



LIKE MINDS, LIKE MINE
Whakaitia te Whakawhiu i te Tangata

Like Minds

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WHAKAITIA TE WHAKAWHIU I TE TANGATA

WHAT'S INSIDE

- 1 *Like Minds* Future Forward
- 5 Phil and Anthony - breaking down the barriers
- 6 New *Like Minds* research
- 7 It's a Mad, Mad World
- 8 Claire Anderson - one step at a time
- 9 Steve Gurney - a unique challenge
- 10 Tony and Lee - be there
- 11 Triangulating the West Coast
- 12 New video stories for *Like Minds*



Multi-sport and triathlon athlete, Steve Gurney (right) has tackled some unusual adventures in his life - like being part of *Dancing with the Stars* - but was less prepared for his experience with depression. Read his story on page 9.

“... I'd just gone over my personal threshold of tolerance and needed to take the load off to get back to a healthier state of mind.”

STEVE GURNEY

Like Minds Future Forward

“ As a nation we are more accepting and relaxed about having people with experience of mental illness in the workplace or on the rugby field, but [we shouldn't] take it for granted... ”

ASSOCIATE MINISTER OF HEALTH, HON DR JONATHAN COLEMAN

Speaking at the recent *Like Minds* national seminar, Dr Coleman said, “The work [of *Like Minds*] is vital. There have been some major achievements over the last few years and that is work that needs to continue.”

» continued page 2 ...



The Minister talked about how research shows that *Like Minds* is making a difference and has brought about significant change – especially in people’s perception of mental illness. Since *Like Minds* began:

- Media reporting has become more balanced and less discriminatory
- Awareness of mental illness has increased
- People are more likely to seek treatment earlier for themselves or their family
- New Zealanders say they would be less likely to be ashamed of having a mental illness
- New Zealanders are significantly more likely to accept someone with experience of mental illness as a workmate
- New Zealanders are more likely to think that someone with experience of mental illness is able to contribute to society
- People with experience of mental illness have become more visible in a positive way – quashing negative stereotypes and raising awareness through leading and role-modelling recovery and interaction with the community
- There is now a more experienced and skilled workforce of people with experience of mental illness involved at all levels of the programme, including leadership roles.

Minister Coleman’s speech came near the close of two days that saw renewed passion and excitement amongst *Like Minds* regional providers for what the work is achieving in their communities.

“Reducing stigma and discrimination means that people are more likely to recover full social, family and economic participation”, said Dr Coleman. “Increased economic participation brought about [by] reducing the stigma and discrimination associated with mental illness has a tangible financial benefit.”

The different faces of employment

Economic participation and employment was a major focus of the presentation by guest speaker Glenys Barker, Health and Safety manager from Vero Insurance. She talked about how to ‘normalise’ mental health in the workplace, to maintain healthy and engaged employees and a happy work environment.



“Creating an environment where people can be open about mental health issues has, together with a company focus on employee wellbeing, contributed to decreased absenteeism, increased staff retention, increased job satisfaction and increased the productivity of our employees. This has all had a positive impact on the company bottom line.”

Glenys uses a programme “Time to talk, Time to listen” (which she developed) aimed at supporting people in the workforce experiencing mental

health issues. She credits this and other initiatives with helping to make Vero Insurance one of the Best Large Employers in New Zealand – according to the JRA survey – for six of the last seven years.

Aaron Woolley, Service Coordinator from Te Korowai Hauora O Hauraki, Thames, presented from a different employment angle and talked about the steps his organisation had taken to engage with local employers.



“We asked them, ‘What is your biggest fear of employing someone with mental illness’ and hosted an employer’s breakfast which was very successful and developed some key relationships with employers in the area,” he says.

One of those relationships was with Phil Cave, manager of Thames Timber, who co-presented with Aaron on why people with mental health issues are some of his best employees. Anthony Savage, an employee at Thames Timber, spoke about how working at Thames Timber has been essential in his recovery and was a huge source of personal pride. (See profile page 5)

Magdel Hammond, Services Manager at Connect Supporting Recovery, and Emma Carreon, Team Leader of Employment at EDGE Employment (and current Board Member of ASENZ, the Association of Supported Employment in NZ) spoke about the ‘choose, get, keep’ model of supported employment.

They quoted an alarming statistic, “Over 70% of people with a mental illness say that they want to work, yet less than



Emma Carreon (left) and Magdel Hammond

10% of people with a mental illness are in paid employment.”

Magdel and Emma called on *Like Minds* regional providers to work in partnership with supported employment agencies and organisations such as ASENZ. “We want their help to break down stigma and discrimination that acts as a barrier to people with experience of mental illness finding and keeping employment,” they said.

What about families?

Family and whānau was another key topic with Dr Heather Barnett from the Mental Health Foundation (MHF) presenting key messages from the MHF’s research *Walk a Mile in Our Shoes*, which explored discrimination within and towards families and whānau of people diagnosed with mental illness. (See Issue 41)

Leigh Murray, Family Advisor for Auckland District Health Board, presented on ‘Partnerships, being there, staying involved: what does this mean in action from a family/whānau perspective?’

Leigh shared some of her own journey as a family member of someone experiencing mental distress. “People would say ‘How are you Leigh?’ and I would say ‘Oh, he’s not doing too bad’. I defined myself by how well he was doing.”

She described how she moved from taking over and helping – to her own detriment – to a place where she

could provide ongoing support and encouragement while maintaining her own wellbeing.



Leigh Murray

“I find I am now able to listen and validate, whereas before, my first reaction was to tell him what to do.”

This shift involved a lot of self-education for Leigh on recovery literature including the work of Patricia Deegan and Dr Patte Randal, and relationship skills drawn from counselling models like transactional analysis.

Leigh referred to key documents in mental health emphasising the importance of family and whānau having access to education on recovery so they can better support it. Acknowledging this has not yet happened, she encouraged *Like Minds* to do this in partnership with families and whānau who understand recovery.

Cultural dos and don’ts

The *Real Skills plus Seitapu* presentation from Te Pou speakers Carolyn Swanson, Johnny Siaosi and Manase Lua was about engaging with Pacific peoples. It featured powerful personal stories and entertaining and

Key elements of healthy relationships are:

- Saying more positive things than negative things (giving each other encouragement; not undermining each other with constant criticism)
- Telling each other when things are going well
- Making room for each other’s views even when you disagree
- Expressing affection (spending time together, having fun, hugs)

From page 94 of *Walk a Mile in Our Shoes*

www.mentalhealth.org.nz/file/downloads/pdf/file_293.pdf

informative video clips on some dos and don’ts of cultural sensitivity. For more information read www.leva.co.nz/page/14-mental-health+real-skills-plus-seitapu-ndash-engaging-pasifika

Nelson Wahanui (Ngāti Maniapoto) from Hāpai Te Ora Tāpui presented an impressive model for community action framework for reducing discrimination entitled Māori Ora, Mauri Ora. Nelson explained how demonstrating the values and principles of Māori Ora, Mauri Ora – Aroha, Tika, Pono, Manaaki, Tautoko, Whenua, Mātauranga, and Tangihanga at home, school or work will reduce the stigma and discrimination that people living with mental illness experience. For more information on this framework read *MindNet* www.mentalhealth.org.nz/newsletters/view/article/22/308/2011/

Other highlights included...

Jane Wardlaw from Draft FCB explained the background and process involved in creating the latest *Like Minds* TV campaign www.likeminds.org.nz

Allan Wyllie from Phoenix Research presented the findings from the Service User Discrimination Survey (which will be covered in the next issue of the *Like Minds* newsletter).

Shona Clarke and **Tina Helm** from the Mental Health Foundation presented a model they use in their work to progress the personal effects of stigma and discrimination into action at a societal level.

Thursday afternoon was capped off superbly by a live radio show from **Corrinne Oliver** (Supporting Families Wairarapa) and **Daniel Real**, who produce a weekly radio show on Arrow 92.7FM (see profile Issue 43).

They created a mixing desk out of cardboard that Daniel quipped the recently announced funding changes had forced him to improvise.

However, the funding changes did not stop *Like Minds* seminar attendees from maintaining positive spirits and having a laugh. Taimi Allan, *Like Minds* Team Leader from Mind and Body Consultants, entertained the dinner crowd with a specially penned rendition of 'Don't Worry, Be Happy' on the ukulele.

She was followed by stand-up comedian Rob Callaghan who managed to move the audience to laughter and tears with his incredible personal story of his experience of bipolar disorder.



Minister Coleman and Judi Clements

As Judi Clements, Chief Executive of the Mental Health Foundation, acknowledged in her opening address to the seminar, "We are in a time of change with the *Like Minds* programme and we must collaborate and learn from each other. Now is the time when our links with each other and our partners and allies are even more important."

By Ruth Jackson



Wellywood with a social twist

Like Minds Wellington is calling on keen New Zealand film makers to create a short film, 30 seconds to two minutes long, and enter it in the *Like Minds* Wellington Film Competition 2011.



The competition is open to short films that explore the theme 'Be there. Stay involved with people experiencing mental illness.' To inspire and challenge your thinking there is a short animation on YouTube:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=lyr4vQHofqM

Prizes include:

- A trip for two to Auckland for a 'behind the scenes' look at Exposure top creative advertising director Kevin Denholm's work. (Kevin was responsible for the 'Mitre Ten sandpit' and 'Air New Zealand 'Nothing to hide' advertisements among many others.)
- A laptop
- Flip cameras
- Signed memorabilia from Weta Workshop

There is a youth category and a general category and entries close: Monday 30th May.

More information is available on the competition Facebook page: www.facebook.com/pages/Like-Minds-Wgtn-Film-Comp-2011/176059609103330

Or you can txt your email address to 021 0711 306 - or email likemindswgtn@gmail.com - for an entry form.

Phil and Anthony – breaking down the barriers

Phil Cave, Manufacturing Manager at Thames Timber Ltd, states matter-of-factly, “People with experience of mental illness that we employ are some of our best staff. There is everything to gain and nothing to fear.”

Phil lists the advantages of employing someone with experience of mental illness are their self-awareness, integrity, good character, honesty and their empathy.

He adds, “They are good workers who are keen to stay.”

Be there

Phil stresses that it is important to support people if they become unwell – whether the person was employed knowing they had a mental illness or it developed on the job.

“We try to talk about it openly,” he says. “We talk about the fact that it’s just an illness and there will be better days.”

Phil will often give the person an opportunity to take a break. “We give people time off for rugby injuries and maternity leave...mental health is no different. In fact, sometimes it is easier to manage than the rugby injuries!”

Support offered includes reasonable accommodations, discretion after entitlements end and acceptance by both parties of what will happen next.



Phil (left) and Anthony (right).

Discrimination

The main barriers Phil sees are the attitudes of some managers who lack empathy and understanding. However, Phil enforces a zero tolerance for discrimination and bullying in the workplace. “We don’t tolerate it.”

Phil says a key factor in employing people with experience of mental illness is a close working relationship with the local Workwise (www.workwise.org.nz). “They are excellent at finding people for the job, so we get the right match,” he says.

Anthony Savage

One such employee, Anthony Savage, has been working at Thames Timber for over four years and has a wonderful working relationship with Phil and his Thames Timber colleagues.

Anthony was originally diagnosed in 2002 when he was 24 and over the years, the most common diagnosis he’s received has been bipolar.

Anthony believes work plays a huge role in maintaining his wellness and recovery and is keen to emphasise that we need more employers like Phil, who are supportive, empathic and understanding.

He says, “Working at Thames Timber has changed my life. My workmates weren’t sure at first, but then they got to know me and now they just treat me as normal, which is cool. I’m proud of working at Thames Timber with my mates. And I think people are getting used to mental illness – that it’s just part of life.”

By Ruth Jackson

Te Korowai Hauora O Hauraki

Like Minds provider Te Korowai Hauora O Hauraki became involved with Thames Timber, after Workwise Thames introduced them at an Employers Breakfast Seminar during Mental Health Awareness Week 2010.

Aaron Woolley, *Like Minds* Service Coordinator at Te Korowai says, “Phil Cave is so amazing our team want to clone him! He listens, and is supportive and accommodating of people with experience of mental illness. He’s given Anthony the opportunity to be employed, to have the same rights as everyone, and to be supported right through his employment at Thames Timber.”

“There is great sense of wellbeing amongst all staff,” Aaron says. “This is just the beginning of some wonderful things we can achieve by getting our messages and kaupapa out into the workplace and educating people.”

i Some useful contacts

- **Workwise**
www.workwise.org.nz
- **ASENZ Supported Employment Services**
www.asenz.org.nz
- Download **Taking the First Step** (a guidebook)
www.kites.org.nz/pdf/kites%20taking%20the%20first%20step.pdf

New *Like Minds* research

Following on from the publication of last August's research *Walk a Mile in Our Shoes* (see Issue 41), the Mental Health Foundation (MHF) is working on a new piece of research for *Like Minds, Like Mine*.

The MHF's Senior Researcher and Policy Analyst, Dr Heather Barnett (Hee), says, "This research is about exploring young people's (18-24 years) experiences of discrimination associated with a mental health problem, or having a family or whānau member who has this experience.

"We decided to explore this specific group because prior research has highlighted discrimination towards young people with a mental health problem; recognition that discrimination is a barrier to accessing help; and a broader view that young people are subject to discrimination which exacerbates mental health problems."

The aim is to:

- explore the impact of discrimination from the perspective of young people/rangatahi;
- better understand the relationship between discrimination and young people's experiences of mental health problems;
- make recommendations on ways to reduce discrimination towards young people who experience mental health problems
- make recommendations on ways to reduce discrimination towards young people who have a family or whānau member who has experience of mental health problems

The research has been approved by the Central DHB Ethics Committee and will be guided by Rawiri Wharemate, the MHF's cultural advisor. The research team includes Te Reo Kimiia (Tamehana Consultancy Ltd), Shona Clarke (MHF mental health promoter) and Dr Heather Barnett (MHF). An advisory group of young people will provide

advice on appropriate processes for engaging and working with young people, and will meet throughout the length of the project.

Hee says the team is currently consulting iwi and key stakeholders, establishing the young people's advisory group and setting up the research processes.

"We are also liaising with Te Roopu Ārahi, the *Like Minds* Māori Caucus and Te Wēra Kotua, Egan Bidois and Waiatamai Tamehana are providing oversight for the iwi consultations and ongoing support for kaupapa Māori research processes.

"The first stage in the research, starts in June when we hold 10 focus groups in the greater Wellington region including Kapiti, Porirua, Wellington, Hutt Valley and Wairarapa.

"Some of the groups will be general and others will be specific to young Māori and Pasifika people, as well as young people who are lesbian and gay, and those with a refugee background."

Hee says they expect to talk to a total of 70-80 young people, and all groups will be co-facilitated by a young person from the research team and/or advisory group.

Unique aspects

The unique aspect of this research is the age group of the research participants. "This group has distinct social, cultural, physical and developmental needs that are different from children, teenagers of high school age or adults," says Hee. "There are also social expectations of this life stage, such as gaining autonomy and financial independence, becoming adult citizens and starting families."

Prior research and surveys have also indicated that, of all age groups, young people aged 18-24 have the highest 12 month prevalence of mental

Changes in language to reach the target audience

To accommodate the needs of participants, feedback suggests that terms such as 'mental illness' and 'discrimination' are not readily used amongst young people and could be alienating. The young people's advisory group will need to address terminology to ensure the research is appropriate and relevant.

disorders – such as depression, self harm, suicidal behaviour, binge drinking, sexual abuse and bullying – with notable impacts across work, study, home responsibilities, relationships and social life.

"These experiences are often carried into young adulthood," says Hee. "So, work to reduce discrimination needs to take account of these factors and the challenges of being a young person in a society that appears to tolerate discrimination towards young people."

Outcomes

The research will provide young people, who experience discrimination related to mental health problems, with a voice.

"The evidence base we establish can inform education (that *Like Minds* providers do), policies and practices to reduce discrimination amongst young people or rangatahi. It will also highlight ways in which society can better value and include young people or rangatahi who experience mental health problems."

Results will be published in early 2012.

By Dr Heather Barnett, Cate Hennessy

i Please contact Dr Heather Barnett on ph: (04) 801 0353 or email: heather@mentalhealth.org.nz for more information.

It's a Mad, Mad World

“ Because I've gone through it before, it lends to my sense of faith in myself, that I could do it again. It gives me confidence in my abilities to turn that corner. ”

HINE HAWKE

It's a Mad, Mad World is a brilliant new DVD resource that shares stories of mental illness from employees, artists, actors, musicians, comedians, poets and students.

The documentary was created to demystify and destigmatise personal experience of mental illness and features six people – Taimi Allan, Miriam Barr, Jason Haitana, Paul Witherspoon, Jim Burdett and Hine Hawke.

All six have not only recovered from serious mental illness, but say they are better parents, partners, friends, artists and employees because of their experiences. They are asked: How does your experience of "madness" help or hinder your life?

Miriam thinks it is much harder for people with mental disorder problems to find and keep employment. "But that has nothing whatsoever to do with their skills or abilities, and is really about us having a society that doesn't like to talk about things that are unpleasant in life.

"People will wonder what was wrong with my family that made me go crazy, but actually it was my relationships with my parents that helped me overcome it."

Taimi says that having suffered distressing periods of time in her life, she would not wish anyone to go through those times, but she's really glad she did.

"Mental illness is not necessarily a bad thing. People can learn and grow and be better people because of it.

"I've been to a place where nothing was beautiful. So when I see these little



moments of beauty in someone or in something, it's time to appreciate how far I've come and to celebrate that beauty."

For **Paul**, "The teasing [which coincided with his disclosure at work] would have probably happened anyway, to anybody, but for me it had particular significance because it was wrapped up in rejection."

Looking at some old photos, Paul says it was a period of his life where he'd pretty much given up. "That's what I'm getting out of my recovery, that I don't need to go back there. I love this guy [myself] because he didn't give up, he kept trying."

Jim says, "There are employers out there who are prejudiced, nobody is without prejudice, but mental illness affects people in so many different ways it is impossible to generalise."

He says the most therapeutic experience he's ever had in terms of helping him deal with his mental illness has been working in the field of mental health. "Suddenly, my experience of mental illness is not just a burden, it's a quality."

Hone Harawira (Māori politician) once said to **Jason** that 'Mana comes through mahi, the prestige that we earn, we earn it through our work'.

"For me that was a major thing. The biggest support will always be, not only my family, but the things that I believe in. The things that I hold true."

It's a Mad, Mad World will be screening on TVNZ7 on Tuesday 31 May at 6.05pm, Wednesday 1 June at 12.05pm and Sunday 18 September at 12.30pm. The half-hour documentary was produced by Morningside Productions and made as part of the Open Door series with funding from NZ on Air.

By Taimi Allan, Cate Hennessy

i More information

Join the *It's a Mad, Mad, World* community by becoming a fan on Facebook:

<http://tiny.cc/madmadworld>

Buy your own copy by phoning 09 473 1676 or emailing opendoors@xtra.co.nz

Claire Anderson – one step at a time

Triumph over difficult circumstances is the crux of a compelling story and Claire Anderson's book, *One Step at a Time*, grabs the reader as Claire describes some traumatic events of her life including a sexual assault, her experience of depression and achieving her ultimate goal of becoming an Ironman.

Journey to wellness

Claire says, "My recovery was challenging. There weren't any magical words or a simple fix.

"Accepting the sexual assault was a huge hurdle to overcome and to be honest it took about a decade," she says. "It was when I was doing the Ironman that I went through the complete cycle and finally accepted that the past was the past. It has defined who I am, but it doesn't have to control my present or define my future. Not any more."

She thinks it's important just to talk to someone. "There may be situations where you reach out to someone and they don't provide the support or answers that you need. They either don't respond, or they change the subject.

"That happened to me on a few occasions and I saw that as a sign to not say anything, but actually it's a sign to keep reaching out and try someone else. Acknowledgement is important as it takes so much courage to confide in someone."

Outward Bound

The turning point in Claire's recovery was attending Outward Bound. "It was there that I first discovered the nuts and bolts that were missing from my life."

Claire's nuts and bolts were, "What was important to me. What my values were. What my life mission statement was. What my purpose in life was. When you say it like that it seems like quite

simple things. For me, knowing what was important to me meant I could then fill my days with what was most important. You are happiest when you do things that you value and enjoy the most."

"Now I have a newfound belief that I have power and control over my future. When I was sick I thought that it was up to everyone else to fix my life."

The other key focus for Claire is exercise. "Exercise really does help you feel better and for me the time spent exercising helped me process my thoughts. Often, when I was training for the Ironman, I would be running with tears pouring down my face. It was my time where I could just be with myself and feel whatever I was feeling at the time. I still exercise regularly and I definitely notice a difference in my physical and mental health when I don't."

Be there

Claire's biggest hurdle was asking for help. "I felt that if I needed help I was a failure. I didn't want to admit that I couldn't cope with life. So there were many times when I pushed my family and friends away and tried to block them out of my life. I thought I was protecting them from what I was going through – that this is the best approach but it simply wasn't."

Claire says the support of friends and family was fundamental to her recovery. "As soon as I was open to being helped, they stepped in and did everything in their power to help me."

She is grateful that her family and friends never left her side. "Even when I was going through that difficult time they were always there. They were my safety net," says Claire,

"They never stopped loving me and they continued to treat me as a normal person. They were always asking me out



Claire Anderson with her parents.

Claire's goal when she decided to publish *One Step at a Time* was to try to help at least one person. She's had numerous emails from people saying how they've been touched in some way and how they've identified traits in themselves that she talks about in the book.

Read the book review:

www.mentalhealth.org.nz/page/933-e-bulletin+book-review and/or go to www.claireanderson.co.nz to order the book.

to dinner or the movies. They often told me I am a great person and good friend. They never judged me or my actions, and just provided the environment that I needed."

Claire says that she has incredibly strong relationships with those around her. "I'm surrounded by true friendships – ones that last no matter what you go through," she says. "I used to think that if people knew the truth about my past that they wouldn't want me in their lives. The opposite have been the case.

"I live a far more fulfilling life now than what I ever did. That's why I'm very grateful for the illness. I never would have experienced fulfilment without the depression."

By Ruth Jackson

Steve Gurney – a unique challenge

Steve Gurney is New Zealand's ultimate multi-sport and triathlon athlete. He's known for winning the Coast-to-Coast race an astounding nine times, and competing in the Southern Traverse, the Raid Gauloises, Eco-Challenge and Extreme Games.

He's also tackled more unusual adventures such as, 'wacky' aerodynamic bike pod speeding across the Canterbury plains and starring in New Zealand TV show "Clash of the Codes."

In August 2007, Steve retired from sport after struggling with an ankle injury for two years. Few people knew that he also struggled with bouts of depression during his sporting career.

"The first time was after I had been very sick in a race and nearly died," Steve says. "During my physical recovery I experienced about six months of depression, in part because of the severity of the illness and in part because I might not have been able to race again. The second experience came when I had to retire."

He found both his experiences very debilitating, and couldn't see a clear way out, which was especially difficult for someone who was used to setting goals.

Be there

Steve received lots of support from family and friends and learnt that the right kind of support is very important.

"If people were too sympathetic, I didn't feel any incentive to sort it out," he says. "But if they were too matter-of-fact about it, then I felt like they were not taking my experience seriously."

Steve sought professional help and focused on the long-term answers to his depression rather than looking for a short-term fix.

"I carefully chose who I asked for help

from and went to people who would lead me out of it – people who were focused on positive solutions."

He believes the best way to show support for someone who is experiencing mental illness is to 'be loving' and do something positive with them.

"Help them set and achieve small goals such as having a coffee, going for a walk or seeing a health professional. If what you are doing is not working, try a different strategy."

Journey to wellness

During Steve's journey to wellness, he discovered what works best for him.

"Being around positive people and focussing on positive things is important," he says. "It is also important for me to exercise regularly. When I exercise I get endorphins and I feel good – and the fresh air and sunshine helps too."

Steve also uses positive language. "Our experiences and self-image are linked to language, if you can change your language to be more positive, then your self-image can change too."

He takes time each day to notice what is good about his life – however small. "It never fails to make me feel much better about my day."

Discrimination

Steve's has his own perspective on discrimination. "When I get put in a 'box' such as having a mental illness, it can easily lead to discrimination," he says.

"I find it more helpful to say that every human goes through varying degrees of mental stress depending on the challenges occurring in their life.

"Sometimes, I'm totally firing, creative, witty, and intelligent when things are



Steve Gurney

going really well. Other times I'm under pressure, stressed, coping less than I'd like to and need some help. Most of the time I'm somewhere in between these two extremes."

Steve says that when he was experiencing depression, some health professionals preferred to 'categorise' him as clinically depressed.

"That's OK, but I found it didn't help my recovery for me to be labelled like that. It's more helpful to realise that I'd just gone over my personal threshold of tolerance and needed to take the load off to get back to a healthier state of mind."

The future

Steve continues to undertake unique challenges around the world. In December 2010 he and mate, Steve Moffat re-enacted Marmaduke Dixon and George Mannering's expedition by climbing Mt Cook Aoraki using only the hobnail boots, hemp rope and oilskins of the 1890s.

His new career includes motivational speaking, sharing tales of his adventures with people and team building (www.stevegurney.co.nz). As well as corporate work, he's managed to squeeze writing a book, *Lucky Legs*, and creating sports related products, into his busy schedule (go to www.gurneygears.com for more information).

By Cate Hennessy

Tony and Lee – be there

Both Tony Harrison's parents passed away when he was a teenager and at just 22 he was diagnosed with schizoaffective disorder.

Now 41, Tony says that compared to that person he was in his twenties, he's made huge progress.

"I've been receiving support from mental health professionals for 19 years, until I'm at the point now when I am almost fully independent and can live a healthy productive life."

Along the way he's discovered the most important elements of wellness are; good self-care, paid or unpaid work, good physical and mental health, good relationships with family and friends, and nurturing your spirituality.

Journey to wellness

Apart from the good self-care that Tony has embraced, he's also been blessed with a wonderful support person in Lee Whiley.

"Lee is a highly intelligent man and although he has three kids of his own, he treats me like one of his kids.

"He tries hard to make me feel good about myself and will invite me over for dinner, take me out for lunch, or ask me to give him a hand painting his fence – just simple things."

Tony's been adopted by the whole Whiley family – "and I think the world of them. Knowing them has made my life significant. They've been so kind and caring."

Lee says he is always telling his kids and Tony to take control of their own lives by taking personal responsibility rather than relying on other people. "I want them to stand on their own feet and create their own income, so they feel better about themselves," he says.

Currently Tony and Lee are working on Tony's fitness in preparation for triathlon races. "I've already had 13 months of training and preparation for the New Zealand Ironman, which I didn't complete.

"It was a steep learning curve but now I know the longer races are not for me, so we are trying the shorter races. It's challenging but I'm confident that I can do well."

Work has been another aspect to Tony's journey to wellness. "I'm currently dog-walking for people who don't have the time to do it themselves. And I'm hoping to get unpaid work at Planet Cycles [owned in the past by Lee], which fits with my passion for fitness."

Discrimination

Tony says, "To tell you the truth there's only been a small handful of incidences [of discrimination] over the last 19 years."

He recalls one time when he applied for a job at his local supermarket. "I was positive I was denied the position because they already knew about my background"

So when Tony started working at a service station in Remuera 16 years ago, he didn't disclose his experience.

"Work became enormously stressful because I was still experiencing mental illness, but no-one knew," he says. "I only lasted four weeks. It was too much for me to handle at the time, and I realised that working five days a week while I was unwell was the wrong thing to do at that moment in my life."

Tony says that now when he discloses his experience, employers are kind and more caring. "I feel like I'm not holding onto a secret and I'm more relaxed."

He believes that discrimination is based on public perception, which he says



can be negative in many ways. "However I think that public opinion is changing over time and there are now those with experience of mental illness who are respected in their communities."

Be there

Tony's advice to others, who might be supporting someone in their lives experiencing mental illness, is for them to do everything in their power to make that person feel good about themselves.

"Don't spoil them too much," he says. "Just build their self-confidence and self-esteem with simple things."

Tony also thinks that it is not good to ask people with mental illness to make too many drastic changes. "There was a time in my life when I was very unhappy. I was constantly making changes and trying to modify myself, but it wasn't good for my wellbeing. Now I'm content and happy with what I've got."

"I've had a lot of opportunities, and I've grasped them and taken advantage of them for all they are worth! We are all improving as human beings as life goes on."

By Cate Hennessy

Triangulating the West Coast

In 2007, the Mental Health Foundation (MHF) was given the opportunity to tackle an issue of particular concern to West Coast rural communities – stigma and discrimination associated with mental illness.

Grant Cooper, MHF *Like Minds* mental health promoter says their Southern team worked alongside West Coast communities to provide anti-discrimination training to 68 per cent of mental health services staff, with the support of senior management at West Coast District Health Board (WCDHB).

“Workshops were held in Greymouth and Westport,” says Grant. “The aim was to bring about positive change in service delivery and to promote greater critical thinking and reflective practice within the mental health profession.”

The triangulation report

To assess the effectiveness of the workshops, the MHF employed an external evaluator to canvas the views and experiences of workshop participants, their managers, and service users of the WCDHB.

This ‘triangulation’ evaluation involved supplementing the standard-format workshop assessment forms with follow-up interviews after three months and again after nine months.

“Triangulating the results creates a broader and more longitudinal picture of the impact of training,” Grant says, “and allows us to see where there has been better experiences for consumers.”

The final summary highlighted key findings from consumers, staff and managers.

Consumers said staff attitudes towards consumers had generally improved. They also said there was more openness and discussion around the topic of discrimination after the training.

Staff confirmed they approached consumers differently. They gave consumers more choice and options, and were encouraged to talk more with them about their rights. They also supported consumers’ decisions.

Mental health service managers noticed staff were more likely to challenge labels, language and behaviours. They heard more conversations that addressed both sides of a story and could see staff encouraging consumer involvement in collaborative note taking.

Recommendations

“Once the data and comments were reviewed,” says Grant, “Recommendations were made to identify opportunities to support the recovery* journey of people with experience of mental illness on the West Coast and create a community that values and includes people with experience of mental illness.”

The recommendations are that:

- Issues of stigma and discrimination are reviewed annually through plans, procedures, policies and practices
- Supporting consumer leadership is increased to give greater opportunity to influence services policy, procedures, plans and practices
- There is sustainable mandatory staff training on stigma and discrimination
- Service and community initiatives that counter stigma and discrimination are identified and promoted
- Health and community services receive stigma and discrimination training and resources
- Māori initiatives to counter stigma and discrimination are increased.

Communicating results

The results of the triangulation evaluation were communicated through a series of forums to mental health consumers, Māori and community organisations in October 2010. Feedback was positive and emphasised the overall improvement in mental health services over the last three years.

There was also time to brainstorm opportunities for further development including: more intersectoral forums to work through some of the identified issues; identifying and promoting successful consumer-led initiatives to the wider community and providing training to community groups on stigma and discrimination.

Next steps

Already the MHF has hosted the first intersectoral forum in Westport, exploring opportunities for further collaboration to promote inclusion for people with experience of mental illness.

A community forum was held in Greymouth, in association with WebHealth, to discuss new opportunities for services and consumers to connect through an up-to-date social service directory. The MHF also ran a half-day workshop in Greymouth the next day for community organisations on ways to counter stigma and discrimination in their work.

Grant says, “Our team will continue to work with Māori – through Māori mental health services of WCDHB and Rata Te Āwhina – to support the development of a Māori consumer advisor role. We are also supporting existing consumer leadership initiatives that promote community inclusiveness.”

For more information email grant@mentalhealth.org.nz

By Grant Cooper, Cate Hennessy

* Recovery is defined as living well in the presence or absence of mental illness.

New video stories for *Like Minds*

Like Minds is thrilled to bring you the first set in a series of video stories that will accompany each issue of the *Like Minds* newsletter. These videos will allow us to share even more stories about people and issues relevant to the programme. The first three stories, below, are now online at www.likeminds.org.nz



Doubled up with stigma

Vaughan Meneses is General Manager of Outline NZ – a free, confidential telephone counselling service for New Zealand’s gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (GLBT) communities. He talks about homophobia and how it affects the mental health and wellbeing of GLBT people.

“Mental illness is often invisible, and so is being gay, or being lesbian, or being trans; it’s not until you get to certain points of confidence that you can actually start sharing that you have a mental illness or that you might be gay or lesbian, or, heaven forbid if you’re a gay or lesbian that experiences mental illness.”

[View Vaughan’s story](#)

www.likeminds.org.nz/page/232-doubled-up-with-stigma

Finding light

Ivan Yeo is a mental health promoter for the Mental Health Foundation’s Kai Xin Xing Dong/Like Minds, Like Mine programme. He shares his experience of increasing understanding about mental illness and combating discrimination within the Chinese and Korean communities.

“So when a single person experiences something, especially like mental illness; that person has brought a stain into a white cloth and everybody will just focus on that. For that reason, it is hard for a family member to say, I have a son or daughter, or my partner has mental illness.” [View Ivan’s story](#)

www.likeminds.org.nz/page/233-finding-light-in-a-new-land

Mental illness and violence

Alex Handiside, Senior Policy Analyst, Mental Health Foundation and Brian McKenna, Associate Professor, School Of Nursing, University Of Auckland explore the myths surrounding mental illness and violence; picking them apart and examining the personal impact that they have on public attitudes toward people with experience of mental illness.

Brian: Overwhelmingly people with mental illness are no less, or no more violent than other people within society. What we did is we replicated a study... Of the total number of homicides involved over that thirty year period, eight percent of them would have involved people who were experiencing serious and enduring mental illness at the time that the homicide took place.

Alex: From my family’s perspective... if somebody is... treating your son or daughter differently because of their mental illness, you have an obligation just to get involved and to say ‘mate, that’s just not kosher’.

[View Alex and Brian’s story](#)

www.likeminds.org.nz/page/231-mental-illness-violence



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Like Minds, Like Mine is the programme to counter stigma and discrimination associated with mental illness and is an initiative of the Ministry of Health.

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