

August 2021

Upcoming events

NH Mental Health Peer Alliance, Tue, Aug 17, 10AM. Come, let your voice be heard. The Alliance is made up of adults with lived experience who want to improve mental health services in NH, organizing to advocate, educate, and inform. Please contact greg@connectionspeer support.org for the link.

Board of Directors Meeting Wed, Aug 25, 4PM. Members and staff welcome and encouraged to attend. Please contact greg@connectionspeer support.org for an invitation.

Community Meeting Wed Aug 18 and Thu Aug 26, 10AM
Whether offering ideas for new groups or getting updates on Step Up/Step Down, this a chance for our entire community to gather and be involved in making Connections even better. We need your voice!



"Hope is the Thing with Feathers"



Hope is a concept that comes up a lot at Connections. Indeed, a basic tenet of Intentional Peer Support is, "from fear-based to hope-based." Dave Andre, a longtime friend, is an eloquent spokesman, both for hope, and for how support from your peers can carry you through those times when hope is dim. Please read his powerful story of hope and recovery inside.

CPSC SCHEDULE AUGUST 2021

- **Budgeting, Job, or Computer Skills One-on-One Support: Call to set up a time...**
Meet with Christina from Cornerstone Financial for one-on-one support for budgeting, or Rachel for computer and job skills. Whether you want to get a handle on your budget, brush up your resume, or get comfortable with your computer, we've got you covered.
Call us at **603 427 6966**.
- **Daily Check-in**
Mon thru Fri, 9:15 AM and 1:15 PM. Mon AM and Fri PM are online only. A chance to connect with peers, set goals, or reflect upon your day.
- **Walking Group**
Mon and Fri 9 AM We socialize as we explore local trails. Call Darin at 603 570 8899 by 8 AM to confirm time, location, or if you need a ride.
- **Hearing Voices Group (phone/online only)**
Mon 11 AM. Support for those who are hearing voices, seeing visions, or experiencing other unusual sensory experiences.
- **Effective Communication**
Mon 2 PM Skills for self-advocacy. Assertive, not aggressive. Be your own best case manager.
- **Dual Recovery (At Safe Harbor Recovery, 865 Islington St Portsmouth)**
Mon 3 PM For those struggling with substance use disorder and mental health issues, to share coping strategies and support each other.
- **WRAP Topics**
Wed 10 AM With Wellness Recovery Action Plan, you explore and create a plan for yourself to stay well, respond to stressors, or even to a crisis. It is a powerful evidence-based wellness tool.
- **Craft Group**
Tue 11 AM A time for creative expression or observing the seasons; you never know what might be in store, always a surprise.
- **IPS Topics**
Tue 2 PM Intentional Peer Support is the model we practice here at Connections of building mutually supportive relationships. This group gives us a chance to learn and deepen our practice.
- **Positive Thinking**
Wed 10 AM How we see the world has real effects on our physical and psychological well-being. We identify our negative thinking patterns and explore ways to replace them with positive ones.
- **WRAP Through Art**
Wed 11 AM Making one of our most powerful wellness tools, our Wellness Recovery Action Plans, beautiful! Each week we will complete an art project that visualizes the week's theme.
- **Coffee Klatch**
Wed 2 PM Just stone cold chillin' with a cup of Joe and good company.
- **Coming out of COVID**
Thu 10 AM We explore what coming out of COVID means for us as an individual and as a community.
- **Anxiety and Depression**
Thu 11 AM We offer a safe place to explore feelings such as sadness and fear, and learn from each other how we can respond to them.
- **Managing Stress**
Thu 2 PM How do we cope with stress in our daily lives? We develop healthier ways to respond.
- **A.R.T.**
Fri 11 AM. Art of Recovery Together. Come visit while working on any creative project you wish.
- **Rituals and Routines (online only)**
Fri 2 PM Having a set routine can be a big hurdle to jump. Together we will make strides in looking at positive actions that will enrich our lives and look at what gets "in the way."
- **Journaling (online only)**
Fri 3 PM Reflections and inspiration. Come to journal or spin a tale. A directed prompt will be offered, but all topics are welcome.

CPSC SCHEDULE AUGUST 2021

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
	AM Remote Only				
9:15-10:00	AM Check-in 9:00 Walking Group	AM Check-in Walking/ Stretching	AM Check-in Walking/ Stretching	AM Check-in Walking/ Stretching	AM Check-in 9:00 Walking Group
10-10:45		WRAP Topics	Positive Thinking	Coming out of COVID	A.R.T.
11-11:45	Hearing Voices	Craft Group	WRAP Through Art	Anxiety/ Depression	
12-1					PM Remote Only
1:15-1:45	PM Check-in	PM Check-in	PM Check-in	PM Check-in	PM Check-in
2:00-2:45	Effective Communication	IPS Topics	Coffee Klatch	Managing Stress	Rituals and Routines
3:00-3:45-	Dual Recovery				Journaling

August Special Programming

Wed, Aug 4, 10 AM 3S Artspace-The artists' work featured in *Transitions and Meditations* offers both a literal invitation to meditation as well as an opportunity to reflect on nature as nurture and the power of creative expression to help us process events and emotions.

Community Picnic, Wed, Aug 25, 11 AM A great chance to socialize safely and enjoy our beautiful community. We provide hamburgers, hot dogs, chips, coleslaw, and drinks! Call to reserve a spot or for transportation.

Wed, Aug 11, 10 AM Strengthening our Relationships- Staff from HAVEN will discuss power, control, and healthy relationships

All services are free and no referral is needed

Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday groups are held at our center at 544 Islington St, Portsmouth, as well as online.

- Mon AM and Fri PM groups are online only.
- The center is available for drop-ins Monday through Friday.
- Call us at 603-427-6966 by 4 PM the day before to arrange transportation to the center the following morning, and by 11 AM same day to come in the afternoon.
- All participants must wear a mask while in the center or in the van.
- To join groups online, follow this link:
<https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/709997085>
- If you're new to GoToMeeting, get the app here:
<https://global.gotomeeting.com/install/709997085>
- You can also dial in using any phone: +1 (571) 317-3122
- **Access Code:** 709-997-085
- Our center in Portsmouth may close for bad weather; we'll still be available online.

OUR VOICES

Just Give Them Hope



Dave Andre isn't shy about speaking about his personal struggle and journey to recovery from profound mental illness.

"Sharing my story is good for me, and it's good for others. Not being closeted, putting myself out there. It's not what I'm saying, just that I say it at all. I don't know what will resonate or become of it."

Dave visited Connections Peer Support Center to share his story, including 15 years of his life overshadowed by recurring episodes of bipolar disorder resulting in multiple hospitalizations, as well as the journey to recovery that allowed him to live a rich life including a marriage, a son, a career he loved as a treatment coordinator at a group home for troubled teens, community involvement, and a close circle of friends.

While Dave has now shared his story almost 200 times with various community groups, he had not done so for the past three years. Thinking about his upcoming visit to Connections Peer Support, he felt anxious and unsure about what he would say. He remembered mothers who locked eyes with him and had one question, "How does my child get to be where you are now?" I say, "Just give them hope."

In graduate school, he experienced his first episode of mania, which led to the first of many hospitalizations, though he did not receive the diagnosis of bipolar disorder for three more years. For 15 years he endured a cycle of periods of normalcy followed by manic episodes and yet more hospitalizations. Over that time, Dave took 14 years to finish the graduate program in counseling that was supposed to take one year. He married and had a son.

"I was neurotic, high achieving, extroverted. I got to the master's program, maybe I'd be a doctor someday. There was some abuse in my past. And the thinking and self-examination that were part of the program just churned a lot of things up. I realized that my value was not in my achievements. I realized I wasn't centered right, not even close. This was the age when bipolar disorder usually asserts itself. It was a perfect storm.

"I went on Haldol, which it turns out, I am very allergic to. I was in incredible pain. I was a literal zombie. It obliterated me. Would I live like this for the rest of my life? Then I want out. It was the darkest time."

Many times, he was exhausted and wanted to quit, but thinking of his son gave him the strength to go on. He recalled, "I couldn't ask my son to do what I couldn't do for myself. I feel great empathy for those whose mental illness gives them no respite, no periods of normalcy during which to recover."

OUR VOICES

The cycles of mania continued. “I needed my wife to tell me that I was in trouble. I would lie and cheat to avoid giving up my mania, that feeling that I was God. The dopamine was going wild in my head, an incredible high. I’ve never tried heroin, but I think it must be similar.”

After many adjustments he found the right combinations of medication that worked for him. Back then, Dave explains, insurance was different. “I would be hospitalized for 10 or 11 days to bring me down. There was no pressure to be out in three days.” While Dave considers the medication he continues to take essential for his continued recovery, he emphasizes how critical it was to have a strong network of supporters, people who care about him and are there when he needs them and watch him for signs of stress. “I carry sadness and don’t notice it. Others read me and see what I’m feeling. I am vulnerable to obsessive thinking. I can be frightful, anxious, but living in a scary world is not where I want to be.”

By way of illustration, he tells of visiting his psychiatric nurse and being told, “You don’t look as good as you usually do.”

“I visited a friend, and she said, ‘You don’t look as happy as you usually do.’”

During a recent time of family crisis, they “circled the wagons—they love me and take notice and it’s reciprocal. Others may have no one.”

“Peer support gives you the opportunity to be there, to be a support for someone else, as well as getting support. That’s huge, not simply seeing yourself as a victim or helpless. You cannot tease apart the giving and receiving, the reciprocity. “

“Peer support gives you the opportunity to be there, to be a support for someone else, as well as getting support. That’s huge, not simply seeing yourself as a victim or helpless. You cannot tease apart the giving and receiving, the reciprocity. “

He observed something similar during a visit to Connections Peer Support Center. “Response from peers was incredible. There were people who were in a bad place, but you cared for each other in a way that was unbelievable. I saw it three or four times. Someone started to struggle, to emote, and immediately someone was there for that person and knew what they needed. It was subtle, quiet, whatever was happening deescalated. It was a thing of beauty.”

As he relates, “Hope is huge. Where is your hope? If you don’t have hope, have someone hold it for you. I give you something, but it’s a two-way street. It is such a privilege to be heard, to see people truly interested in my story. It is a gift. We’re all in this together.”

CENTER NEWS AND HAPPENINGS

Heartfelt Thanks to Piscataqua Savings Bank



We are thrilled to thank Piscataqua Savings Bank for their most recent and generous contribution of \$1,000 to Connections Peer Support Center. Piscataqua Savings Bank (PSB) has a longstanding and stellar reputation for its community giving. With their gift to Connections, PSB supports us in being able to provide the connections and support that allows our members to seek, find and sustain a full and rewarding life in their community.

Our New Warmline Operator



“My name is Amanda and I would like to introduce myself to anyone who is calling in to the Warmline on Thursday nights. I am a new peer and I am excited for

this new opportunity. I'd like to tell you about myself by acknowledging my assets, which are being smart, optimistic and strong. By recognizing and applying these assets to my life I believe that it is possible for me to be a part of this world and make an impact and lasting impression.”

Welcome, Amanda! We are excited to have you bring your talents and enthusiasm to Connections!

SUSD Home Full of Surprises



As renovations proceed apace at the gracious 18th century homestead that is Step Up/Step Down's new home in Northwood, we occasionally find a surprise, in this case, a fragment of antique wallpaper. Look for it in a frame adorning a wall sometime soon!

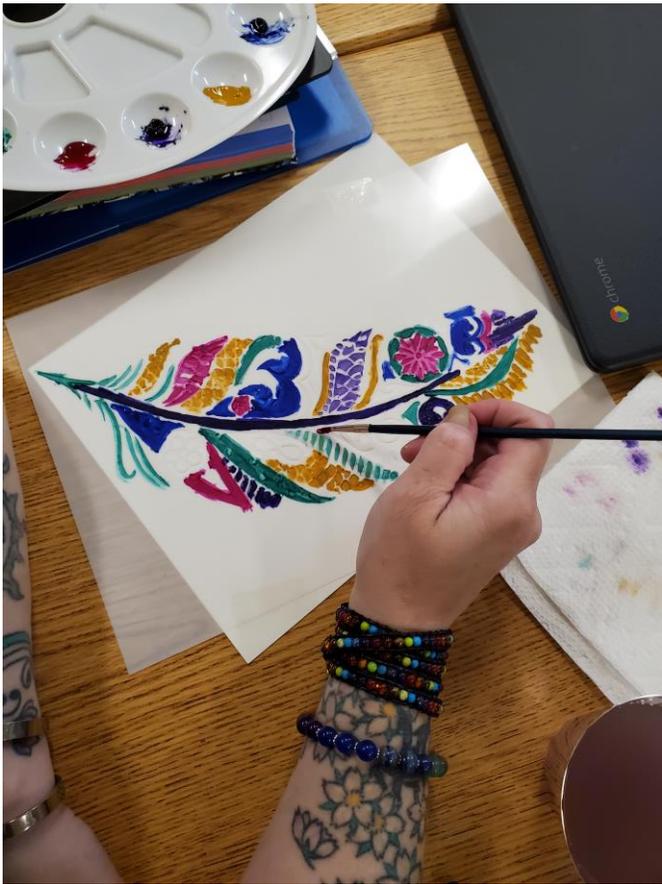
New Group: Rituals and Routines



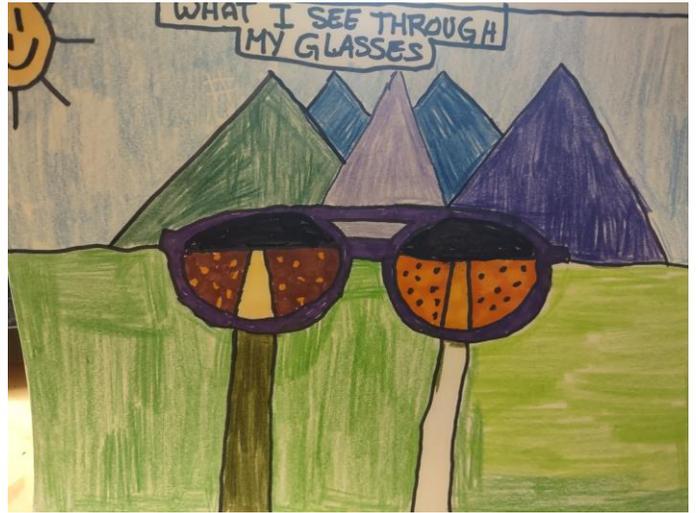
Having a routine can really be helpful in battling depression and motivation. We will be talking about

wake up and good night routines as well as creating a special space for you to craft a relaxation time inside your day. Keeping a schedule can help us conquer the dreaded paralysis that can cause procrastination. We will be looking at setting short- and long-term goals and breaking things down into do-able pieces. We will also discuss how to celebrate our accomplishments both big and small. As we continue through the groups, we will see how things build on each other to make a positive impact on our lives.

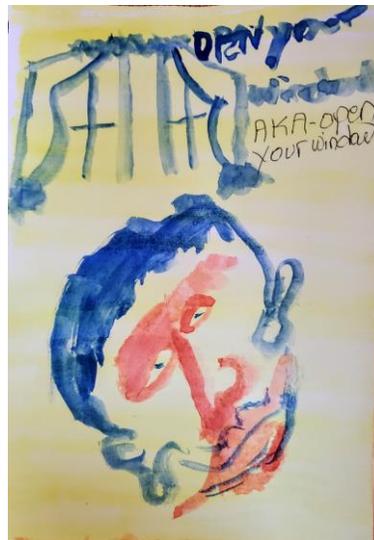
MEMBER CONTRIBUTIONS



Nicole creating our cover art



Betsy pondered her World View



Donna looked at her world view as well



Beth was enjoying the green of summer



Paula created a tribute to her beloved cat, Django

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Please send any additions or corrections to

info@connectionspeersupport.org

Crisis Text: Text HOME to 741741 to connect with a trained crisis counselor
www.crisistextline.org

To connect with local resources in the Seacoast area, go to www.211nh.org OR call 211.

Service Link:

Your link to information and support services within your community.

<https://www.servicelink.nh.gov/>

Toll Free Number: 1-866-634-9412

Peer Respite:

Peer Respite is a 24-hour, peer-driven, short-term, non-medical alternative to hospitalization. To begin your pre-qualifying application and interview, call the following respite centers: **PEER RESPITE PROGRAMS ARE SUSPENDED DUE TO COVID-19. PLEASE CALL OR CHECK PSA WEBSITES FOR UPDATES**

Stepping Stones, Claremont, NH. Respite 603-543-1388, Stepping Stone Peer Center: 603-543-1388,

Toll Free: 1-888-582-0920,
www.steppingstonenextstep.org

H.E.A.R.T.S. Peer Support of Greater Nashua, Nashua, NH. Crisis Respite: 603-864-8769, Peer Support Center: 603-882-8400,
www.heartspsa.org.

Monadnock Area Peer Support Agency, Keene NH 03431, Respite 603 352-5093 or 866-352-5093,
www.monadnockpsa.org

Legal Help:

NH Legal Assistance 603 431-7411
NH Pro Bono 1 800-639-5290
Legal Advice & Referral Center 1800-639-5290
Disability Rights Center: 1-800-834-1721

Meals:

Salvation Army Food Truck parked on State St near South Church, **Portsmouth:** Dinner Daily 5:00 PM, Breakfast Mon-Fri 7:00-8:00 AM, Takeout only

Middle St Baptist Church, 18 Court St, Portsmouth Community Lunch, Wednesday 12 PM-1 PM. Takeout only

St. John's Church, Chapel St Portsmouth Community Lunch: Thursday 12 PM-1 PM. Takeout only

Community Health Services:

Families First: Providing health and dental care, as well as parent and family support.

Portsmouth location: 100 Campus Drive, Suite 12, Portsmouth (603) 422-8208

Food Banks:

Operation Blessing: 600A Lafayette Rd, Portsmouth: Call for an appointment: (603) 430-8561

Gather: 210 West Rd, Suite 3, Portsmouth. Monday-Thursday 10 AM – 3 PM by appointment, Friday 9 AM-1 PM. info@gathernh.org or 603 436 9641

Mental Health/Substance Misuse Resources:

Alcoholics Anonymous, A.A. World Services, Inc., 24-Hour Hotline 1-800-593-3330; www.aa.org/

NAMI NH, www.naminh.org

National Suicide Prevention 1 800-273-TALK (8255),
www.suicidepreventionlife.org/

NH Specialized Information and Referral Center is available 24/7, 365 days a year. Simply dial 211

Granite Pathways Rehabilitation Services 10 Ferry St, Suite 319, Concord NH granitepathways.org

Safe Harbor, 603-225-9540,
<https://granitepathwaysnh.org/safe-harbor-recovery-center/>

Seacoast Mental Health Center, Inc. 603 431-6703, <http://www.smhc-nh.org/>

Seacoast Pathways, 603-812-9031,
<https://www.seacoastpathways.org>

Transportation:

ACT (Alliance for Community Transportation) 603-834-6010,
triplink@communityrides.org

COAST (Cooperative Alliance for Seacoast Transportation) (603) 743-5777 www.coastbus.org

VIRTUAL EVENTS (ALL FREE!)

Please note, that while all events are free, most do require you to pre-register; just follow the links!

Compassionate Communication Practice Circle

Tue, Aug 3, 9 PM

The Compassionate Communication Practice Circle is for people that want to learn Nonviolent Communication (NVC) and integrate it into their lives. NVC inspires heartfelt connections between ourselves and others—making it more likely that everyone's needs will be met. It will support you in moving from default reactions causing disconnect toward ease and flow in your relationships. <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/compassionate-communication-practice-circle-tickets-140931286271?aff=ebdssbonlinesearch>

RTS Webinar - The Science of Happiness, Part 1: Introduction

Tue, August 17, 2021 1 PM

Join Annie Paraison, founder of Love Before All, LLC, as she presents "The Science of Happiness, Part1: Introduction" Welcome on the journey to the discovery of your authentic self! In these sessions, we will explore ultimate freedom, the way we stand in its way, and the practices that will prove useful when cultivating a lifestyle that honors unconditional love which is the only path to freedom. <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/rts-webinar-the-science-of-happiness-part-1-introduction-tickets-161678130641?aff=ebdssbonlinesearch>

Improv Comedy Workshop for Beginners

Learn a new improv comedy exercise each and every weekday at 4 PM

With any luck, you'll be left with enough knowledge of the exercise to lead it yourself for your friends and colleagues! Enroll here for free and a calendar invite with the Zoom link will be sent to you the day before the event (or if you register the day of the event, the invite will be sent to you at the last second, which you might find exciting depending on your personality!!!)

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/free-improv-comedy-workshop-for-beginners-tickets-135867905563?aff=ebdssbonlinesearch>

Tai Chi Series - Review and Practice all 108 Moves (all experience levels)

Mon, Aug 16 and 30 3 PM

This series of webinars offers the opportunity to review and practice a Chinese martial art and system of calisthenics, consisting of sequences of very slow controlled movements. The practice promotes the qi or life energy within us to flow smoothly and effectively throughout the body. It is also a meditation and spiritual practice. https://www.eventbrite.com/e/tai-chi-series-review-and-practice-all-108-moves-all-experience-levels-registration-128263041209?aff=ebdssbonlinesearch&keep_tld=1

INSPIRATION

Here is a preview of Connections' new online group, *Rituals and Routines* that begins August 6 at 2 PM. We will be supporting each other in bringing order and peace to our lives. We look forward to you joining us.

Routines and Rituals

What are the things that are most important to me?

How can I better organize my life to include these things?

What do I want or need to change or look at?

What does my morning and evening look like?

Is it working for you? Are there things that are missing or that you would like to include?

Are you a planner or do you prefer to go with the flow?

THE MONTHLY PUZZLE

Created with TheTeachersCorner.net Word Search

First fill in the blanks, then find those words in the puzzle. All answers are in this newsletter!

Z E U O P M I Y S Y M K I M P
R F P V T W I R N S A Z B O H
O L N O S E P E O Y J G S S B
U M M L U D J M O O K O G N A
T O O Q G N P O G A Q T M O U
I Z J S U E W T K K N F D I P
N D U T A S Y E Z V M Z J T A
E B S E H D J A N G O S T A Q
S W T R Q A E U U I E N V T O
V X O D H Y W V D O Z E H I C
D W F N O R T H W O O D D D W
W D D A G S Y D H J B R U E E
Y A M A N D A D N E V A H M I
E Q S Y B O S P U O R G L P H
C O M E D Y L B G O C A J T I

1. August's new group is Rituals and _____.
2. Staff from _____ will visit on Wed, Aug 11
3. This month Dave _____ shares his story.
4. Paula's art remembered her cat, _____.
5. Our next picnic is _____ 25.
6. SUSD's home is in _____.
7. Our BOD meets on the 4th _____.
8. One thing to do at Community meeting is to suggest new _____.
9. Friday groups are _____ only.
10. _____ will be on the Warmline Thursdays.
11. Aug 4, we will visit the exhibit, Transitions and _____.
12. Weekdays at 4 PM, you can take a free online improv _____ workshop.

If you are struggling with mental health issues, you may benefit from being with others who have similar experiences. Intentional Peer Support is about making and sustaining **mutually supportive relationships**. When people are mutual partners in a relationship, there is equality; one person is not the “helper” to the other, both benefit and can support each other working toward what we want in life. It is a positive, hope-based approach, helping us to determine actions we can take to reach our goals.



CPSC is open to everyone 18 and older seeking support in pursuing mental health wellness with an emphasis on hope and recovery.

All services are free and no referral is required.

**Warmline telephone support, staffed by trained peers, available 5-10 PM seven days a week.
Please call us at: 603-427-6966**

Connections Peer Support Center

544 Islington St.

Portsmouth, NH 03801