



APRIL NEWSLETTER

We Are Still Here for Each Other

Out of concern for the safety and well-being of our staff and our members, Connections Peer Support Center has extended its office closure to May 4th.

Peer support *is* essential right now. We want to be available to you, our members and the public, as we look for ways to remain connected and to provide and receive support during this time of uncertainty.

The COVID-19 virus has suddenly altered so much in our lives – our plans, our routines, and how we connect with each other. We are now experts on previously foreign concepts: pandemic, social distancing, shelter-in-place, and essential business.

We are all in this together. In being together we find and offer support and strength, we experience connection with others, we share and discover ways to cope during this difficult time, and we can share the simple joys of our day.

Only the physical space of the center is closed; we are here online and by phone and we want you to join us!

Greg Burdwood, Executive Director

Connections Peer Support Center is still a place where we can find and offer hope to each other. You are an important part of that – come and be together with us:

WARMLINE TELEPHONE SUPPORT:

MON-FRI 8:30 AM-10:00 PM

SAT-SUN 5:00-10:00 PM

603-427-6966

ONLINE AND TELEPHONE GROUPS AND SUPPORT DETAILS INSIDE

CONNECTIONSPEERSUPPORT.ORG

Peer Support Approaches for Responding to Fear

Many in our community may be feeling extra stress with all of the talk about the Coronavirus outbreak, officially now called COVID-19. As peer supporters, we are in a position to support others around their own fears as well as the general fear in our communities. Encouraging people to discuss their fears is a great practice. Our discussions can provide accurate information, and it can help others find accurate information from appropriate sources. In this way, people can decide what they need to do to in order to minimize their risk of becoming infected, and it also can have their minds put at ease if they realize that they have already taken necessary precautions.

We can respond to fear with compassion and also offer constructive support. Fear can be a lifesaver that protects us from real danger and spurs us toward positive action, but it also has the power to deeply disturb and limit us. Worst of all, fear can erode our trust in ourselves, in the goodness of others, and the joy in living.

Constructive responses to fear include:

1. Put fear into perspective – our perception of fear is often increased by what we see, hear, and read in the media. It is important for us to become knowledgeable consumers of information, and be able to differentiate between accurate news and exaggerated, scary sound bites of skewed information and wrongly-projected statistics. Staying informed and choosing reliable resources, such as the Centers for Disease Control and the World Health Organization will help. Resource link: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/>
2. Media breaks – the key is to stay informed without being overwhelmed by a constant flow of upsetting information. Catch up on the news at a time of day you feel most rested, relaxed, and supported. Watch the news with a supportive friend.
3. Interrupt fear – interrupting fear can limit its power. When we are fearful, we may also feel out of control. Doing usual tasks such as washing dishes, exercising, or talking with friends reminds us that we can be fearful but still make meaningful choices. Each task accomplished lessens fear's grip and restores our confidence and trust that we can cope with life's circumstances.
4. Use all of our senses – when fear takes hold of our thoughts, small concerns can grow large and take over. Awareness of all five senses can help us be in the present moment instead of losing ourselves to the “what-ifs” which can be circling around our brains. Breathing exercises, mindfulness routines, coloring, cooking, and practicing other ways of being in the “here and now” with the help of our senses is helpful.
5. Find your joy – turning to joy does not mean ignoring your own suffering or the suffering in the world. Finding your joy means being willing to remember that connection to others is one of the most important ways of restoring life's meaning. James Baraz sums it up this way in his book, *Awakening Joy*, “Focusing only on the terrible things can lead us to pull back from life and fall into despair. Staying in touch with the well of joy within us enables us to be part of the solution rather than the problem.”

What helpful strategies do you have that help you to calm your fears?

Martha Barbone, Interim Director of Operations
National Association of Peer Supporters, Inc (iNAPS)

www.peersupportworks.org

CONNECTIONS ONLINE AND PHONE GROUPS

Morning check-in: Monday-Friday 10:00AM

Afternoon check-in: Monday-Friday 3:00PM

Check in is a time to gather with your peers, share what is on your mind, the successes and challenges of your day.

Positive Thinking: Wednesdays 12:00PM

The power of positivity can do wondrous work on the mind and body. Join us for readings, music and the creation of our own affirmations, poems, and journal entries.

Anxiety/Depression Group: Tuesdays and Thursdays at 1:00PM

Isolation and uncertainty can bring up difficult feelings. Share what you know about sadness or fear. These feelings can be a vehicle for communication. Is this about your life now or another time, another circumstance? What have you lost? You are not alone.

Please join your meeting 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](tel:+15713173122)

Access Code: 709-997-085

Do you have a suggestion for us? Please let us know!

Call or email: 603-427-6966 or info@connectionspeersupport.org

Please check our website or call us for updates as expand our offerings.

CENTER NEWS AND HAPPENINGS

Wow! That Was Fabulous!



\$7,277.40!

We feel enormous gratitude to The Fabulous Find for selecting Connections Peer Support Center as one of their three February recipients, and thank you so much to all of our members, volunteers, board members, and staff who went the extra mile to make this fundraiser a success.

Every dollar raised will go to support our mission of mental health recovery in our community

That enormous smile on the face of Executive Director Greg Burdwood says it all.

Thank you again!

Meet Bradley, a New Voice on the Warmline

A few of you have already spoken with our newest staff member, but here he is in his own words:

“ Hi I’m Bradley, I’m 25 years old, and graduated from UNH with a degree in Biology in 2017. I was diagnosed with Bipolar 1 in 2018 and after struggling with the mental health system, I found that the best way to ground myself was through giving back to others and connecting to relentless positivity. I believe laughter, good food, and clear communication are the best medicine. In my free time I like to play racquetball, juggle, golf, draw and dabble with guitar a bit. I have a profound appreciation for nature and animals, and I’m a dogfather to my 15-year-old Bichon named Cheenie. I’m very much looking forward to getting to know everyone and grow stronger with you all. “



MEMBER CONTRIBUTIONS



Our Voices: How Betsy Is Staying Connected

Member Betsy checked in with this update about how she is coping with the stress and isolation of social distancing:

"This one (piece of artwork) is most appropriate for what we're going through right now. The toughest thing for me is that I have to rely on everyone, because I have no car. It's hard for me to walk very far. So, I feel especially trapped and alone. I have two friends - one friend who is especially helpful. She has been doing my grocery shopping. The two friends and

I do A.R.T (Art Relaxation Together) Group virtually about every Friday. That's been especially helpful because I can see their faces and we can get silly."

What strategies have you been using to stay well?



COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Agencies/organizations are invited to 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:

Stepping Stones, Claremont, NH. Respite 603-543-1388, Stepping Stone Peer Center: 603-543-1388, Toll Free: 1-888-582-0920, www.stepsingstonenextstep.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, 15 Middle St, Portsmouth: Dinner Daily 5:00 PM Breakfast Mon-Fri 7:00-8:00 AM

Seacoast Community Church, Lafayette Rd Portsmouth
Lunch: Tuesdays 12 to 1 PM

St. John's Church, Chapel St Portsmouth Lunch:
Thursdays from 11 AM to 1 PM

Middle Street Baptist Church, 18 Court ST, Portsmouth:
Wednesdays from 12 to 1 PM

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:
Monday, Thursday, Friday 10 AM – 4 PM

Gather: 210 West Rd, Suite 3, Portsmouth. Monday to Thursday, 9 AM – 5 PM, Friday 9 AM to 1 PM

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.suicidepreventiononlife.org/

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

Granite Pathways, 10 Ferry St, Ste 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 HAPPENINGS

Crisis Text Line

Text HOME to 741741 from anywhere in the United States, anytime, about any type of crisis, to be connected with a counselor.

Ten Percent Happier

<https://www.tenpercent.com/live> At 3:00PM each day releases a new live, five-minute guided meditation.

Fred Hersch Concert

<https://www.facebook.com/fredherschmusic> At 1:00PM daily, legendary jazz pianist, Fred Hersch performs a concert on Facebook Live

Bending Bodhi

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCxlnQozMI_18EkE9DJK2IQ Local yoga studio is putting up new classes each day on their Youtube channel.

The Science of Well Being

<https://www.coursera.org/learn/the-science-of-well-being> This Coursera course from Yale professor Laurie Santos has been tearing up the internet of late. It's all about increasing happiness and building more productive habits.



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.**