partner, I knew that life on the Disability Support Pension was going to be so much easier if I had some employment to supplement it.

I didn't NEED to do it, I WANTED to do it. Work also keeps my mind occupied, which I find really helpful in staying well.

A Disability Employment Service supported me in looking for work, and I've now been a kitchenhand at a restaurant for 9 months. I found it can take some time to get used to working again, and it can still be really tiring, so when I get home I'm sure to rest up.

The main reason I'd been out of the workforce for a while is because I'd been caring for my son, who has a disability. Thankfully, my son started getting NDIS support, so he has support workers coming around to help him with his needs. He's 19 now, so he's off making his own way in the world.

I can see myself going for a better job in the future. And as you can get a free course every year if you're on the Disability Support Pension, I may also return to study. I actually completed a Food Safety certificate through Flourish Australia's Connector Hub program, so I know I can handle doing a course.

Milestones

I've experienced a few hospital admissions over the years, but not for a while. As my mental health recovery is going really well, my goal is simple: to keep living independently in the community.

At present, I live by myself in my own home. I've been here for about 12 months, and I am easily able to maintain my cost of living.

My mental health issues aren't holding me back from doing what I want and need to do. I just get up every single morning, and do what has to be done.

So much of my recovery is thanks to Flourish Australia. To be honest, if it wasn't for Flourish Australia, I believe I wouldn't have gotten to where I am now.

ABOVE: With the right support and encouragement, Raymond has built himself a whole new life PHOTO BY RAYMOND WALTER

Kindness and Understanding Supported Me to Live Happier & Healthier

By Elizabeth

The turning point in my mental health recovery journey was New Year's Eve 2021, when I made a decision to actively improve my life. I had been miserable for years and not taking care of myself, so I thought it was definitely time to commit to becoming happier and healthier.

Back to the community, back to life

I was in and out of Cumberland hospital until 2018. After my last admission I moved into my own apartment, and things were going well. Tragically, my Mum then passed away. In addition to grieving, I had also relied on her help to get to the grocery store and to appointments, and I soon found it hard to cope.

With so many major changes happening all at once, a worker from my community health centre suggested that connecting with Flourish Australia's Housing and Accommodation Support Initiative could be good for me. Cecelia, my Support Worker from Flourish Australia, visited my home for a chat about the HASI program, and was excited to tell me that I had been accepted into it.

HASI's support has been so helpful. As I live alone, it makes a real difference knowing that somebody kind and compassionate will be dropping by to see how I'm doing, support me to get to where I need to go, and join me for lunch sometimes. Before connecting with Flourish Australia, I had no idea there were service providers offering such personalised, practical day-to-day assistance.

In Their Shoes

Another plus is that Flourish Australia's Peer Workers are on recovery journeys of their own, so we've shared our life experiences. This gave me a sense of safety and inclusion. I could let my guard down, and that's where the healing started.

Experiencing kindness and understanding from others who've walked in my shoes has helped me accept it's ok to struggle with mental health issues. Sadly, it's still a taboo topic for many, and that can diminish your confidence and self-esteem (if you let it). There's also the misconception that experiencing a mental health issue means you're dangerous, which is simply untrue.

A Holistic Approach

I started taking daily walks and eating well, and my fitness has improved to the point where under the advice of my GP I've been able to cut back on certain medications. My workers are amazed by my transformation, and I'm grateful for their encouragement to persist in moving towards recovery. I'm proud of myself!

Giving back

As a young person who's experienced a lot of distressing situations, I would love to share my recovery journey to bring hope to my peers. Knowing I have a heart to help young people, Cecilia has encouraged me to consider finding employment in peer work. She says my kind and genuine personality, coupled with my lived experience, would make me ideally suited to it. So once I get my driver's licence, I'll be applying for a position with Flourish Australia. They're such a lovely team that it's easy to imagine myself as part of it, and it would be such a great way to spend my time.

Recently, I've been feeling so good in myself that I started a new relationship. It's a nice feeling to really connect with someone, as love and acceptance is a fundamental human need, and after so much disruption in my younger years from spending time in mental health units, I don't take a single act of kindness for granted.

Now there's colour in my life, where everything used to be grey.

ABOVE: PHOTO PROVIDED BY STOCKSNAP ON PIXABAY

LEAVING THE 'HOOD

Ways Out of the Victim Neighbourhood

By Warren Heggarty

Temptation is everywhere, and when things go wrong, it is difficult to resist dwelling on the 'poor me' mantra. However, the more you dwell in the victim 'hood, the less energy you are going to have to move yourself to a nice neighbourhood.

The first step is to be aware of how we think. Psychologists have identified three types of thoughts that can cause us to see ourselves as continual victims, rather than the absolute champions we really are. Greaves et al call them 'attributions'

1. Internal attribution - blaming yourself for everything that goes wrong.
2. Stable attribution - believing that the fault in yourself that causes things to go wrong is permanent and unchanging.
3. Global attribution - believing that 1 and 2 above apply to EVERYTHING not just the latest disappointment in your life,

To put it bluntly, you label yourself a failure, then you think that you always have been and always will be a failure and then you think that it doesn't matter what you do, you are just a failure.

If this sounds like someone you know, it will be helpful for that someone to adopt some strategies to learn how to be more realistic.

The other thing we do which blunts our ability to get things done and give ourselves credit is blaming others. This is arguably even more useless than blaming ourselves.

Regardless of whether it is yourself or another who cops the blame, usually it's more useful to focus on what can be done right rather than what has been done wrong (in your opinion).

Amy Morin gives these suggestions: (Morin, 2017) Firstly, spend less time and energy labeling yourself a failure or blaming others. This is not going to fix the situation.

Secondly, try to think more about about what can be done rather than how disappointing everything is. What could YOU do to make the situation better right now.

Thirdly, behave contrary to how you feel. If you are shuffling along with shoulders slumped and head bowed, stand up straight and stride purposefully forward. If you are frowning, smile. Acting contrary to your feelings can change your feelings, Your body and mind are connected.

Fourthly, avoid 'black and white' thinking. If you make a mistake, one mistake does not make you a permanent failure at all things, In fact, if you LEARN from the mistake, you have actually advanced!

So keep advancing, concentrate on your strengths and do what you can do. With a bit of support you may soon find yourself striding purposefully right out of the victim 'hood.

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Morin, A. (2017). How to get out of a victim mentality. In S. Greaves, Real Strength (p. 120). Chichester: Capstone.

ABOVE: The victim 'hood is a ghost town anyway. Nobody needs to hang out there, PHOTO BY AURAYAA on PIXABAY





ACDC PROJECT

Having Conversations to Make People Aware of Community Supports

By Warren Heggarty

Too many people only seek mental health support in a crisis. They are unaware of mental health and wellbeing supports which are available in their communities. This is where the ACDC (Assisting Communities through Direct Connection) team comes in.

People Connectors employed by community managed organisations across Australia have been talking to people about health and wellbeing and about making those connections, and they do it in many community languages and in a culturally sensitive way. (About the ACDC project, 2023). This is what they call 'proactive outreach!'

It is actually a door-knocking campaign. For the past 2 years teams have been going door-to-door in selected communities across Australia spreading the good

news that support is available. 'Proactive outreach is important' says Julie Millard Consultant/Trainer, 'because people don't know what they don't know?' Julie also says that householders report to People Connectors that loneliness and social isolation are two of the main areas that are affecting them, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic.

The proof that proactive outreach really works is that I didn't really know about the ACDC Project until Julie Millard actually contacted me

about it, albeit via email. Now I DO know. And now so do YOU. Why not watch this video which explains more about it.

<https://acdc.org.au/about-acdc/>

Tens of thousands of households have so far received a visit from People Connectors, had a conversation about health and wellbeing, been given a brochure and magnet about local and national services and if needed been assisted to connect with services. If no one was home, the brochure and fridge magnet are left in their letter box.

People Want to Talk

James McKechnie, ACDC Project Manager, said it was remarkable how receptive householders were to the project, which is the first of its kind anywhere in the world. The message from the ACDC team is, perhaps surprisingly, people WANT to talk about mental health issues. How things have changed over the years!

People Connectors have also made appearances in local and multicultural media. For example Vevyan Putrus who appears in the ACDC promo video was also interviewed on Arabic Muslim radio 2MRM. This program was related to the project's doorknocking in Greenacre NSW which has a large Arabic and Muslim population. This approach ensures that the information given to people is relevant to their own area, taking into account, local cultures and community languages (2MRM, 2022)

Increased Knowledge

Another benefit of the project is that it has enabled a lot of data to be collected and passed onto researchers at the Centre for Social Impact at the University of Western Australia. This data enables us to learn about the impact of mental health issues at a household and community level. The more knowledge we have, the better position communities will be in to seek funding and provide additional support services.

According to Community Mental Health Australia CEO Mr Bill Gye "So far, the top three reasons why people have not accessed services are: preferring to self-manage their symptoms, being afraid, embarrassed or ashamed to ask for help, and not knowing where to go for help. Prevention and early intervention are far more effective than dealing with people in crisis." (Loucadou-Wells, 2023)

Thanks to Julie Millard for her help with this article

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Assisting Communities through Direct Connection

传递健康

社区协助直接联系项目



LOCAL SUPPORT 当地支持 — HURSTVILLE

Advance Diversity Services 多元化促进服务	(02) 9597 5455 advancediversity.org.au	Services for migrants, refugees and older people of all cultures. 为各文化背景的移民、难民和年长者提供服务。
Chinese Australian Services Society (CASS) 华人服务社	(02) 9789 4587 casscare.org.au	A range of social and welfare services for multicultural communities. 为多元文化社区提供一系列社会和福利服务。
Carer Gateway 照护者支持	1800 422 737 carergateway.gov.au	Services and supports for carers delivered both in person and online. 以面对面和线上的形式为照护者提供服务和支持。
Latrobe Community Health Service Latrobe 社区卫生服务	1800 242 696 lchs.com.au	Help accessing the NDIS or connecting to other community support. 帮助获取全国残障保险计划 (NDIS) 或其他社区支持服务。
Stride Mental Health Stride 心理健康服务	1300 001 907 stride.com.au	NDIS mental health support and family and carer program. 提供全国残障保险计划 (NDIS) 下的心理健康、家庭和照护者支持服务。

For more information please visit:

欲了解更多信息, 请访问: ACDC.ORG.AU

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LEFT: Sonia, Chris and Sariya – People Connectors, Chris, the Manager and Julie Millard Consultant/Trainer about to go door knocking in Westmead NSW after a week of face to face training in safety, the project and the proactive outreach model. PHOTO BY SONIA.

ABOVE: Bilingual ACDC Project magnet delivered to households in Hurstville NSW in 2022. PHOTOS COURTESY OF JULIE MILLARD

Recovery is My Jam:

FREESTYLING IN THE PARK

By Gloria Wulf (as told to Grant J Everett)

I'm introducing more balance and harmony into my recovery journey by practising relaxation, meditation, and healing through music. This has calmed my mind, allowing me to slow down and take life in.

Jamming In The Park

Since moving to Maryborough from Hervey Bay, I've gotten involved with a musical group called Freestyle Jamming In The Park, founded by Teresa Maree. They do therapeutic performances focused on recovery and wellbeing, and the musicians were so calm and harmonious that I started playing bongos with them to learn how to be more like them.

We jam in the park on Mondays, Tuesday is drumming in the hut, and cook up a community BBQ every month. Freestyle Jamming In The Park is an opportunity for creatives to mingle and inspire each other, and parents are often grateful to have something to keep their kids entertained.

Some musos have played guitar for over 20 years, while others are less experienced. Our singers have beautiful voices, and a major highlight was when a gentleman in the audience, who had been mute for five years, was listening to a lady who had a voice like an angel, and he just started belting out the words!

One musician from Freestyle Jamming In The Park, Ivanya, has done a lot of holistic therapy with me. We did an excellent group called Cutting Of The Cords. We've also done a speech group, sound therapy, colour therapy, and a women's circle. Ivanya calls me regularly to make sure I'm doing okay.

Challenges

I've had a lot to deal with over the last few years. The death of my brother was very difficult. Then my other brother moved up from Melbourne following a heart attack so I could care for him. I've looked after others from a young age, so that's inbuilt. I've arranged a



support worker for my brother, which has made a difference.

I'm having health issues at the moment, but I know I'll overcome them. My jaw and mouth are in constant pain, which is affecting my wellbeing and distracting me from my projects. It's been stressful waiting for my past and present doctors to get on the same page about it.

I had to give up driving, so I've been arranging lifts with friends from time to time. I don't want to rely on people driving me everywhere, as I'm used to being independent. My support worker is organising cab vouchers, and thankfully Maryborough is much more walkable than Hervey Bay.

I've moved house three times in 7 months, which hasn't helped my wellbeing. I'm currently living in a gated community where you need a code to get onto the grounds, and that helps me to feel peaceful.

I've been exposed to a lot of violence in my life, to the point where I experienced hair loss from PTSD, so when I encountered violence again a few years back, I refused to put up with it. This is a major trigger for me, so I will cut people off, no matter who they are.

Flourish Australia

I overcame many major crises alone before I realised I needed help to keep going. Flourish Australia supported me to get back on track. Whenever I've needed them, they've always been there.

When I began my mental health recovery journey three years ago, Flourish Australia staff from Hervey Bay would visit me. I'd worked in various support organisations and always been community minded, but when I lost my older brother, I went from being employed as an Activity Officer to somebody who struggled to function. I was very distressed, but as my trust levels built, I was finally able to say, "Look, my PTSD is through the roof, I'm struggling, I'm being triggered, I need help!"

Getting involved with Flourish Australia's group activities really helped. Rachel ran a meditation group, a walking group to the beach and the botanical gardens,

an exercise group, and a music group. These all played a part in slowing my racing thoughts. When I started the meditation group I found it very hard to concentrate, to just listen to the birds and feel the wind. Once I got used to it, I enjoyed it. The music group was another favourite, and I enjoyed playing the bongos and the tambourine. I've never been musical, so it's funny I'm Jamming In The Park nowadays!

Flourish Australia staff accompanied me to my appointments, and helped me access NDIS support. Due to distance, unfortunately, it's not feasible for me to attend Flourish Australia at Hervey Bay anymore, but we've kept in touch through their WarmLine.

Final thoughts

I've learned we need to make the choices that resonate with us best and not just do what we're told to do. Sometimes I'll need to say, "No, I can't do this right now." I'm playing things one day at a time, backing off and slowing down a bit, which is hard for me! It's an ongoing journey; but if I don't look after myself, who will?

Want to know more about

Flourish Australia Hervey Bay?

Unit 6 & 7,
10 Liuzzi Street,
Pialba QLD 4655

8:30AM - 8PM
Weekdays

2:30PM - 8PM
Weekends

(07) 5293 5350

LEFT: Gloria Wulf, getting her tambourine on at Freestyle Jamming In The Park!
BELOW: Teresa, Evania Ev, Stan, and Barb.
PHOTO BY TERESA DUMBLETON
(Founder of Freestyle Jamming in the Park)



Mental Health Month 2023

We all Have a Role to Play

By Grant J Everett and Warren Heggarty



October was Mental Health Month, and 2023's theme was "We All Have A Role To Play." Flourish Australia celebrated with many events across our organisation.

Mental Health Month is the perfect time to think about how we can connect with the people around us. That might mean looking out for someone close to you, supporting your community to be more mental health aware, being a mental health ally, or taking time to care for your own wellbeing.

Creating a world free from mental health stigma will take effort from all of us. So what role will you play in the push to erase stigma?

This is the time of year that Flourish Australia services like to invite the local community in so they can see what we're all about. We showcased employment opportunities and NDIS support, held discussions about the power (and astonishing growth) of peer work, and showed the many ways we support people who experience mental health issues.

We hope to bring you some detailed reports of these happenings in future issues. In the meantime, here is a rundown:

Sydney Region Events

Flourish Australia's Sydney Region Team put together a series of four events designed to allow people from different services who might not normally get together to mingle and ask 'what role do YOU play?'

Firstly, there was a Big Afternoon Tea held on 6th October at our Marrickville service where people received Flourish Australia showbags full of goodies and enjoyed food, drink, music and socialising. Secondly, the Connect and Thrive team from Kogarah arranged a Picnic In The Park at Alexandria on 11th.

Thirdly, Buckingham House threw the doors open on the 20th. And finally, Flowerdale Cottage in Liverpool had a BBQ lunch where everyone attended in fancy dress!

More Events!

The Flourish Australia service on Hunter Street, Newcastle, hosted a morning tea and a bunch of market stalls. They also held an art exhibition with canapes and live music on the evening of the 20th of October. Our New Outlook service at Wollongong had their own exhibition of creative works from local artists.

Flourish Australia staff also contributed to events that were group efforts. Our staff helped to host the Snowy Valley Community Fun Day at Tumut Showgrounds, where there was live music, arts and crafts, street food, wellness stalls and giveaways. Our Salisbury service in South Australia partnered with NAHLN (Northern Adelaide Local Health Network, Wondakka service) and NSC (Northern Social Club) to put on a free community picnic with outdoor activities. The Salisbury service also attended a Roundtable on the South Australian Unmet

Needs Report hosted by the Mental Health Coalition of South Australia.

Still more events!

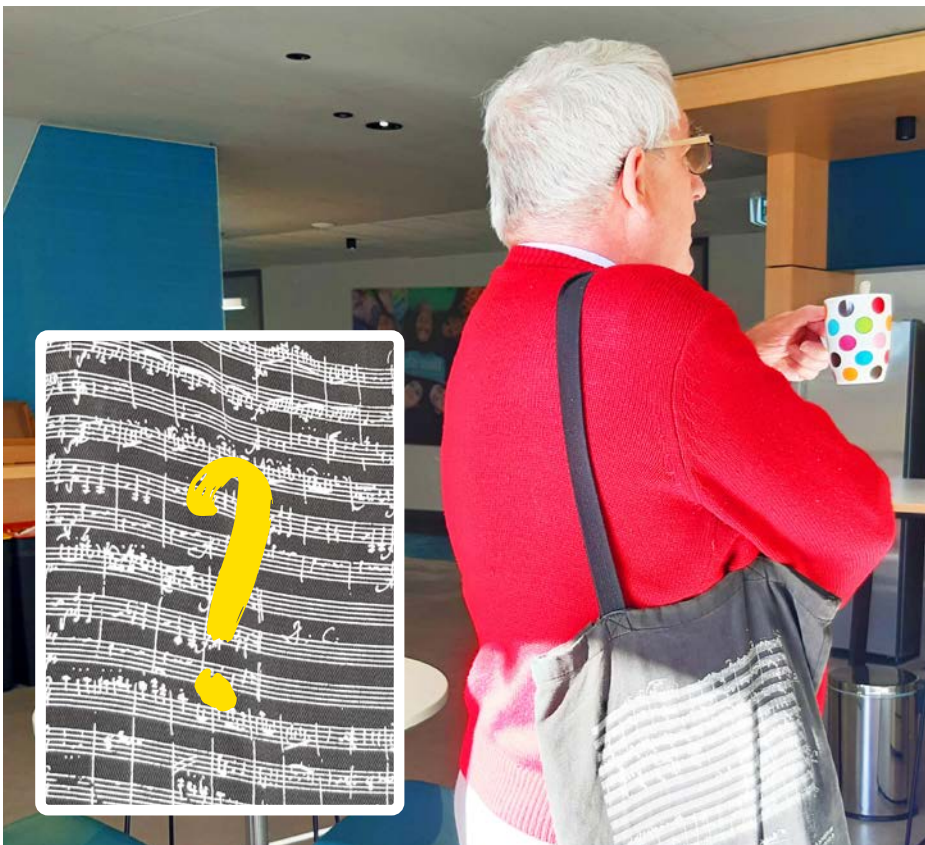
On Friday the 27th of October, Associate Professor Simon Rosenbaum hosted Flourish Australia's "Let's Do Lunch" webinar, speaking about how people can change their lives for the better through fully integrated physical and mental healthcare. An exercise physiologist, Professor Rosenbaum trains health professionals in humanitarian settings around the globe, and is a Flourish Foundation Ambassador. His talk was about motivating us to Move our Mood.

Beyond Flourish Australia itself, in the next few issues, we will also be reporting on "A Country in Chorus." This includes one of Flourish Foundation Australia's ambassadors Jonathon Welch AM, founder of the Choir of Hard knocks; And "Slice Silence," an art installation by Indigo Daya at the University of New South Wales which explores alternative approaches to self-harm

So how did YOU celebrate Mental Health Month 2023? We'd love to hear all about it!

ABOVE: Early in October, our Marrickville service had a Big Afternoon Tea! Mitchell is here being congratulated by Clare, Catherine and Jessica for his role in organising it.
PHOTO BY WARREN HEGGARTY

More about Mental Health Month in coming issues!



Small Talk is Big Time

Tips on Mastering the Art

By Warren Heggarty

In the book 'How to talk to anyone', Leil Lowndes shows how to go from first impressions through small talk then into deep conversation. (Lowndes, 2017, pp. 41-82) There are some great tips on small talk here, and also in famous books like those by Dale Carnegie.

There are some languages that completely lack 'small talk' set phrases like 'How are you?' and 'Nice day' and 'How's it going?'. They have other ways of handling greetings. Some languages have one set of phrases that are strictly for small talk and another set that are more conversational. The English phrase 'How are you?' translates into Japanese 'O-genki desu ka?' only in Japanese it is not small talk but a genuine question! In English the phrase does not (usually) require a full report on your health in response.

If it DOES, a completely different tone of voice and body language may be used.

Small talk does not have to be some profound utterance about the human condition. In fact, there is a REASON small talk is often about trivial things like the weather (hasn't it been cold lately?) These uncontroversial, somewhat empty lines are how we gauge the mood of other people.

It is important to get a feel for the environment you are in and to observe signs to gauge what sort of mood other people are in.

Have you ever been in a really bad mood, just wanting to be left alone, when suddenly someone starts yammering away about something that you are really not in the mood for? This can be quite painful. If you are polite, you might end up simply putting up with it. Some of us are excellent

at reading 'mood' but some of us are not so good at it. It pays to look for visual or behavioural cues in the other people to gauge whether they are in the mood for socialising or conversing. If someone is quiet, looking at the floor and not interacting, it might be better to ask RUOK? Before launching into what fun you had on the weekend.

Leil Lowndes recommends wearing or carrying an item with you that can be used to spark a conversation with a stranger. For example, I have a tote bag which has a facsimile page from a Mozart score. This screams 'Musician' to those who see me. 'Excuse me, I couldn't help notice... are you a musician by any chance?' (Lowndes, 2017, p. 54)

Once you have initiated a conversation, content DOES matter. As we have said previously in Panorama, the best thing you can do is to listen and concentrate on what the other person has to say. Dale Carnegie (author of 'How to win friends and influence people') talks of three types of questions you can ask to start a conversation.

Firstly, there are factual questions, such as "What footy team do you support? Whereabouts do you live? And how long have you worked here?" Secondly, there are causative questions like, "What made you want to do this kind of work?" or "How did you come to like athletics?" Thirdly, there are value based questions like, "Tell me about someone who had a major impact on your life," or "What do you get out of your volunteer work?" (Dale Carnegie Organisation)

WORKS CITED

Dale Carnegie Organisation. (n.d.). How to start a question with three conversation types. Retrieved June 2023, from dalecarnegie.com: <https://www.dalecarnegie.com/en/winpeopleover/how-to-start-a-conversation>

Lowndes, L. (2017). How to talk to anyone. London: Thorsons

ABOVE: Leil Lowndes suggests wearing a 'whatzit,' some kind of item of clothing or accessory that prompts other people to say, 'excuse me but I couldn't help noticing that...' **PHOTO BY MEGAN ADAMSON**

YOUR JOURNEY TO EMPLOYMENT




Every year 1 in 5 Australians will experience some form of mental health issue.

Flourish Australia provides mental health specialised disability employment services (DES) supporting people living with a mental health issue to access sustainable employment.

Flourish Australia DES locations:

Bankstown • Broken Hill • Caringbah • Cessnock • Harris Park
Hornsby • Liverpool • Maitland • Penrith • Seven Hills

To see if you qualify for our free service, please call us for a confidential discussion or visit our website for more information.

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