Madness has always been a popular theme in all sorts of creative media, from horror movies like *Psycho* through to classic novels like *Jane Eyre*. Even in New Zealand, the ‘mad’ person has provided a dramatic turning point on popular shows like *Shortland Street* and new local drama *The Cult*.

But how accurate are these depictions? And where are the people with real experience of mental illness? Surely the journey of real people sharing real stories has to be more powerful than the stereotypical images of those with mental illness that we are normally exposed to.


d continued page 2 …
Having actual stories communicated creatively is a way of challenging the stereotypes about mental illness. A way of showing people the unique and individual journey that each person experiencing mental illness takes.

Dean Manley, the Mental Health Foundation’s Like Minds, Like Mine Project Manager researched how mental illness is represented in film (see page 6). He says that as with any ‘othered’ community – Māori, non-European, women or disability – the serial killer, idiot, incompetent, or mad genius stereotypes that have been constructed in the arts, can reinforce stigma and discrimination.

“The asylum discourse has been built up over centuries in creative and scientific texts,” he says. “Creative representation plays a huge part in discrimination, especially film, due to their dissemination, scale and marketing.

“The issue is that these media take complex issues and experiences and reduce them to readable signs and characteristics which confirm stereotypes – representation is very rarely controlled by those with real experience.”

In the UK, Time to Change – an ambitious programme led by Mind (a UK mental health charity) to end discrimination faced by people with mental health problems – has launched their own online films as a counter balance to the images that people are normally exposed to (www.time-to-change.org.uk/online-films).

The main character in the short, one-minute films is Stuart Baker-Brown, who has experience of schizophrenia. He plays on people’s fascination with the madmen of horror movies to take people on a journey that forces them to reconsider their attitudes. The films are turning up on YouTube, with titles like ‘Schizophrenic man terrifies kids at party’. They take viewers from ‘a point of fear and stereotyping’ all the way to realising that reality is nothing like those stereotypes.

**New Zealand’s Mental Health Media Grant programme**

Another approach to challenging public stereotypes (and one of many that Like Minds takes) is the NZ Mental Health Media Grants, which is funded by the Like Minds programme and administered by the Mental Health Foundation (MHF).

It has been running for the last three years and each year, projects are selected that can help increase understanding and break down stigma and discrimination around the experience of mental illness.

MHF Chief Executive Judi Clements says “Music, performance, art and creative writing can be valuable ways to reach people who aren’t touched by other media, so the creative projects are wonderful opportunities for people to share their experiences in a meaningful way, and stimulate thought and discussion.”

We take a look at four of the creative projects.

**Walking to Africa – Jessica Le Bas**

Author Jessica Le Bas, has been writing and publishing for many years. She has won several awards for her poetry including the 2008 NZSA Jessie Mackay Award for the Best First Book of Poetry for her first collection of poems, Incognito.

Her second collection, Walking to Africa, was funded by a 2007 media grant and is a unique anthology that allows readers to follow, through the eyes of a loved one, one particular journey of mental illness. The narrative sequence looks at mental health and glimpses the realities, the fragility, the unknowing and unknown.

Jessica says, “Walking to Africa emerged as a way of exploring the strange mental-health-care planet our family had arrived on. Lost, I wanted directions, answers, remedies and ways of understanding what was going on. I wanted a map that showed the terrain, the way in, the way out.”

Judi Clements says Jessica’s collection is a compelling read. “It evokes a range of reactions including sadness, smiles and anger; she says, “and is a contribution to the growing reservoir of understanding, which we hope will overflow and wash away the remains of discrimination and misunderstanding that for so long have bedevilled experiences of mental distress.”

Denise L’Estrange-Corbet, who also previewed the collection, says “The poetry is not flowery, but blunt, honest, descriptive, funny and immensely personal and had me totally immersed and absorbed from start to finish, it’s beautifully written, I loved it!”

Walking to Africa is being published by Auckland University Press and launched on 9 October as part of Mental Health Awareness Week.

**Seclusion circle series – Kristian Lomath**

Artist Kristian Lomath is a 2008 media grant recipient whose project Seclusion circle series – a series of twelve three-metre-high, double-sided painted panels – was initially planned as a solo initiative.
Over 12 months, the art installation developed organically and drew the interest and participation of five other artists – computer analyst/writer Malcolm Hore, potter/sculptor George Andrews, photographer Yvonne Westra, writer, artist and musician Barbara O’Reilly and designer Anna Revell. They each contributed a panel or other artwork that reflected their own experience of mental illness.

“There are also three dimensional art pieces and filmed narratives from the artists talking about their personal experiences and their art,” says Kristian.

Kristian’s experience is that creative projects have the ability to bring people together, and that supportive group collaborations with like-minded people can generate a wonderful energy that audiences pick up on.

“The responses to my installation have been extremely encouraging and positive,” he says. “Auckland’s Depot Artspace had fantastic feedback on the exhibition.

“They tell me it caused a real buzz and provided multiple opportunities to engage with the public who left the gallery saying the art informed and engaged them.”

Kristian and the other artists believe the exhibition has provided some insight into their experiences as well as the importance of social connection, communication and recovery.

“What I would like people to walk away with,” says Kristian, “is the knowledge that it is possible to live with mental illness – and that you can pursue your dreams and be successful.

“At the very least I hope they walk away with insight into something they never thought existed in their own routine.”

Seclusion circle series has been exhibited in three galleries over the past two months and Kristian says there has been interest from another two organisations and a Waikato gallery.

Girl with no Words – The Silk Tent Theatre Company

Another 2008 media grants project is the Wanaka-based Silk Tent Theatre Company’s Girl with no Words – listening to the language of cutting.

Currently on the road and with upcoming performances in Auckland, Clyde and Queenstown, this multi-media performance is a thought-provoking piece of theatre. It uses songs, poetry, film and visual art to tell the moving story of a young woman’s experience of self-injury as well as the reaction and responses of people around her – family, healthcare professionals and the wider community.

The piece is written, directed and performed by Gilly Pugh, Lucy O’Hagan, Lizzi Yates and John Schwarz – and aims to get audiences thinking about emotional suffering and compassion by exploring a difficult subject with energy, imagination, humour and empathy.

Lizzi says that during their recent Wanaka season they had an outstanding response to the play.

“We had close to a sell-out season with about 10% of the population attending. The performance itself has sent waves of conversation through the community – people are talking.

“One of the local high school teachers who attended said that three people had contacted him as a result of the play – not parents but community members who were expressing concern about vulnerable kids. He was very positive about the power of theatre!”

Anne Helm, a consumer consultant and panellist for the media grants attended a private premiere in Wellington and says the performance and discussion forum afterwards, demonstrated the huge amounts of time and research the group had spent on the project.

“They are putting something out into the wider community that has a lot of stigma associated with it and they have done it with intelligence and compassion,” she says. “They have put lots of careful consideration into the presentation and the accompanying programme – it works well.”
MHF Chair, Materoa Mar, who also attended the premiere says, “The performance clearly brought out the misunderstanding and discrimination that someone who self-injures can experience, and yet at the same time there was a clear message of hope and recovery – and that the two most important responses people can offer are compassion and humanity.”

Tickets cost $20 each and are available online at www.patronbase.com/ticketfest or by calling 021 154 5511.

The Soul Project, Sound of us Living – Jenn Shelton

Accomplished, Wellington based singer-songwriter (and 2008 media grant recipient) Jenn Shelton is launching her new album during Mental Health Awareness Week 2009. Called The SOUL Project, the album is a collaboration with other New Zealand singer-songwriters who each share their experience of mental illness in song. Jenn has dedicated the project to Mahinarangi Tocker and her legacy. The 23-year-old wanted to create the album as a way of decreasing stigma and discrimination around mental illness. The idea came to her at 4am one morning and was borne out of her own experience of depression.

“Mental illness is not talked about openly in our society, she says, “yet it impacts and effects so many people.” Instead of shying away from the facts of depression and mental illness, Jenn thought that making music would be a positive way of opening it up to others. “Everyone has a journey, everyone has a story and most of the time people hide their upset feelings from others and keep their chin up. There needs to be more understanding,” she says.

The final 12 songs and artists were chosen from a large selection of song submissions sent in by musicians from all over the country. The artists are: Jenn Shelton, Sarita Murdoch, Mark Laurent, JJ Carberry, Di McMillan, Teumu Tijentes, Ngaire Ann Daniels, Sam Saffery, James Tait-Jamieson, Brenda Liddiard, Josh Palmer and Lee Lawrence.

Jenn says, “Apart from the pure enjoyment of listening to these songs, the album is about sharing and understanding, from one human being to another. It’s a melodic reminder, that this is how life can be and it allows others to feel OK about whom they are and what they might be feeling.

“The strength and courage that the artists have shown in sharing a part of their souls is moving – and it is inspiring to see such strong challenges to misconceptions about mental illness. “Creative projects and outlets give both the artist and the observer another style of expression. They can challenge the stereotypes people have about mental illness by showing living examples of success and recovery, and creating a sense of belonging.”

Jenn says she would like people to come away with a feeling of connection, inspiration and hope; of being given a glimpse into the completely different lives and experiences of each artist, “All people are unique, and none of us fit into the negative stereotypes that are out there.”

The album is available from the Warehouse and The CD and DVD Store and by emailing sound.of.us.living@gmail.com

Conclusion

What these projects highlight is that an individual’s experiences, how they choose to share them and the responses they receive from other people are anything but typical.

One of those who saw Girl with no Words, Liz Maluschnig, says that creative projects tend to bypass people’s minds and go straight to their heart, “Any barriers between them and wanting to judge and label others as different from themselves are removed – [instead we] acknowledge our own vulnerability and the sameness that is at the core of each of us.”

Susie Meyer, who also attended the performance, says that engaging people is the most difficult part, but if people are entertained or creatively provoked they become more involved and feel part of something.

“At the time the production was on I could not go anywhere in town without people stopping to talk to me about it. It came up in the ski lift line and the supermarket. People were enthusiastic and positive. Some people found it challenging but this in itself provoked them to comment.”

Dean Manley’s research found that if people with experience of mental illness can control their representation, they can “speak back to stereotypes and dissolve the myths” around mental illness.

He says, “Mad people given voice and expression in creative, documentary and other new media channels will [eventually] dissolve the spectacle of madness.”

By Cate Hennessy

To find out more about the NZ Mental Health Media Grants and the recipients and their projects, please go to the media grants section of the Mental Health Foundation website www.medigrants.org.nz
Employment – what you do makes the difference

Our second topic in Like Minds, Like Mine “What you do makes the difference” series will focus on employment. We will be launching it to employers via the website and other means at the end of October. In the meantime, we introduce you to the topic with an employee profile and a look at reasonable accommodation in the workplace.

Profile: Geoff Gibson, employee

Geoff* has experienced episodes of psychosis and depression which have had an effect on different areas of his life. While his diagnosis initially “rocked the boat” in his family, they eventually came to accept his mental illness and formed a strong and loving part of his support network.

His first experience of employment, however, was quite different. Working as a builder’s apprentice, Geoff’s bosses sensed there was something different about him. “They couldn’t ‘figure me out’, one of them said,” Geoff recalls.

A series of incidents involving intimidation followed. “They wanted to know what pressed my buttons, so their way of doing that was to look for ways to antagonise me and set off. That was their way of dealing with it,” Geoff says.

Geoff eventually disclosed to his employers that he had a mental illness. “I cracked,” he says. “I didn’t have an episode, but I ended up telling them because I was pressed so hard.”

Dismissed from his job, Geoff found another apprenticeship under an employer who was much more accepting, having had experience of mental illness himself. As well as giving him plenty of building trade knowledge, his new employer taught him how to cope with working under pressure, to deadlines and to the client’s expectations.

When illness struck, Geoff’s employer ensured that his career goals did not fall by the wayside. “He supported me through two episodes, and kept me on right to the end of my apprenticeship,” Geoff says. “He let me have time off work, if I needed it. He was very responsive, he always listened – he was a very good listener. He liaised with my parents quite a lot, when I was living with them.”

Geoff credits the mentoring role his employer played as a significant part of his recovery.

“It’s all about enlightening people and saying, yeah – it is ok to suffer mental distress like I have. Workmates and employers can often be your second family, and that’s really cool. I think that’s important to overcoming discrimination in society.”

People with experience of mental illness can also meet an employer halfway by working to overcome their own fear of being discriminated against.

“I think if you go in with good expectations of your employer, your employer will believe in you,” he says. “It’s about going in there with an open mind. I think that anyone who wants the best out of their career should go in with a good expectation of their boss, and in turn that will come back. You get as much as you give.”

*Name has been changed to protect privacy

By Chris Banks

Information for employers

One in two people will be affected by mental illness at some time in their life according to Te Rau Hinengaro: The New Zealand Mental Health Survey (2006). This is a much higher prevalence (46.6%) than previously thought, with 39.5% having already experienced mental illness and 20.7% having a disorder in the past 12 months.

The fact that a person has experience of mental illness says nothing about their ability to do a particular job. In fact, skills and traits of people with experience of mental illness and recovery include creativity, empathy, inner strength, resilience, lateral thinking, loyalty, and appreciation – and work allows people to maximise their potential as human beings.

One key strategy to incorporate into the workplace is ‘reasonable accommodation’. Reasonable accommodation is about employers initiating and encouraging dialogue with open-mindedness, willingness and honesty, so that the stigma around the fear of something different or unknown breaks down. Principles include:

- Addressing the individual needs of each employee.
- Respecting the employee’s form and degree of confidentiality.
- Being flexible in enforcing traditional policies and willing to engage in joint problem solving.
- Making all accommodations voluntary for the employee, but make them concrete and specific.
- Setting up and keeping an easy system for reviewing accommodations periodically to meet changing needs, and keep in mind that needs will change.

Keep these principles in mind when any employee asks to be accommodated in the workplace. They will help you to create a positive and more productive environment.

By Darcey Jane
THE NUTTERS CLUB – SPREAD THE WORD

Mike King’s radio show “The Nutters Club” on Radio Live Sundays from 8–10pm, is striking a chord with many people and challenging the stereotypes of mental illness. Supported by the Mental Health Foundation, the show has been running for four months. Every week Mike is joined by clinical psychologist David Codyre and a special guest who talks frankly and honestly about their experience of mental illness. Since the show started Mike says he’s had calls from people wanting to share their stories and connect with other people going through the same thing. He told Sunday News, “We try to get as many stories about the journey (of mental illness) out as we can, to allow people to explore different possibilities and ways of doing it.” The radio show has led to initiatives such as the Sunday News short story competition. As a result of the competition All Black prop, Craig Dowd, and NZ’s greatest cricketer Sir Richard Hadlee both had articles written about them in Sunday News. The show has also generated a Facebook page and has recently started up on Twitter. Go to http://www.facebook.com/pages/The-Nutters-Club-NZ/237509975576 and become a fan, or sign up to http://twitter.com/thenuttersclub for daily updates.

The Frozen Funds Charitable Trust has recently announced its 2009 recipients. Twenty-six organisations have been awarded funding for 28 different projects and a total of $239,325 has been distributed.

2009 applications were for creative, educational or advocacy projects that promote full participation and citizenship for people who use mental health or intellectual disability services.

For more information, or if you are interested in applying for the 2010 grant round, contact Cheryl Mennie, Public Trust Special Business, Public Trust, PO Box 5067, Wellington or go to www.frozenfunds.co.nz. Expression of interest forms will be available in January 2010 and must be submitted by 31 March 2010.

Like Minds, Like Mine congratulates the Mental Health Foundation’s Like Minds Project Manager, Dean Manley, on being awarded his Doctorate in Film, Television and Media Studies (University of Auckland). His PhD thesis called, Visions of Madness: An Investigation into Cinematic Representations of Unreason, follows on from his 1999 master’s thesis, which examined representations of suicide in four critically acclaimed films.

Dean’s PhD research looked more deeply at cinematic representations of madness. It explored the notion that cinema reflects and reinforces the ‘asylum discourse’ by ‘othering’ people diagnosed as “mentally ill” – making a spectacle of them, and reinforcing stereotypes. This in turn can justify discriminating policies.

He discovered that madness is often associated with violence, criminality, and degenerative human failure and that cinema and other media sources are most people’s source of information about madness. Conversely, he found that depictions of the “mad genius” had similar effects.

“Despite, or maybe because of, reductions in stigmatising reporting,” Dean says, “negative perceptions of madness persist. The film industry has more freedom than journalists to represent madness and because of that they can be more subversive.”

He says they are also driven by the need to make money and trade on stigmatising representations of madness to increase drama and tension – “essential elements of tragedy”.

Dean has found that working on his PhD connected well with his role as Like Minds Project Manager. To find out more about Dean’s research go to: http:// Researchspace.auckland.ac.nz/ handle/2292/5166 (Thesis) or email dean@mentalhealth.org.nz.
**MENTAL HEALTH COMMISSION TO LAUNCH NATIONAL CONSUMER NEWSLETTER**

The Mental Health Commission is to publish two pilot issues of a national consumer newsletter.

Contracting editor Colin Slade says the initiative was signalled in the Commission’s Statement of Intent released earlier this year.

“The idea for such a newsletter has been around for a while,” says Colin, “and it’s great that the Commission has come to the party. As well as being a much-needed forum for national and international consumer opinion, this will help provide a communication tool to link the regional and local networks. My hope is that we find funding to make this a monthly publication, so that it becomes a truly useful and up to date source of news and information of interest to consumers and supporters everywhere.”

The first issue is to be published during Mental Health Awareness Week. Enquiries or contributions to Colin at colinslade@ihug.co.nz or text 021-369-797.

**NEW LIKE MINDS RADIO SHOW LAUNCHES IN TOKOROA**

A new Like Minds, Like Mine radio programme was launched in Tokoroa on 31 July 2009 by Like Minds Programme Leader Darryl Bishop, and attended by many Like Minds providers from around the region. Thank you to everyone who supported the launch!

The radio programme, called Like Minds Like Mine, is hosted by Noeline Kuru from Progress to Health, who has personal experience of mental illness. The show will bring listeners information about Like Minds activities as well as interviewing mental health professionals and people with experience of mental illness. You can catch the show every Tuesday right after the 2pm news and Thursdays at 3.30pm on Raukawa FM at frequencies 90.6, 95.7 or 93.2, or go to http://www.raukawafm.co.nz/ and click on Whakarongo (Listen).

**BUSINESS FORUM ON MENTAL HEALTH**

The Nelson Tasman Chamber of Commerce – with support of local agencies Te Raukawa Health Services, Health Action Trust, Workstar, Nelson Bays Primary Health and the Public Health Service – are hosting a Business Forum on Mental Health on Thursday 8 October in Nelson.

The Forum features keynote speakers, Steve Gurney (athlete and adventurer), Bill Wilkerson (Co-founder and CEO of the Canadian Business Roundtable on Mental Health) and Aubrey Quinn (from the Like Minds, Like Mine TV ads).

The aim of the luncheon seminar is to develop greater insight into the approaches for supporting mental health within workplaces in New Zealand, which is crucial for supporting the health of business and our economy. It is also intended to identify local business leadership in supporting mental health within workplaces.

For more information or to register, email info@commerce.org.nz or phone 03 548 1363

**OUT OF THEIR MINDS**

Sanity is the container madness sits in; they are made for each other like a cup is made to hold drink. Sanity stops madness from spilling everywhere. Madness stops sanity from confining us to the tyranny of the ordinary.

MARY O’HAGAN

Out of Their Minds continues to explore the value in experiences of mental illness with the launch of the second round of artists and thinkers on their new look website. The site features interviews from Mary O’Hagan, Ben Cragg, Shona Clarke and Tim Hagan as well as the first round of interviews from Judith White, Gareth Edwards and Egan Bidois. Go to www.outoftheirminds.co.nz to view the complete interviews.

People commonly view mental distress through skewed portrayals shown in popular media. Ideas of secretive, finicky introverts sidestepping cracks denigrate a person’s real experience.

TIM HAGAN
Sheldon Brown kept his experience of depression to himself for some years before finally being diagnosed. Not disclosing to his wife and children that something was wrong made his life "very stressful," but experiences within his own family at a young age affected his ability to put into words how he was feeling.

"My mother had a severe mental illness, which was never really explained to me," he recalls. "We lived in a fairly isolated house, a hundred steps from the local road. Sometimes we had to manhandle her down to an ambulance or down to the car to get her into the city for shock treatment.

"She's been dead for many years now, and still I don't understand what the illness was. So I guess getting a diagnosis was a relief to me."

It didn't solve all Sheldon's problems, however. Fearful of losing his high-powered career in public relations, Sheldon didn't disclose to his bosses, and in fact took on more work. "Slowly I had to own up to the fact that I just couldn't perform at that sort of level all the time, and I would fall over," he says.

Some of Sheldon's episodes required him to be hospitalised. It was during one of these episodes that his by now strained relationship with his family hindered his recovery.

"The worst experience I had was when I was hospitalised in Dunedin for 11 months. In that time, I virtually didn't hear from my three children," he recalls. "The lack of contact from them was devastating. My eldest son, I think the only contact he initially made after several months was to ask where my car was in Auckland and whether he could borrow it.

"I can accept that it's very difficult to understand a father who has achieved a lot and is good at what he does, good at sport, generally healthy but then has these mental falloffs...it's difficult to understand what is happening."

Nevertheless, despite the difficulties, Sheldon believes that families have a strong role to play in helping loved ones see the light at the end of the tunnel.

"I think one of the most important things you can do for a family member with a mental illness is to let them make their own decisions. Let them work their way towards recovery. Don't take control away from them. Don't let them feel impotent. Don't do things behind their backs, and don't make them feel that they're distanced from the decisions, the discussions and the consultations."

Hospitalisation may not be the best option for someone experiencing a depressive episode.

"Consult your family member about whether going to hospital is the best approach," Sheldon says. "And certainly try and provide a warm and supportive environment within the home so that hospitalisation doesn't have to become a reality."

By Chris Banks
Noeline Kuru began to experience anxiety and depression following a horrific birth that nearly killed her and her son. The changes in her behaviour were sadly not well understood by the people around her.

Through her long periods of unwellness, people would see she was fine for part of the day and crying during other parts of the day.

“Some suggestions were made that I should pull myself together and get on with it,” she says, “which made me feel worse and more useless, as I could not pull myself together.”

Instead she spiraled down into a deeper depression. “I lost so much confidence in myself and no-one knew what to do,” she recalls.

“I hid in my house for a long time, and didn’t seek the right help. I tried to stay away from medication and all those clinical things because I didn’t want to be tagged with a mental illness. I remembered how people had talked about my mother when she had episodes.”

Noeline finally chose to accept medical help and the next eight years were spent utilising mental health services, a period that Noeline says was far too long.

“I was in and out of hospitals because I never really received the right help, or the right support groups. The focus should not only have been on the clinical, but also on the recovery journey – how you can live with depression.”

Fortunately, Noeline was able to find the support she needed from tangata whaiora, other people with experience of mental illness.

“I talked to others who had experienced long periods of unwellness, and from them I learnt how I could manage my own illness,” she says. “I started to have hope that I did fit in somewhere.”

However, Noeline says she felt she was still being judged on her diagnosis. “I became quite institutionalised, because I didn’t want to live in the community. I actually wanted to live in hospital. I wanted to live in places with other people who experience mental illness, because nobody judged you. The patients didn’t judge you,” she says.

Noeline feels the stigma around mental illness in society had a direct impact on the attitudes displayed from the people around her.

“There’s a lot of shame attached to having a mental illness, especially in a small town.”

“I also have a physical disability, and when I went to my school ball, my father put a cardigan over my arm to hide it, because he didn’t want anyone to tease me,” she says. “We shouldn’t have to hide our differences and disabilities, but there are still people in this world who are unable to accept those differences.”

“People have got to understand that ‘mental’ is not a bad word,” she says. “It’s just society’s made it a bad word. Because when I become unwell, how do I know to seek help if I have a stigma attached to that?”

By Chris Banks, Cate Hennessy

Profiles available as print resources

Sheldon Brown and Noeline Kuru’s stories are part of a new set of print resources available from Like Minds, Like Mine. Six New Zealanders share their experiences of mental illness and what has made a difference in their lives. For orders email likeminds@mentalhealth.org.nz
Mental Health Awareness Week 2009

Mental Health Awareness Week (MHAW) is upon us, so mark it on your calendars and in your diaries – it runs from Monday 5 October to Sunday 11 October!

This year’s theme is based on the five concepts recently identified by The Foresight Project (www.foresight.gov.uk), and promotes strategies for wellbeing that are achievable, inclusive and that everyone can do.

Called the Winning Ways to Wellbeing, the five concepts are:

CONNECT Develop your relationships with friends, family, colleagues, and neighbours as these connections support you and enrich your life.

GIVE Do something for a friend or stranger and see yourself and your happiness as linked to the wider community.

TAKE NOTICE Be aware of the world around you and see the beauty in everyday and unusual things – reflecting on them helps you appreciate what matters to you.

LEARN Try something new or rediscover an old interest, or take on a new responsibility or challenge – learning makes you more confident and can be fun.

BE ACTIVE Physical activity helps you to feel good so find something that you enjoy and suits your ability.

One of the five ‘winning ways’ will be the focus for each day of the week: Monday = Connect, Tuesday = Give, Wednesday = Take Notice, Thursday = Learn and Friday = Be Active.

The theme comes with a Māori whakatauki: Heke tipu oranga, he taonga tuku iho, ka pakanga ake, aue te aiotanga, te manawanui, which in English means: Persist in the battle and journey for wellbeing, it is a treasure handed down from the heavens, then comes confidence and peace.

MHAW merchandise
MHAW merchandise is now available on the Mental Health Foundation website and includes free posters, postcards and a very handy motivational magnetic memo board with pen and symbols. The memo boards come in packs of three and each pack costs $10 (incl GST). Go to http://www.mentalhealth.org.nz/page/29-Welcome to place an order.

Limited edition T-shirts
Also available for purchase is a new limited edition run of t-shirts, designed by Mari Pettersson. The t-shirts were inspired by the theme of ‘give’, one of the five ways to wellbeing, and will be available from the Mental Health Foundation’s online shop (www.mentalhealth.org.nz/shop) from 6 October.

MHAW toolkit
The MHAW 2009 toolkit is now online and has practical ideas and activities for communities, groups and individuals to explore this year’s theme. There are book reviews and reading lists, wellbeing initiatives, as well as links to organisations and websites that will connect you with your community and support networks.

What’s on?
There are lots of wellbeing events and activities planned across the country for MHAW 2009. They include a regional hikoi in Kaikohe; free tips on how to look after your own mental wellbeing in Frankton; Artsenta art exhibition in Dunedin; the annual October gig and a Fiesta in Western Park in Auckland – and much more.

If you want more information about what’s on in your region during MHAW, go to www.mentalhealth.org.nz/page/562-2009-Winning-Ways-to-Wellbeing-Event-calendars

Wellbeing videos
Each day during MHAW 2009 the Mental Health Foundation will be launching a fresh video interview exploring different aspects of wellbeing. Those being interviewed are MHF Chief Executive Judi Clements, author and Māori language scholar Ruth Tai, primary care liaison nurse specialist Karin Byrt and Auckland City Council programme advisor Minnie Baragwanath. There is also a ‘making of’ documentary on John Matteson’s new single ‘Fighting Shadows’ (see page 12).
A new book was launched in Wellington on Monday 28 September. Called *Stepping out of the Shadows: insights into self-stigma and madness*, the book is a collection of articles, essays and personal accounts about self-stigma associated with mental illness.

Self-stigma has been described by one of the authors of this book as ‘a haunting spectre’ and by another as a ‘shadow’ on the lives of those who experience it. It is the first book of this kind to be published on this topic. Editors Debbie Peterson and Sarah Gordon say, “self-stigma is a relatively new topic for the mental health and social sectors and we hope that this book will appeal to a broad cross-section of people from all walks of life in New Zealand and internationally.”

The chapters of this book explore the concept of self-stigma from the perspective of authors who have experience of mental illness, or have researched self-stigma, or both.

Dr Mike Slade, a reader in Health Services Research at King’s College in London says, “This is an excellent book, breaking new ground in our international understanding of self-stigma...Both personal narratives and research findings are presented which show that self-stigma is caused not by mental illness, but by the societies in which we live.”

Those who contributed to the book include: Mary O’Hagan, Dr Lynne Pere, Anne Helm, Vito Malo, Dean Manley, Ivan Yeo, Sarah O’Connor, Dennis Duerr, Niki Smith, Ruth Jackson and Alex Barnes.

Thanks to the Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand, the New Zealand Mental Health Commission, *Like Minds, Like Mine* and the Building Bridges Trust for their support.

**Excerpt from “Being one of them”, Mary O’Hagan**

“As a child, I was surrounded by stories of people facing adversity, conquering evil and saving the innocent. I read Ladybird books about Boadicea and Joan of Arc, brave kings and fearless missionaries. I watched ‘The Lone Ranger’ and ‘Flash Gordon’ on television and longed to be a hero like them. When I closed my eyes at night I made up stories about saving my classmates from my burning school, running through the flames, dragging them out into the sun, choking, while the nuns cheered me on.

When I went to Ward 17 for the first time I saw all the broken heroes who ended up like me, in places like this, seeking redemption. There was no shortage of myths and legends about people in our kind of predicament – St George and the dragon, 40 days in the wilderness, the despair of Job, survival in the trenches. I thought the psychiatrists and nurses would feel compassion and respect for my desperate struggle; that they would understand I was fighting the collapse of my self and my whole existence. I expected they would guide me through my despair back into a universe that was rich with meaning. It didn’t take long for me to realise that the staff didn’t see us reflected in heroic stories. All they saw in me was a sick, deluded, screwed up 20-year-old who needed their control and containment.”

**SELF-STIGMA RESEARCH**

Research shows that the shadow of self-stigma can have a significant effect on the lives of people with experience of mental illness – but that self-stigma is part of a cycle that everyone has an opportunity to break.

Based on the research, a new model of stigma and discrimination has been developed called the discrimination intervention model. It encompasses and addresses the concepts of both self-stigma and discrimination and the complex inter-relationship between the two. It includes circuit breakers that can interrupt the cycle. Go to [www.mentalhealth.org.nz/file/downloads/pdf/Fighting- Shadows.pdf](http://www.mentalhealth.org.nz/file/downloads/pdf/Fighting-Shadow.pdf)
Profile: John Matteson

John Matteson has devoted the past two decades to motivating and entertaining people with experience of mental illness with his music and spreading positive messages about mental health through music.

He was diagnosed with bi-polar disorder at 19 and following periods of hospitalisation and living in a boarding house, fought his way out of his situation to establish a busy career as a musical performer in his 20s.

John’s new single is called “Fighting Shadows”, which he describes as a self-stigma anthem. Produced in collaboration with the Mental Health Foundation (MHF), John is hoping the release of the single - timed for Mental Health Awareness Week 2009 - will be one more way to educate the general public about mental illness and raise awareness of the issues involved.

John composed the single to launch the MHF’s 2007 self-stigma research project at a special function in Wellington in front of the Governor General.

He says, “I was talking with Debbie Peterson at a staff retreat earlier in the year about the self-stigma research, and I said the concept of self-stigma is like ‘fighting shadows’ – you’re pushing against barriers that don’t really exist. It was an idea that came from the image on my Psychiatric Survivor album cover.

“After that conversation, Debbie picked up on these words and named the research publication, ‘Fighting Shadows’. Then Sara McCook Weir (who was also involved in the research) suggested that I write a song to go with the publication and the single developed from there.

“It took two-and-a-half months to write the song and if you listen to the lyrics, it tells the story of one person’s experience overcoming self-stigma. I wanted to describe it in a poetic form that everyone can relate to and can access. The verses talk about the person’s negative experiences and the chorus looks back on those experiences and recognises that they were just ‘fighting shadows’.”

The team working on the single were: producer Christopher Banks (founder of NZ band Deep Obsession), drummer Gordon Joll (who worked with Herbs), backing vocalist Betty-Anne Monga (from Ardijah), engineer and mixer Nigel Foster (who has worked with the Exponents and Strawpeople) and a 4-piece string quartet from Auckland Philharmonic Orchestra.


“\nThe way you look at me, The way you talk to me, I want to find dignity, I want to find love, I want to find respect, I wanna fight these shadows in my head. “

LYRICS FROM “FIGHTING SHADOWS”

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