

April 2021

Upcoming events

NH Mental Health Peer Alliance, Tue., Apr 20, 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, Apr 28, 4 PM Members and staff welcome and encouraged to attend. Please contact greg@connectionspeersupport.org for an invitation.

Twilight of American Impressionism Wed, Apr 7, 10 AM
A community excursion to the Portsmouth Historical Society's latest exhibit.

Community Meeting Wed Apr 14, 10 AM
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!



A Season for Hope



“From fear-based to hope-based” is basic principle of Intentional Peer Support, one Connections is excited to bring to Step Up/Step Down, its new voluntary, residential, peer-based program.

Inside, Step Up/Step Down Program Manager, Kali Moulton tells her own story, and shares her passion for Intentional Peer Support and a hope-based approach. See page 4.

CPSC SCHEDULE APRIL 2021

- **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 explore local trails. 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 are welcome.
- **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.
- **WRAP Topics**
Tue 2 PM or Wed 10 AM. With Wellness Recovery Action Plan, 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.
- **Arts and Crafts**
Tue 11 AM A time for creative expression or observing the seasons, you never know what might be in store, always.
- **IPS Topics**
Tue 2 PM and Thur 10 AM. 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 can have real effects on our physical and psychological well-being. We will identify our own negative thinking patterns and explore ways to replace them with positive ones.
- **WRAP Through Art**
Wed 11 AM. Wellness Recovery Action Plan, is a process where you explore and create a plan for yourself to get and stay well. 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.
- **Art Journaling**
Wed 2 PM Please join us as we explore different types of art Journaling and writing. No prior experience needed! Feedback is welcome.
- **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.
- **Nutrition in the News**
Thur 11 AM. Each week we will cover a different topic regarding nutrition and health. Bring your questions or suggestions for topics.
- **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.
- **Healthy Relationships (online only)**
Fri 2 PM. Here we explore ways changing past patterns of behavior and of developing healthy relationships in our lives.

CPSC SCHEDULE APRIL 2021

	Monday Remote Only	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday Remote Only
9:15-10:00	AM Check-in	AM Check-in Walking/ Stretching	AM Check-in Walking/ Stretching	AM Check-in Walking/ Stretching	AM Check-in
10-10:45		WRAP Topics	Positive Thinking	IPS Topics	A.R.T.
11-11:45	Hearing Voices	Arts and Crafts	WRAP Through Art	Nutrition in the News	
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	IPS Topics	Art Journaling	Anxiety/ Depression	Healthy Relationships
3:00-3:45-	Dual Recovery		Computer/Job Skills		

April Events

- **Mon, Apr 5, NO PM Groups**
- **Budgeting with Christina from Cornerstone Financial- call or email nina@connectionspeersupport.org to set up a time for this one-on-one support by phone or online.**
- **Community Picnic: Wed, April 21 10 AM @ Newcastle Common, rain date Wed Apr 28. We are being brave! We supply burgers, hot dogs, drinks, and chips**

- Tue, Wed, and Thur groups are 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, due to social distancing, we suggest you call ahead to make sure there is room
- 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.
- Connections' building may close for bad weather; we'll still be available online
- 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](tel:+15713173122)
Access Code: 709-997-085

OUR VOICES

Where I've Been



Some details escape me, but there are moments I'll never forget about my first hospitalization.

I was in high school, my life spiraling, turning gray and blurry, maybe before my best friend attempted suicide. On an ambulance ride with my childhood baseball coach, an EMT my father asked to go with me, we talked about the past, the good past when I was just a shy nervous kid picking flowers in left field and not a heavy lump of pain and sadness.

Someone during intake commented on how polite I was. I guess they weren't used to kids like me self-admitting to the hospital. Politeness was my armor against the anger, disappointment, and disrespect that came from adults with authority. Politeness hid my fear.

The intake process was painfully long. My face was sticky from crying. I had been in the hospital at least eight hours and no one had asked if I needed water, a meal, or to go to the bathroom.

Eventually, I mustered up some courage and piped up, "I'm hungry." A nice staff member looked horrified and stopped at a vending machine near the closed cafeteria. I don't remember what he brought back, just that it wasn't dinner, not enough for my teenage body.

No one told me what the rules were.

My room was cold. My thin blanket didn't do much. The full moon kept me awake. There were no curtains or shades to block out the light, probably for some safety reason.

The next morning, I timidly followed the others into a common area. No one spoke to me until a mean staff lady scowled at me and told me I couldn't eat breakfast unless I took a shower. I said, "I usually don't shower every day, and I showered yesterday." Apparently, that was the wrong answer and I was being "difficult." I ran back to my room to hide.

Another staff lady came by a few hours later to check in on me and asked why I was so upset, so I told her. It all came pouring out. Then she said something like, "I'm so sorry that you're upset [but] you were being difficult and disrespectful."

I had to stay in my room alone for the first day and do worksheets. Someone came by with lunch and dinner. I went to sleep, interrupted by hourly checks where someone peeked in to make sure I was still alive, still there. When you wake up every hour, you don't really get much sleep.

The rest of the week was a blur. I ate with the other kids and went to groups. I kept my head down. They took my blood every other day. By the end of the week, I had a softball sized bruise at the crook of my arm.

I remember one group, a “safe space” where we were encouraged to talk about whatever trauma we were going through. When it was my turn, a very strong girl started yelling at me. The staff just sat there and waited for her to stop berating me. I cried and went back to keeping my thoughts to myself.

The ward was completely locked. I spent a lot of time at the window, looking out at the beautiful spring weather, wishing that I could go take a walk along the rocky Maine coast and smell the salt air. All I wanted was to feel alive. It’s pretty impossible to feel alive when everything around you is sterile and gray.

Once, I got to see the psychiatrist. Once. He didn’t look up from his paperwork. He just asked me some standard questions and made a few changes to my medication.

I enjoyed the therapy dog, who came on Fridays, a chocolate-colored mix of poodle and lab. He snuggled up to me and let me be. Dogs are great that way.

After two weeks, I was sent home because I was “well” and had a “proper medication adjustment.” I didn’t argue. They were the experts, not me. How could I know if I was well? I was crazy. My mind was not to be trusted.

I was not well. My life was a blur. I didn’t even notice as all of my friends slowly dropped out of my life, one by one.

My second hospitalization, at age 23, was no better. Every decision to improve my life did not involve me. They decided to send me to another program but didn’t tell me. The program director just showed up to take me there. I promptly had a panic attack and spent the rest of the day hiding in my closet as a nurse sat right in front of me, staring in silence.

I made a few friends on the ward and was excited to find out we lived one town away from each other. Then one of the nurses took me aside and told me they wouldn’t let me leave until I promised not to contact any of them once I got out. “Finish your stay and then focus on moving forward,” she said. Her words echoed lines from a prison movie I saw once. “Do your time and don’t look back.”

*Control belongs in the hands of the individual
because, at the end of the day, it's your life.*

I finally saw a psychiatrist on the last day. He didn’t look at me, either. He just read down his list of questions and made little notes.

No one should ever have the experiences that I had: no connection, no support, no direction. We all deserve better than that. We’re not sick, we aren’t patients. We are people. It’s not prison. It’s supposed to be a wellness program.

That's why I want to build the Step-Up, Step-Down program. Control belongs in the hands of the individual because, at the end of the day, it's your life. You're the one who has to be happy with it.

GROUP HIGHLIGHTS

Hearing Voices



“Sorry I missed what you said, my voices were bothering me again.” While facilitating an unrelated group, I was surprised to hear someone talking about hearing voices as part of a normal conversation. Surprisingly (or perhaps, not!) other members answered with empathy and advice. “I bargain with my voices. Ask them if they can talk later, that’s what I do when my voices are acting up.” “Yes, I was having trouble sleeping the other night and I asked mine to pipe down til morning.”

Another member was apparently as surprised as me. “Wow, I hear voices too. I didn’t know that you all were hearing voices as well. I don’t talk to many people about this, but it is comforting to know that others understand what I am going through,”

This was the first time I had ever met a group of people who spoke openly about these experiences. I was fascinated by how open and matter of fact they were about their voices and what was happening inside their mind.

If you are looking for a supportive place to talk about your experiences, join a group of your peers that understand what you are going through. Hearing voices group is a safe non-judgmental place where you can be open about your experiences.

Hearing Voice Group is offered Mondays at 11 AM, online only.

Healthy Relationships

Have you ever felt that you were wrong for setting boundaries even when everyone has told you that would be a good idea? Have you ever put everyone's needs ahead of your own and at the end of the day you felt resentful and empty? Have you ever said yes when you really mean no? If these questions sound familiar this might be a great place to discuss healthy opportunities for a better friendship with yourself and in turn with others.

Healthy Relationships is offered on Fridays at 2 PM.

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>*

MEMBER CONTRIBUTIONS

Comfort

I have a cat; his name is Baloo. He was named after the Jungle Book. I got him from the NHSPCA in Stratham at four months old. It was nice that he already had his shots and neutering. We got home and he was nervous. It didn't take long for Baloo to adjust, though it wasn't until I petted his tail that we made a connection. We love to sleep on a recliner together. Baloo loves to snuggle and be held. I love it too when I, not working the Warmline I love our companionship; we give to each other. Baloo will ask to be held by jumping on the table and pawing at me. We play with his toys sometimes. He really gets into playing when he's chasing a toy on a wand.



~ Beth F

Not Flying Away

Noticing, within, I am full of words
No longer do I want to fly away as birds!
I'm finally being able to see that line
Maybe one day I'll begin feeling fine.

What is it like to be "normal" like others?

During my life I've felt as if a pillow smothers

As for me, I've been stuck out at the waters of the sea

The shore is mostly a blur; to get near, I plea

Writing, painting, & praying are the ways I cope

Without their support, I'd lose all hope

Unfortunately, medications are an important part

Most times this is what I want to run from, I dart

However, it's the combination of all; that's why I'm still

A least I don't feel as if caught in headlights, like a deer

So here I still am, choosing not to, away fly

What do you think are the answers as to Why?

~ Mary Barabos

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 EVENTS (ALL FREE!)

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

Introduction to Organic Gardening

Thursdays, April 8, 15, and 22, 6-8 PM

Portsmouth Public Library presents a comprehensive organic gardening course presented by an experienced teacher and commercial vegetable grower.

This is a six-hour course taught in weekly, two-hour sessions

<https://portsmouthpl.librarycalendar.com/events/organic>

Banjoes, Bones, and Ballads

Mon, April 19 6 PM

Portsmouth College Women's Club presents an evening of music with Jeff Warner, supported by New Hampshire Humanities! Traditional songs, rich in local history and a sense of place, present the latest news from the distant past. They help us to interpret present-day life with an understanding of the working people who built our country. .

<https://portsmouthpl.librarycalendar.com/events/ballads>

EFT Tapping • Energy Wellness

Thu, Apr 1, 1 PM

Recently, there has been a good deal of interest in EFT or "tapping." Here is a chance to find out what it is all about. Whether you're new to tapping or a pro, you'll benefit from taking this hour to relax your body and move into a better feeling, healthier place. Karen's group sessions are packed full of ideas, tips and techniques, and are a great opportunity to learn how to put tapping to work on improving all aspects of your life.

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/eft-tapping-energy-wellness-online-tickets-143905115073?aff=ebdssbonlinesearch>

Unhurried Conversations

Thu, Apr 1, 1 PM

Unhurried Conversations are free and open to the public. They are hosted by unhurried enthusiasts in different parts of the world. During the pandemic, they are all available online to anyone around the world. We use a simple process to make sure when one person speaks, everyone else listens, so the speaker is not interrupted. Sometimes there are long pauses between speakers, sometimes not. The conversations often move between light topics and more personal and profound ones. And in the end, we often find that all these are connected.

https://www.eventbrite.com/e/unhurried-conversation-host-david-zinger-april-tickets-137644555571?aff=ebdssbonlinesearch&keep_tld=1

The Art of Public Speaking: Increase Your Confidence and Build Your Skills

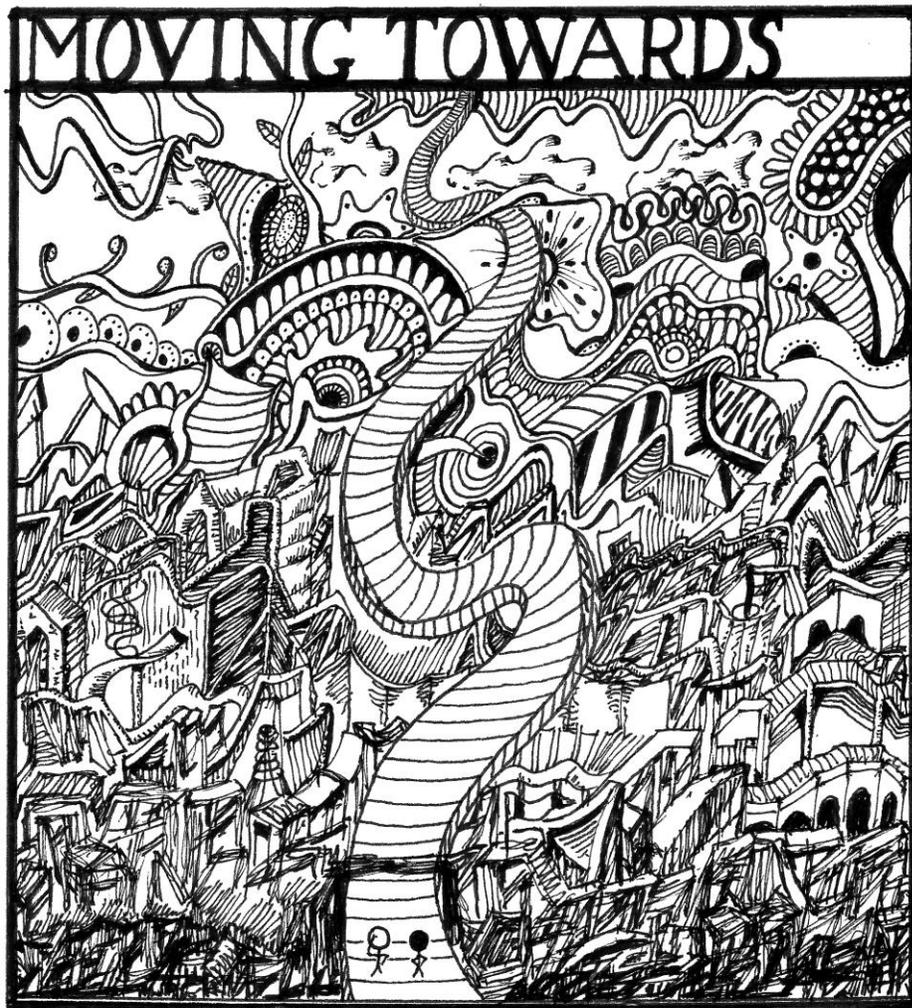
Wed, Apr 14, 1:30 PM

Due to overwhelming demand, I am rerunning this webinar for those who want to learn my seven-step for building a foundation for effective public speaking. This session will cover the basics of body language, voice, tone, pitch, use of stories, use of pauses, tackling imposter syndrome, practical exercises to try at home.

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/lets-do-lunch-taking-the-woo-woo-out-of-the-mind-body-connection-tickets-133746444215?aff=ebdssbonlinesearch>

INSPIRATION

This evocative piece comes from artist, Anand Sharma (@linesofanand on Facebook and Instagram if you would like to see more of their work), as a final presentation following their completing IPS Core Training. What comes to your mind when you hear, “connection?”



THE MONTHLY PUZZLE



Now that Spring is here, we are ready to notice the beauty in nature and think about how we can grow and bloom as well. Check out of groups schedule for some idea. Our art projects this month will be all about this season of hope and growth as well.

Blooming Where We Are Planted

O	I	S	P	E	A	A	E	S	O	O	A	O	F
L	F	O	U	N	P	R	I	M	R	O	S	E	R
S	O	I	T	O	N	E	M	T	E	G	R	O	F
D	R	O	L	I	L	A	C	O	N	E	F	O	Y
M	S	F	O	C	D	P	A	N	S	I	E	S	O
L	Y	N	O	I	L	E	D	N	A	D	E	I	O
I	T	D	U	O	S	P	V	I	O	L	E	T	S
D	H	D	S	R	I	R	I	S	O	I	S	P	O
O	I	O	G	P	S	S	S	Y	N	U	Y	P	D
F	A	G	C	U	P	U	I	I	I	I	E	O	N
F	M	W	D	A	I	F	C	E	C	S	M	O	U
A	H	O	R	S	L	D	O	O	H	I	P	P	E
D	M	O	S	T	U	G	I	T	R	R	V	A	R
D	C	D	A	R	T	S	L	V	O	C	I	L	I

PANSIES
IRIS
TULIP
CROCUS
DOGWOOD
FORSYTHIA
DAFFODIL
FORGET ME NOT
LILAC
PRIMROSE
VIOLETS
DANDELION

Play this puzzle online at : <https://thewordsearch.com/puzzle/2174797/>





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