

January 2022

Upcoming events

NH Mental Health Peer Alliance, Tue, Jan 18, 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 tina@connectionspeersupport.org for an invitation.

Board of Directors, Wed, Jan 26, 5 PM. Members and staff welcome and encouraged to attend. Please contact tina@connectionspeersupport.org for an invitation.

Community Meeting, Tue, Jan 25, 10:15 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!



Identity and Hope



In this month's newsletter, Connections' staffer, T J Maher shares his own story of discovery in finding his own identity, as well as how his journey continues. We're delighted to offer this as the beginning of many conversations as we actively reach out to more diverse groups and a greater community. We would love to hear your thoughts; please be in touch!

OUR VOICES

Being True to Myself: A Story of Hope



My name is TJ Maher. I am a transgender man and I use the pronouns he and him. I hope my story brings you hope that change is possible at any stage in your life.

I have always struggled with perfectionism. When I had every reason to be happy, I would still beat myself up. In college, I struggled with mental health issues and was diagnosed with Bipolar 2. I went on to a career as a teacher and then made the decision to go to chiropractic school. While there, I chose to go off my psychiatric meds, which led to a series of breakdowns and

diagnosis of Bipolar 1.

While hospitalized in 2017, I was put into an environment where I could do a lot of thinking and reflecting on my life. It was also safe to be disconnected from reality and to connect with the spiritual realm. I remember vividly talking to God and trying to discern what it meant to be a man to me. I feel that a complete breakdown was necessary for me to come to this realization, to fully understand myself. I felt safe. My behavior was so erratic that I was isolated, but my relationship with my higher power made it so I didn't feel so alone.

I began with changing my name and my pronouns. I was perceived as a tomboy as a child and this helped my transition to realizing I was a man as an adult. When I was in the hospital lots of people would say my identity was wrong. When I eventually came home from the hospital, I was aggressively searching for acceptance. It was challenging for me to come to terms with my identity, and I just wanted my family to be a stable force outside of me. It was hard for my family to accept my transition and use my correct pronouns and name. They were my support system, but it caused conflict because they were having a hard time coming to terms with it as well. It has taken time, and it is not perfect, but my family has come to accept me, and our relationship is strong.

Today I'm constantly misgendered and people still don't know my pronouns. It's hard because I've chosen not to change my body, so people automatically categorize me as a woman and use she/her pronouns. When people get my pronouns wrong, it feels like a part of me slips out the window. I feel whole, valued, and seen when people get my pronouns correct. I am becoming more comfortable being an advocate for myself when people make a mistake and use the wrong pronoun. I would like to ask you to consider standing up for me and others and being an ally. Normalizing asking about pronouns would be a great gift to transgender folks in society.

I wish I could say being trans made me feel complete, but I am still a work in progress. I have doubts about everything; that's just who I am. I feel blessed to be able to choose my identity, one that is congruent with me. I am also sometimes angry with God that I had to choose; it caused so much stress because of how I came out in a manic state. I was so sick when it happened that I didn't trust my brain. My relationship with God is still strong. Going through this breakdown gave me a new appreciation for life and the things that I had, and made me more empathetic to other people. Empathy is the reason I have decided to go into peer support as a career. I could not have done it before. My hope is that in time the words will come back to me. I hope that finding community will help me recover my voice.

Identity is an evolutionary process. Perhaps I am more nonbinary than male. Part of me gets nervous talking about it, like I'm a little kid in the nonbinary community. Maybe I don't know enough about it, but it allows me to step outside the usual gender boxes and be myself.

I'm still discovering parts of my identity like you can discover yours. It's never too late to change a part of yourself. You can become anything your heart desires like: an artist, a musician, an athlete, a writer, just to name a few. Identity is not limited to your gender and you can evolve and grow.

I'm still discovering parts of my identity like you can discover yours. It's never too late to change a part of yourself.

That's why I am telling my story here. I am hoping to create more support and community around issues of gender and identity, and invite others to join me. Please call if you are interested in joining a group focused on these issues.

TJ Maher is a Connections staffer with our Step Up/Step Down peer-driven residential program. He is eager to connect with others who have concerns around LGBTQ issues and mental health. Please call us at 603-427-6966 to get in touch.

OUR VOICES

Grateful for Friendships

Thank you, Lord, that I have such good friends
I pray for their health and our friendship never bends
Until we met, I felt as if I was on my own
Now there's happiness that I've known

Always recall Family and Friends are Everything
To Everyone about them I would sing
Each and every one of you make me smile
It's great when our laughter we rile

We have each other to depend on when we're
feeling down
For saving me, I feel you deserve a crown
No longer do I feel as if my thoughts run wild
It's the same with thinking of when I was a child

My own anger I've learned to keep in check
Luann, Crystal, Phyllis, and I had a blast sitting on my
deck!

Don't know what I'd do without Sally and Kim
Their friendship is permanent, not off on a whim!

Debbie, Diane, Kayla, and Gail are all quite nice!
Carol R, Carol M, Anne- I'd never roll the dice
Even Virginia is there when either need to talk
Can always imagine, with all of my friends, going for
a walk
Having so much friendship and love, I am so grateful!
Long gone are my emotions of being hateful
Thank you Everyone, for me all you've done!
Feel as if my heart and Mind are finally becoming
one!

~ Mary B

My Loss and Gain



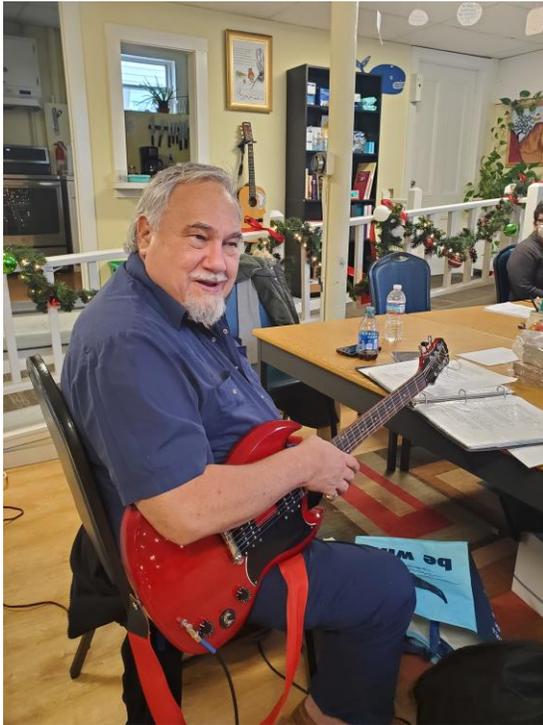
Baloo

It's now December 13, my birthday, and I am reflecting on a loss and gain in my life that happened on a Wednesday of last week, December the 8th. On this day I had the very hard task of putting my 5-year-old cat, Baloo, to sleep for good. He had been sick for a while and there was nothing helping him recover. I miss him a lot and wish there would have been something I could've done to strengthen him. It was his time to go. He had a wonderful loving life on earth with me.

A few days had come forth and it being now Friday, December 10, there came an opportunity of healing. The healing came with a very sweet kitten named Luna. Luna needed a forever home. I didn't feel I could take a lifetime responsibility now. But I was very much willing to help out a friend who had wanted a kitten for a long time. Before this would happen, I said to my friend Nicole that I would foster Luna until she went to her forever home. Nicole organized the whole thing. The event meant she had to call upon Nina's help to transport Luna from her previous home to my home. Luna has been healing on the bridge to move forward. My adjustment in losing Baloo doesn't seem as lonely for the time of fostering Luna. I consider Luna a big gain in the short time I will be taking care of her. I believe Chrissie, Luna's new owner, will gain just as much as I have and more.

~ Beth F

SEASONAL VIBES



Clockwise from upper left: Larry Hosack brightening our December with his guitar, Natalie and Alden decorating the tree, Noah casting a critical eye on gingerbread houses, and Mary taking a moment of quiet amid the hubub.

Connections Peer Support



- All groups are available in center and online: <https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/709997085>
- For detailed descriptions of groups, please go to the calendar on our website: connectionspeersupport.org
- Center may close for bad weather; **Warmline and online groups will still be available.**
- Call us if you need transportation to the center.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
9:15 AM Check-in 3 10:15 Hope and Recovery 11:00 Hearing Voices 11:30 BYO Lunch/Check-in/Neighborhood Walk 1:15 Dream and Aspirations 2:15 Dual Recovery	9:15 AM Check-in 4 10:15 MONA 11:30 BYO Lunch/Check-in/Neighborhood Walk 1:15 MONA Art Project	9:15 AM Check-in 5 10:15 Intrusive Thoughts 11:30 Community Lunch/Check-in/Neighborhood Walk 1:15 Mindfulness Activities
9:15 AM Check-in 10 10:15 Hope and Recovery 11:00 Hearing Voices 11:30 BYO Lunch/Check-in/Neighborhood Walk 1:15 Dream and Aspirations 2:15 Dual Recovery	9:15 AM Check-in 11 10:15 Speaker: Mike Skinner/Advocacy 11:30 BYO Lunch/Check-in/Neighborhood Walk 1:15 Advocacy / Assertiveness	9:15 AM Check-in 12 10:15 Intrusive Thoughts 11:30 Community Lunch/Check-in/Neighborhood Walk 1:15 Mindfulness Activities
CLOSED 17 	9:15 AM Check-in 18 10:15 NH Peer Alliance 11:30 BYO Lunch/Check-in/Neighborhood Walk 1:15 Advocacy / Assertiveness	9:15 AM Check-in 19 10:15 Intrusive Thoughts 11:30 Community Lunch/Check-in/Neighborhood Walk 1:15 Mindfulness Activities
9:15 AM Check-in 24 10:15 Hope and Recovery 11:00 Hearing Voices 11:30 BYO Lunch/Check-in/Neighborhood Walk 1:15 Dream and Aspirations 2:15 Dual Recovery	9:15 AM Check-in 25 10:15 Museum of New Art 11:30 BYO Lunch/Check-in/Neighborhood Walk 1:15 Community Meeting	9:15 AM Check-in 26 10:15 Intrusive Thoughts 11:30 Community Lunch/Check-in/Neighborhood Walk 1:15 Mindfulness Activities 4:00 Board of Directors Meeting
9:15 AM Check-in 31 10:15 Hope and Recovery 11:00 Hearing Voices 11:30 BYO Lunch/Check-in/Neighborhood Walk 1:15 Dream and Aspirations 2:15 Dual Recovery	We've got one-on-one support for budgeting, computer, or job skills. Give us a call to set up a time.	

January 2022 Schedule

544 Islington St, Portsmouth, NH 03801
603-427-6966

Center open: 8:30-5:30 Mon-Thur,
8:30-4:30 Fri

Warmline Telephone Support:
5-10 PM 7 days a week



Thursday	Friday	Step Up/ Step Down
9:15 AM Check-in 6 10:15 Anxiety/ Depression 11:30 Community Lunch/Check-in/Neighborhood Walk 1:15 Nutrition Topics	9:15 AM Check-in 7 10:15 Anger Management 11:30 BYO Lunch/Check-in/Neighborhood Walk 1:15 Art Workshop	is an innovative, non-medical voluntary residential program where someone in a mental health crisis might step-up from outpatient care into a supportive environment, or step-down from a hospitalization before going back to their homes. This enables them to remain connected to friends, family, and community members as they focus on their wellness. All guests will be able to go to school or work, see their loved ones, and remain members of their community while avoiding the high cost of a hospital stay, at no cost to the participant. Find more information on our website: https://www.connectionspeersupport.org/susd
9:15 AM Check-in 13 10:15 Anxiety/ Depression 11:30 Community Lunch/Check-in/Neighborhood Walk 1:15 Nutrition Topics	9:15 AM Check-in 14 10:15 Anger Management 11:30 BYO Lunch/Check-in/Neighborhood Walk 1:15 Art Workshop	
9:15 AM Check-in 20 10:15 Anxiety/ Depression 11:30 Community Lunch/Check-in/Neighborhood Walk 1:15 Nutrition Topics	9:15 AM Check-in 21 10:15 Anger Management 11:30 BYO Lunch/Check-in/Neighborhood Walk 1:15 Art Workshop	
9:15 AM Check-in 27 10:15 Anxiety/ Depression 11:30 Community Lunch/Check-in/Neighborhood Walk 1:15 Nutrition Topics	9:15 AM Check-in 28 10:15 Anger Management 11:30 BYO Lunch/Check-in/Neighborhood Walk 1:15 Art Workshop	

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 Noon-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

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

FREE COMMUNITY EVENTS

Please note, that while all events are free, you may need to pre-register; just follow the links or call!

How Volunteering Helps Your Career: Surprising Secrets to a New Job

Wed, Jan 12, 3:30 PM

Did you

know that volunteers have a much better chance of finding a job than jobseekers who don't volunteer? Understand why volunteering makes you a stronger job candidate, know why most companies value giving back to the community, and learn how acquiring skills as a volunteer is your "pathway to employment": <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/how-volunteering-helps-your-career-surprising-secrets-to-a-new-job-tickets-222483703747?aff=ebdssbonlinesearch>

The Art of Mindful Singing: Intro Class

Thu, Jan 6, 2022, 4 PM

Through the use of mantra, seed syllables, toning and chanting, we'll do a deep dive into the subtleties of your voice and awaken the rivers of your breath. You'll be given simple, yet powerful take-home practices that develop sustainability for your voice and promote greater health and well-being for your whole-body temple. <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/the-art-of-mindful-singing-free-intro-class-tickets-167490361179?aff=ebdssbonlinesearch>

Watercolor Paint Circle

Thursdays, 1 PM

Join us Thursday morning online for guided watercolor painting to help you calm the mind, release blocks and tune into your unique gifts. Easy templates are emailed to you weekly so you can trace or draw the artwork to get started. Cynthia shows you techniques she has learned over the years with the camera set on her piece as she works. A creative visualization to start helps to bring you into the moment and be the artist you know you are. Enjoy the first one free!

https://www.eventbrite.com/e/watercolour-paint-circle-morning-tickets-159747652529?aff=ebdssbonlinesearch&keep_tld=1

Arts & Crafting: New Year Creativity Workshop

Sat, Jan 22, Noon

The new year welcomes a refreshed outlook on life and the possibilities around us. Join Angela Johnson, professional artist, creativity coach, and educator, in this interactive workshop as she guides you through mindfulness exercises to help cultivate your personal creativity and inspire you to start the year strong.

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/arts-crafting-new-year-creativity-workshop-registration-205688689407?aff=ebdssbonlinesearch>

Community Reiki Healing

Sat, Jan 15, 5 PM

Reiki is a form of alternative medicine that was discovered in Japan by Usui Sensei and has been practiced for over 100 years. Reiki is channeled energy coming from the purest and highest levels of consciousness. Reiki adapts to the needs of each individual so it knows exactly where to go in the body.

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/community-reiki-healing-registration-158245349099?aff=ebdssbonlinesearch>

INSPIRATION

Thoughts to share from Mike:

“Always hold firmly to the thought that each one of us can do something to bring some portion of misery to an end.” - Author Unknown

“There may be times when we are powerless to prevent injustice, but there must never be a time when we fail to protest.” - Elie Wiesel

“When we give ourselves self-compassion, we are opening our hearts in a way that can transform our lives.” - Kristin Neff

DELIGHTFUL resolutions for the NEW YEAR

MORE OF THIS	LESS OF THIS	THINGS I WILL ACHIEVE		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> _____<input type="checkbox"/> _____		
		I WILL TRY	I WILL LEARN	I WILL VISIT

THE MONTHLY PUZZLE

Created with TheTeachersCorner.net Word Search Maker

Who Might You Talk to at Connections?

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

MIKE
NICOLE
CINDY
MARY
KAREN
PAULA

TINA
RACHEL
ERIN
DONNA
BETSY
JAMES

NINA
BETH
PAUL
CHRISSIE
NOAH
DARIN





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