

Help from the Heart *Mental Health First Aid*

1. Your best friend was a victim of physical assault some years ago and has since been diagnosed with an anxiety disorder. You are with her when she suddenly breaks into a sweat, doubles over as if in pain and starts to hyperventilate.
2. Your teenage son seems to be anxious, suspicious and irritable most of the time. He has the most bizarre plans for the future and he is acting as if he has not slept for a week.
3. Your best friend has used marijuana regularly since you were both in high school and she also drinks occasionally. Lately she has become confused and anxious. In fact, it is hard to make sense of what she says and she seems to have undergone a complete personality change.
4. You are at work when your ex-boyfriend calls. He sounds really depressed and he says he wants to kill himself.
5. A fellow employee seems to have recently lost all pride in his appearance and enthusiasm for life. His speech is sluggish at times, he states he "just feels sad all the time," and tells you he has given away his favorite CDs and computer games.

Do you know how to help? If your answer was no to one of these scenarios, Mental Health First Aid can provide you with the answers.

-Reprinted from Comprehensive Mental Health Services.
http://thecmhs.com/Mental_Health_First_Aid.html

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Mental Health First Aid

Courses are now available to train people to help others who are experiencing a mental health problem or crisis. The goals of physical First Aid and Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) are similar but with a twist related to mental health. The aims of MHFA are to:

- Preserve life where a person may be a danger to themselves or others.
- Provide help to prevent the mental health problem from becoming more serious.
- Promote the recovery of good mental health.
- Provide comfort to a person experiencing a mental health problem.

A Mental Health Aid responder learns the five basic actions of MHFA:

1. Assess the risk of suicide and/or harm while ensuring their own personal safety and deciding how best to help.
2. Listen non-judgmentally to ensure the person talking can do so freely without feeling judged.
3. Give reassurance and information to the person, helping them realize they have a real medical condition that can be treated. They should be encouraged to go for help.
4. Encourage the person to get appropriate professional help.
5. Encourage other supports such as self-help strategies or by reaching out to family, friends and other available people.

During the twelve hour MHFA course, a detailed overview of psychiatric problems is given so that participants become acquainted with the symptoms of the various illnesses and disorders. Nancy Hurren, MHFA instructor and a staff member at the Canadian Mental Health Association Kings Branch, comments that, "The whole course is about understanding and about making people more confident to approach someone who is having problem."

Mental Health First Aid Canada is a program of the Mental Health Commission of Canada, and is now offered through CMHA-Kings.

For more information go to www.kingsns.cmha.ca or www.mentalhealthcommission.ca.

By Heather Frenette



Strengthening Families Together: Group Therapy for Families



This summer in a room in the Soldiers Memorial Hospital in Middleton, a small group of people gather to support each other. Each person has a close connection to someone who is living with mental illness.

The group is led by two facilitators and the program, **Strengthening Families Together**, at the centre of the sessions has been developed by the Schizophrenia Society of Canada. The nine session program is ambitious, featuring guest speakers including a psychiatrist, who will talk on facts about psychosis. Other topics include causes of psychosis and its treatment, coping as a family, self-care, communication, living with someone with psychosis: handling crisis situations, recovery journey and understanding the mental health system.

The atmosphere in the room is one of respect and of hope. Family members share their experiences and learn they are not alone. "**Strengthening Families Together** is about more than education; it is about strengthening family members and friends of individuals who have experienced psychosis by providing support, awareness, and tools" (Workbook, p. 1).

Another ten session **Strengthening Families Together** group is scheduled to begin September 18th in the Kentville area. To register, call Pat (678-8458) of Penni (678-1229) or email pat Harold@eastlink.ca.

By Heather Frenette

Reference:
Strengthening Families Together workbook.
Strengthening Families Together.
<http://www.schizophrenia.ca/strength.php>

The Benefits of Group Therapy

Attending group therapy sessions is a good way to receive psychotherapy treatment. Usually there is one therapist and several consumers participating in the group. People can benefit from what the therapist offers but more so from their peers involved with the group.

Many benefits are gained from group therapy sessions:

1. The Instillation of Hope – People in the group are at different stages in their recovery. People who are in early recovery can benefit from observing how others cope and recover, which in turn produces hope.
2. Universality – People with a common problem realize they are not alone, there are others going through the same thing.
3. Imparting Information – In a group setting people can share their experience, strength, and hope with each other.
4. Interpersonal Learning – Through interaction with others, people can better understand themselves.
5. Existential Factors – Besides support and guidance, people realize that they have to take full responsibility for their “own lives, actions, and choices.”

Overall, group therapy greatly influences one’s recovery. It is part of an integrated treatment regime which includes group therapy, medication, and one-on-one treatment from a psychiatrist, psychologist, or other mental health professional. If group therapy is combined with other treatments, a person stands a better chance to achieve recovery.

By Tony Legere

References:

Michael Herkov, PHD. “About Group Therapy.” [PsychCentral](http://psychcentral.com/lib/2006/about-group-therapy/). 18 August 2012.

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Kendra Cherry. “What Is Group Therapy?” [About.com Psychology](http://psychology.about.com/od/psychotherapy/f/group-therapy.htm). 18 August 2012.

<<http://psychology.about.com/od/psychotherapy/f/group-therapy.htm>>



Mental Health Notes

Probiotics and Stress Relief

Acadia University researcher, Zoe Hunter, is looking for a connection between probiotics (bacteria that are beneficial to human health) and stress. She is working with people with symptoms of anxiety and depression to see if there is a link. Her thesis is that probiotics actually alter the stress receptors in the body.

Hunter needs a hundred participants for her research. Volunteers, who must be over the age of 18 years, should contact her at

<http://fluidsurveys.com/s/probioticstudy/ef>.

-The Advertiser, August 21, 2012



Mental Illness in Rural Nova Scotia

An Acadia University student is writing her thesis on the everyday lives and experiences of rural Nova Scotians who have been diagnosed with a mental illness. Caroline Trudel would like to interview people who have been diagnosed with a mental illness. The interviews will take place at the CMHA offices in Coldbrook. If you are interested in taking part, please email Caroline at 092896t@acadiau.ca.

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Healthy Eating On \$200 a Month and Less

Many people find it hard to eat a healthy diet. Of all the foods in the supermarket, healthy whole foods such as apples, cheese and bread have seen big increases in price. People will often turn to “cheaper” convenience foods and fast food. This may lead to health problems that are even more expensive to treat. It may require more planning but healthy eating is possible. Here are a few tips that work for me:

- Buy only what you need. Check your fridge and freezer once a week to see what you need and make a list. Plan your meals so that the most perishable foods are eaten first and then focus on the others. When you do this, you often find that you don't need much the next time you shop.
- Buy seasonal. Local fruits and vegetables are cheapest when in season. Plus they taste better, are more nutritious and last longer than imported foods. Go to a farmers market or look for trucks or cars selling produce by the roadside. Buy what you absolutely need.
- Buy from bulk bins. Try to get things like grains, pasta, herbs, spices and other pantry essentials in bulk. It's cheaper especially if you only want little. Take advantages of good deals and weigh items so you don't pay for more than you want.
- Choose canned and frozen foods wisely. Some can be highly nutritious but read the back to see about overall value. Most canned and frozen whole foods should have five ingredients or less. Always check the expiry date on canned foods so you know how long you can store them until needed.
- Make most of your meals yourself. This is the only way to ensure proper nutrition. Avoid take out or fast food as much as possible. Good inexpensive meal ideas are soups, stews, chilies and casseroles. Add lots of vegetables and grains and you'll have a very nutritious meal.
- Cut back on meat and dairy. If you eat mostly vegetables and grains, you don't need to eat these foods. You can find soy milk fortified with Vitamin B12 (the only vitamin whose source is meat). Fresh fish like pollock and tilapia and canned fish in water are also cheap sources of protein. Eggs are an inexpensive source of vitamins, protein and iron. You can buy milk at a better price at some drugstores, gas stations and meat outlets if needed.
- Drink water. It's the cheapest drink available and better than pop or juice. Plus it will help you to digest those nutritious foods that you're eating. Many natural foods contain water so as long as you drink a few glasses a day, you should be all right.
- If you want more help, talk to your doctor. Your doctor may check to see if you need supplementation or may refer you to a dietitian who can help you make a healthy meal plan suited to your budget.

For more info on local go to www.wolfvillefarmersmarket.ca and www.kentvillefarmersmarket.ca.
or more info on nutrition and how to make a healthy meal plan, go to www.dietitians.ca.

By Melinda Cadarette

A Mental Health Perspective Mission Statement:

The purpose of this newsletter is to bring faith, hope and courage to members of the local mental health community of Kings County, Nova Scotia, as well as others who are involved with a mental, emotional or psychological condition.

Donations to support this newsletter and other important programs and services can be made to
CMHA, 11 Opportunity Lane Suite 3 Box 10 Coldbrook NS B4R 0A5
(Cheque or money order will be accepted).

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Editor: Heather Frenette Writers: Tony Legere and Melinda Cadarette

Printing and Distribution: Laurel Taylor, James Taylor, Nancy Mailman and Heather Frenette

We also thank Brenda Main, Michelle Ferdinand, and Laurel Taylor for their help.