

February 2021

Upcoming events

NH Mental Health Peer Alliance, Tue., Feb 16, 10 AM. 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@connectionspeersupport.org for an invitation.

Board of Directors Meeting Wed, Feb 24, 4 PM Members and staff welcome and encouraged to attend. Please contact greg@connectionspeersupport.org for an invitation.

Budgeting with Christina from Cornerstone Financial. This is one-on-one support by phone or online. Please call or email to reserve a spot. nina@connectionspeersupport.org

3S Artspace: Phantasmagoria Thur, Feb 11, 10 AM
“is about memories of Portsmouth-- my own, those of my family and others’, as well as the murky divide between memory and imagination, science and magic.”



Dual Recovery

Overcoming Mental Health and Substance Use Challenges



Numerous studies indicate that about half of those who experience a mental health challenge will also misuse substances and vice versa.

But for Nicole, who facilitates Connections’ Dual Recovery group, these aren’t statistics; this is the path she walks every day. This month, in her own words, she shares her personal journey of dual recovery, beginning on page 4.

CPSC SCHEDULE FEBRUARY 2021

Connections will be closed
Monday, February 15 for
President's Day.

- **Daily Check-in**
Mon thru Fri, 9:15 AM and 1:15 PM. Mon and Fri are online only. A chance to connect with peers, set goals, or reflect upon your day.
- **Walking Group**
Mon and Fri 1:00 PM At 1 PM on Mondays and Fridays, we will be braving the weather and exploring local trails, such as The Urban Forestry Center and Odiorne Point. Call 603 570 8899 before noon to confirm, or if you need a ride.
- **Hearing Voices Group (online only)**
Mon 11 AM. Support for those who are hearing voices, seeing visions, or experiencing other unusual sensory experiences.
- **Journaling Group (online only)**
Mon 2 PM. Reflections and inspiration. Come to journal or spin a tale. A directed prompt will be offered, but all topics and genres are welcomed and encouraged.
- **Dual Recovery (online only)**
Mon 3 PM. For those struggling with substance use disorder and mental health issues, to share coping strategies and support each other.
- **Stop Smoking**
Wed 10 AM Each of us have our own reasons for wanting to quit smoking. We will be sharing strategies, supporting each other, and cheering our success.
- **Art Journaling**
Tue 10 AM Please join us as we explore different types of art Journaling and writing. All levels of art journaling and writing will be explored as we go on this journey. Chrissie- a newish member will be leading this group. Feedback is welcome.
- **Crocheting and Knitting**
Tue 11 AM All levels, from beginner to advanced. You may bring your own project, but we have supplies available.
- **WRAP Through Art**
Wed 11 AM. Wellness Recovery Action Plan, is a process where you explore and create a plan for yourself to stay well, respond to stressors, or even how to respond to a crisis. It is a powerful evidence-based wellness tool. But they can be beautiful too! Each week we will complete an art project that visualizes the week's theme.
- **Computer Skills and Job Skills**
Wed 2-4 PM Topics based on member interests. Whether you want to brush up your resume, practice for an interview, surf the web, or upgrade your Word skills, we're here to support your success.
- **IPS Topics**
Thur 10 AM. Intentional Peer Support is the model we practice here at Connections. This group gives us a chance to learn and deepen our practice.
- **Men's Group**
Thur 11 AM. We decide the topics ourselves. Being in these smaller peer groups can allow us to share things we might find hard to share in mixed groups.
- **Depression and Anxiety Group**
Thur 2 PM. We offer a safe place to explore difficult feelings such as sadness and fear, and learn from each other how we can respond to them.
- **A.R.T. (online only)**
Fri 11 AM. Art of Recovery Together. Come visit while working on whatever creative project you wish.>
- **Grief and Loss (online only)**
Fri 2 PM. A safe place to process feelings of grief and loss, as well as learn ways to move forward.

CPSC SCHEDULE FEBRUARY 2021

	Monday Remote Only	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday Remote Only
9:15-10:00	AM Check-in	AM Check-in Chair Yoga/ Stretching	AM Check-in Chair Yoga/ Stretching	AM Check-in Chair Yoga/ Stretching	AM Check-in
10-10:45		Art Journaling	Stop Smoking	IPS Topics	A.R.T.
11-11:45	Hearing Voices	Crochet & Knitting	WRAP Through Art	Men's Group	
12-1			Lunch Break		
1:15-1:45	PM Check-in 1:00 Walking Group	PM Check-in	PM Check-in	PM Check-in	PM Check-in 1:00 Walking Group
2:00-2:45	Journal Group	Arts and Crafts	Computer and	Anxiety/ Depression	Grief and Loss
3:00-3:45-	Dual Recovery		Job Skills		

Tue, Wed, and Thur groups will be held at our center at 544 Islington St, Portsmouth, as well as online. Mon and Fri groups are online only. The center is available for drop-ins, but we suggest you call ahead to make sure there is room.

Due to social distancing requirements, for groups held in center, you should call us at 603-427-6966 by 4 PM the day before to reserve a spot or 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. Please call or visit our website to learn about the additional procedures we have in place for everyone's safety.

Connections' physical center may close in bad weather; If the weather is iffy please call to make sure we are open. In case of snow closure, all programming will still be available online

Join groups online or by phone through this link:

Please join any group from your computer, tablet or smartphone.

<https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/709997085>

New to GoToMeeting? Get the app now and be ready when your first meeting starts:

<https://global.gotomeeting.com/install/709997085>

You can also dial in using your phone.

United States: +1 (571) 317-3122 Access

Code: 709-997-085

My Story

Nicole Fortune

I have been struggling and now, finally progressing through my diagnoses. I am what “they” call dually diagnosed with a substance use disorder (now in remission) and bipolar disorder. Since I was 12 years old, I knew there was always something wrong. I was depressed a lot as a teen and definitely began dabbling in the substances looking for something that would take away the pain in my gut and in my head. One day I found alcohol and it made all of those horrible feelings disappear. I was elated. I found the elixir. I spent my teen years battling and hiding the use of substances and became more depressed as the years ticked by.

I started college when I was 17 and began working full time to pay for my apartment which I shared with others also struggling with substances. I bounced around a lot. At the age of 20 I sought out therapy to find out what was wrong with me. After about a year in therapy I was given the diagnosis of bipolar 1. I read everything I could find. It was disheartening. It looked like a grim future for me.

At the age of 24 I began the journey into psychotropic medication to soothe the symptoms. I went through so many antidepressants that first year. This also started my job losses. I was always able to get a job, but it was very hard to maintain one. In my life I have had 46 different jobs. My mood disorder made it simply impossible to manage the stressors that a full-time position had.

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At the age of 28 I had a psychotic break and this began the journey through hospitalizations, programs, residential settings, half-way houses and sober communities. All in all, I had 22 different placements. I fought with my providers and refused help because I saw it as defeat. I had

to just get back to “normal” and I could get through the next day. During these years I not only lost jobs, but also friends, family support, housing, cars, and relationships. I was a failure in everything I tried to do.

I had a pattern. I would feel better, take on too much, crash and burn and get hospitalized. My meds didn’t help as far as I could tell. I spent many years living in crazy places to avoid living on the streets. Some of these places were very dangerous and abusive.

In 2016 I was living in a hotel down south with an abusive man and not eating more than once a day at the local soup kitchen. Something had to give. I was losing the battle and the plan of suicide seemed to be the next step. I believe that at this point of my journey that God intervened.

My mother called me and discussed the possibility of living with her in New Hampshire. It had been several years since I had seen her or had been home. I accepted the invitation knowing that it was going to be dangerous and difficult to extract myself from my living situation. I left everything behind and returned home on a Greyhound. Things were tough and at certain points it felt impossible.

After much community help, family assistance and programs I finally got to the point where I am now. I have had my own apartment for 3 years, have a job which I have held for 2 years and am in school for my PhD. I am still on medications, but much fewer, have great services, am developing friendships and repairing family ties. It has not been easy and every day there are hurdles. I follow a very specific routine, have a support team, never skip psychiatric appointments and regularly use coping skills which I have found help me. We hold a dual recovery group on Mondays at 3 PM. It is not a 12-step program format. We are coming together to share in the healing process and to support each other where we are on our journey.

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I have found a wonderful community here in Portsmouth and am passionate about my life and my future. Connections has been a huge part of the healing journey for me. Thank you for reading.

Dual Recovery Group meets online on Mondays at 3 PM

You can join from your computer, tablet or smartphone through this link:

<https://global.gotomeeting.com/join709997085>

If you have questions, please call us at 603 427-6966 or email nicole@connectionspeersupport.org

CENTER NEWS



Step Up/Step Down is Moving Forward!

Connections Peer Support Center is proud to welcome Kali Moulton as the new manager for the Step-Up / Step-Down program. You may recognize Kali from her role on the board of directors or have seen her during a fundraising event. She is also a local magician and family entertainer with a passion for bringing communities together.

“I am so excited to join the team and members at Connections Peer Support Center. There is a lot that we can learn from each other and I am looking forward to getting to know everyone.

It is my goal to make sure that our Step-Up / Step-Down program provides comfort and support to those who need a welcoming space as they focus on their wellness journey.

WRAP for the New Year



WRAP (Wellness Recovery Action Plans) are a powerful set of tools we use every day to get and stay well. This month artist Janet Laird of Art for Insight, returned to help us integrate art into our WRAP plans for the New Year. We talked about what we wished to release, getting to know our materials, letting go of preconceived ideas, and even a Word of the Year.

It was great to dive into the projects and see where they took us. Janet is a WRAP Facilitator as well as an artist and makes the topics come alive. Thank you, Janet, for joining us!

MEMBER CONTRIBUTIONS

Last month Connections published Angela's wistful poem, but inadvertently omitted several lines. Now, here it is in its entirety, for your enjoyment:

Pity Party

I had a "pity party"
So glad you could attend

For it's the kind of party
That you really need a friend

I pitied me for failing
I pitied me for sin
I pitied me for all I've lost
And what I've never been

The purpose of this party
Is still not very clear
I only know how good it felt
To know that you were near

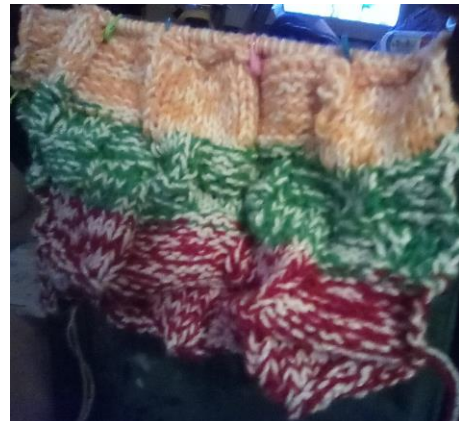
And if sometime you feel
the need
To have a party too
Remember I am always here
To help you pity you!

~Angela S.

This month, we were taking inspiration from the world outside, both natural beauty and our need for warmth. And we remembered warmth can come from the care we give to each other as well as handmade blankets...



Betsy has taken up knitting...



From Paula:

"I love coming here because of what we do for each other"

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,
www.safeharborrecoverynh.org

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

Seacoast Pathways, 603-812-9031,
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 COMMUNITY EVENTS (ALL FREE!)

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

The Blues and Beyond

Sat, Feb 20, 2 PM

East End Libraries present: The Blues and Beyond tells the story of African Americans in the United States from slavery to the present day by exploring and documenting, with music, videos, narration and illustrations, the evolution of African American music alongside U.S. history. From field hollers and camp meetings to old spirituals to the Blues to the popular genres of today, music is the means by which African Americans have told their story. The program is delivered using Zoom and allows viewers to interact with the program performers and narrators.

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/the-blues-and-beyond-tickets-130503931773?aff=ebdssbonlinesearch>

Zumba Class from Stronger Austin

Tue and Thur, 7 PM, Sat 11 AM

The routines feature aerobic/fitness interval training with a combination of fast and slow rhythms that tone and sculpt the body. All fitness levels are welcome!

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/free-virtual-zumba-workout-tickets-136009350629?aff=ebdssbonlinesearch>

Preservation of Documents, Photos, and Digital Memories

Sat, Feb 20, 10 AM

Are you thinking that this winter is a good time to sort those shoeboxes of photos? If so, here are some ideas for caring for them. Professional archivist Connor Lee Graham will discuss how to preserve a family historian's treasures: old photographs, documents, and digitized memories. The program will highlight cost-effective steps for a home archivist to preserve family records

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/meal-planning-made-easy-tickets-117581353995?aff=ebdssbonlinesearch>

Virtual Yoga Class with Yoga4Us

Wed, Feb 10, , 7 PM

Virtual Yoga, This is part of a Self-Care Fair to help you incorporate calm in your day, set positive intentions, feed the soul, shed the COVID 15 and engage in mindful movement. 2020 has been a challenging year and that is why we are offering workshops at no cost to you. Do something good for you!

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/virtual-yoga-class-with-yoga4us-tickets-132467669365?aff=ebdssbonlinesearch>

Disney/Pixar Soul Trivia Live-Stream

Saturday, Feb 6, 8:30 PM

Welcome to Trivia AD's VIRTUAL series, bringing our exciting trivia to your responsible social distancing! Unlike our highly competitive in-person events, these Facebook live streams will be purely for fun and entertainment. Everyone is on the honor system, you are your own scorekeeper, and the prize is a bit of distraction, plus an outlet for all those movies and shows you're bingeing, until we can get back together for the real thing! click on the "DISCUSSION" tab in the event to view the live feed.

<https://www.facebook.com/events/664237820910406>

Healthy Relationships



THE MONTHLY PUZZLE

This Month is all about Healthy Relationships!

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

COMPASSION

CONNECTION

EMPATHY

KINDNESS

LISTENING

MUTUALITY

POSITIVITY

RESPECT

SUPPORT

TRUST

VALIDATION

WORLDVIEW

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 8:30 AM- 10 PM Monday through Friday and 5-10 PM Saturdays and Sundays: 603-427-6966

Connections Peer Support Center

544 Islington St.

Portsmouth, NH 03801