



**Special Issue on Spirituality** The Mysteries of Spirituality and 'Madness': What it means to be a White Witch: Why do we need to love?: Discovering your spiritual

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All the members of the news group have used mental health services or care for someone who has. The group welcomes articles and/or letters. The deadline for the summer edition is 21 September. If possible, please send articles on CD/floppy disk, or by email. The views expressed herein are not necessarily those of the News group.

## Mental Health and Spirituality

For some people 'spirituality' will seem a strange subject for an edition of Speak Up Somerset as the topic has all but disappeared from psychiatry and from 'mainstream' psychology too. It seems so long ago that Jung was developing his work with people who had symptoms of mental illness and was concluding that human beings must be seen as a whole almost from the moment of birth and that illness is what results from the conflict between different parts of the personality which have developed unequally. He also proposed that the soul is at the heart of our capacity for wellness.

Although transpersonal psychology has burgeoned and flourished in the general consciousness of our culture, it has remained firmly on the outside of conventional approaches to mental health provision, treatments and structures, though there have always been individuals who have worked away quietly, and often in isolation, to bring another dimension of understanding to the work on the wards and in the community.

In the light this, the Somerset Spirituality Project seems like a beacon of hope to some of us using the mental health services. Under the guidance of John Foskett, there have been conferences at Mere and at Long Sutton, and recently a two-day retreat at Acacia House in Yeovil. We have two paid mental health chaplains and there have been special interest groups in different parts of the county. "Taken Seriously", the report of research carried out by service users in Somerset, which was supported by the Somerset Partnership and the Mental Health Foundation, has been taken very seriously indeed and has led to interest being expressed in many parts of the country. (As reported in our News pages, there is now international recognition for this work since the publication of research papers in *Mental Health, Religion & Culture* in March of this year). Additionally, there have been recent conferences in London, Dorset and at Hawkwood College in Stroud and representatives of Mind and Soul in Somerset

workshop leaders or participants at these events. Meaningfully embedding the values and insights of a spirit-based perspective into everyday mental health practice (for those to whom it is important) still remains the greatest challenge.

This edition, then, has sought to express the experiences, thoughts and feelings of those for whom spirituality, however it has been individually defined, has played an important part. There are articles from a spectrum of viewpoints, and some detailing the disappointments of needs not met and hopes let down. Some people reading these accounts may find themselves, whilst not agreeing with the beliefs themselves, yet able to recognise that, for the writers, they are what have been left to hold on to when everything else, including sanity itself, has been taken away.

Our thanks and appreciation, therefore, are due to all of the contributors for sharing themselves so honestly and movingly in this edition.

## Transformation

### Next issue of Speak Up Somerset News

We welcome articles, poems, stories etc. on the theme of TRANSFORMATION.

Please send in your contributions on new ways of looking at life, overcoming personal difficulties by transforming your lifestyle etc, and outlining those special factors or turning point which helped you to change and improve the quality of your life in a major fashion.

Please email your contributions to [speakupsomerset@talk21.com](mailto:speakupsomerset@talk21.com) or post them, by 15th September, to us at Speak Up Somerset, PO Box 3484, Yeovil BA21 5ZH For any queries, please telephone Maureen Street on 01935 850979

**Enter a photo or poem** in the Somerset art of recovery competition. The closing date is 1 September 2004. For more details please contact Jade West or Diane Brodie on 01935 474875/410138.

**Come along to the Art of recovery** conference on Friday 8th October 2004 at the Brewhouse Theatre in Taunton. This is an life enhancing event to celebrate the creativity of those affected by mental distress and to help us all find ways of promoting good mental health. Whether by art, poetry, music, sport, exercise, friends, family, faith or by using different therapies. For a booking form please contact Diane Brodie on 01935 410138.

## the art of recovery



### Have you been given a diagnosis of Personality Disorder?

If so would you like to share your experiences?

South Somerset Mind are doing some research on Personality Disorders in order to develop training materials and a video to help others understand this diagnosis and how it affects people

We are keen to chat with Service Users who have been given this diagnosis. If you are interested please call Diane on 01935 410138 for more information.

### Experience into Action Training Course

#### Training Mental Health Service Users and Carers to be Trainers

Would you like the opportunity to use your experiences of mental health in a positive way, gain confidence, have opportunity for support and develop skills in training that may lead to opportunities of work?

South Somerset Mind will be running a free 10 week accredited course, through NCFE, in September that is open to people who have used mental health services or been an informal carer.

If this is something you might like to consider call Diane on 01935 410138 for more information

### Job Opportunity

South Somerset Mind's training department is looking for a service user/survivor to work as a trainer offering training on topics related to mental health.

1.5 days per week @ £8.00 per hour.

For more details please contact Peter Hill, South Somerset Mind, The Markwick Centre, Dampier Street, Yeovil BA21 4EN. 01935 474875

**DEFINITIONS OF SPIRITUALITY** by  
*Fay Wilson-Rudd*

Spirituality is something of a buzzword – but what does it mean?

In his autobiography David Beckham indicates that he is spiritual but not religious. The star Shirley Mclean has said ‘Your religions teach religion, not spirituality’.

The Education Reform Act of 1988 as amended in 1996 states: This Act governs all state education in Britain, and begins with the words stating the aim of education as: ... a broadly based curriculum which promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of society.”

Just before Christmas the Department of Health published guidance for managers and those involved in the provision of chaplaincy-spiritual care to meet the Religious and Spiritual needs of Patients and Staff.

Not too much is offered by way of a definition of spiritual except to say that all human beings are spiritual beings who have spiritual needs at different times of their lives.

“Although spiritual care is not necessarily religious care, religious care, at its best, should always be spiritual “(a quote from Hospice and Palliative Care Chaplains writing in 2003).

**BACK TO THE DICTIONARY!**

Spirit – the force within a person that is, or provides, the will to live – spiritual – that which relates to the spirit or soul rather than to the body or to physical things.

Jung, the famous psychoanalyst described Christian spirituality like this

“To imitate Christ means to live out our own destiny as authentically and whole heartedly as he lived his.

Within the Christian tradition there are many different spiritualities – for instance some people follow the Ignatian path, others find Celtic spirituality helpful, within all the major faith traditions there are different branches of spirituality – we have

there are two different forms of Islam.

Prayer and meditation are part of spirituality – it has been said that prayer is being aware of God’s presence: seeing the world and ourselves through God’s eyes: Prayer is a journey inwards since that is where God is. Prayer is to unmask what is unreal in our lives.

How then do I as a Chaplain work on the various units and what else am I involved with that might impact on service users seeking to develop their spiritual awareness in their own community?

**Chaplaincy on the Units:**

A weekly act of worship is held for elderly inpatients – this may be a Communion Service, Morning Prayer, Songs of Praise or a discussion ‘topped and tailed’ with appropriate hymns and prayers. On the acute units, especially where users are being encouraged to re-engage with the wider community, the Chaplain can accompany people to Church. Alternatively acts of Worship can take place on a Unit. The Chaplain is also able to offer

Communion to any who wish to receive it and arrangements are in place for people to receive a visit from the leaders of their own faith community. Many one-to-one conversations also take place.

**What else?**

I am a member of the General Synod of the Church of England (a bit like Parliament as each Diocese elects an agreed number of members and we are there to reflect the views of churchgoers in our area [the Diocese of Bath & Wells covers all of Somerset as well as the Unitary Authorities of Bath & North East Somerset and North Somerset]). At our meeting in February 2003 we discussed many issues relating to Mental Health including the care of prisoners. The result is that the Church of England has been working with the charity MENTALITY to produce discussion material to help churchgoers and others develop an understanding of mental health issues. Excitingly this Diocese has been asked to pilot the material during June and July and to report back – the hope is that the finished material will be available later this year.



## SOMERSET PARTNERSHIP TRUST HELPS FUND SELF-MANAGEMENT TRAINING COURSE

Members of the Yeovil Manic Depression Self Help Group have recently taken part on a Self-Management training course run by the Manic Depression Fellowship (MDF). Nationally the course has a waiting list of over six hundred people, caused by a severe shortage of funding, so members of the Yeovil group were delighted that the Somerset Partnership Trust was able to provide funding.

There were twelve participants on the course, which was held in Yeovil and was run over three days. Eight members were from the Yeovil group and four from Taunton and London. The two facilitators themselves had the diagnosis and had previously attended a course. Although the Yeovil members knew each other, there was an air of apprehension on the first day. Ground rules were established: openness, honesty and confidentiality were needed, as some of the issues to be dealt with would be sensitive and possibly distressing.

The main aims of the course were outlined: to put the sufferer back in charge of their illness and to have greater control over the quality of their life. After the course, many have reported an improved confidence in dealing with the condition. The individual can be affected in many ways, mostly negative but the positive impacts were emphasised.

Recognition is vital to learning when an episode of mania or depression may be approaching. The exercise of drawing a life chart enabled individuals to look at past events and relate those events to episodes. The ability to identify triggers and recognise warning signs was highlighted, as it is a skill essential for successful self-management.

The concept of a mood diary was introduced. This enables an individual to monitor their mood on a daily basis using a simple one to ten scale. A 'traffic light' analogy using green for equilibrium, amber for warning and red for crisis gives visu-

the green but to be able to take action when needed. Thought was given to coping strategies, self-medication and support networks in developing an individual action plan.

The pro-active nature of the course was reinforced when looking at maintenance. Individuals examined aspects of their lifestyles that would support and maintain good mental health. Avoiding specific stresses or adopting complementary therapies was amongst options considered. In the event of a relapse, forward planning can help the individual. The value and practicalities of writing an advanced agreement was discussed. The document is drawn up when the person is well and it clearly states their wishes.

The most bizarre part of the course was writing a letter to oneself. In this, the participant stated what he or she hoped to do and achieve following on from the course. No doubt having forgotten about it, the letter would serve as a useful reminder when delivered some months later.

At the end of the course, there was clearly a coming together of the participants, a feeling of friendship and a strong sense of mutual support. This will only strengthen the cause of the Yeovil group as it continues to grow. The value of the course was demonstrated at a recent group meeting. One of those who had

taken part said that the insight gained had almost certainly prevented her from being hospitalised during an episode. Surely this is evidence enough that self-management can help those affected by manic depression but where is the funding for the courses?

To that end, the participants are grateful to the following people who made the course possible:

- Dörte Lucas, a mental health nurse at Cedar Lodge in Yeovil and the driving force behind the Yeovil group, who organised the course and coordinated the funding.
- Chris Chambers, a social worker at Holly Court in Yeovil, who kindly donated some of his 'Health and Social Care Award'.
- Phil Cracknell, chairman of the Taunton MDF group, who secured money from the 'Users and Carers Evaluation and Monitoring Group'.
- Pauline Murphy, a manager at Holly Court, who obtained money from the Somerset Partnership Trust.
- James Pallet, hospital representative for Sanofi-Synthelabo, for a donation.

For further information about the group, please telephone 01460 73932 (evenings).

*Peter Potten*



## The One and The Many- Pathways Into Inner Stillness

### From Earliest Times

From earliest childhood I was curious about life's meaning and purpose, of the possibility of a divine reality permeating through every strata of existence, giving reason and meaning and purpose to all things. In particular, to find out whom I was and why I was here.

### Encountering the Presence of God

My first experience of "the stillness" or "presence" of God, was as a child of seven during the long prayers in a "C of E" Evensong service - a delightful sense of Being beyond words, but more powerfully attractive than all of the hymns, prayers, psalms, responses, sermon etc., though I didn't know why. Life then unfolded as a series of experiences leading to an understanding of how that inner silent presence of stillness, unspeakable joy and latent creativity might be encouraged to gradually unfold.

### Our True Nature Is Spirit

Commonly, thoughts overshadow inner Self- awareness, so that our real nature is lost in ego- identification or separateness from our true Being, which is limitless, as the source of all existence. For this reason, for many on the spiritual path, God, or the ultimate reality, is often seen as something entirely separate from and external to themselves, to be worshipped from afar. The words of Jesus the Christ: "God is spirit and must be worshipped in spirit and in truth", "the Kingdom of God is within you", and, "I and the Father are One", point us to a possible solution to this paradox, which is a somewhat radical one (and of course, Jesus was the ultimate radical!), and hinted at in my poem, "Image of God":

*He is the very centre of our Being  
But He remains hidden if we do not  
seek Him there*

*He is both immanent and transcendent  
Limited by our feeble attempts to  
encompass Him with mere words.*

The, "immanent", of course is the world of form and phenomena, including the great masters and higher beings that have illuminated us, and the personal God, in whatever form "He" or "She" may take.

### The Radical Solution

unfold, was that if we really want to know God, we simply have to find ways to stop thinking, obeying the Psalmic injunction: "Be still and know that I am God", in order to experience our real nature, *transcendence*, in other words, spirit, which can only be known through surrender. The entirety of the Muslim faith can be summarised in the word, "Islam", which means **surrender** (to Allah / God). The ultimate aim of Yoga (union), is defined by Patanjali as, "control of thought waves within the mind", leading to Samadhi, oneness with spirit.(see "How to know God, the Yoga Aphorisms of Patanjali", by Christopher Isherwood .)

### Mysticism- Direct Perception of Reality

There is a set of beautifully illustrated books by Timothy Freke called "The Wisdom of the.....Christian Mystics" ..... "Zen Masters" ..... "Hindu Gurus" ..... "Sufi Sages"..... "Tibetan Lamas", etc which all echo the same essential oneness in which we live and move and have our Being: "*Brahman is the Self (transcendental God) hidden in everyone. Meditation leads them deeper into consciousness.....and beyond thoughts to the wisdom of the Self*", (*Katha Upanishad*)

### The Path of Devotion (Surrender)

The "way of the heart", followed on one level or another by all religions, is the pathway of loving surrender, which also leads to transcendence. In Christian charismatic worship, which I find attractive, in surrendering to the power and presence of the Holy Spirit and the "Christ Presence", a deep and blissful stillness can overcome one, to the point where the body can become inert with few thoughts, and speech impossible. This can be kept alive through personal prayers and devotions and meditation etc. In Quaker Worship it is from a deep silence that ministry emerges. Quakers look "for that of God", in each other and the world at large. The Sufi poet and mystic, Rumi defines the spiritual quest thus: "*The intellect and the senses investigate cause and effect, the spiritual seeker surrenders to wonder.*"

### The Power of Being Present

*"Through allowing the "isness" of all things, a deeper dimension reveals itself to you as an abiding presence,*

*uncaused joy beyond good and bad. This is the joy of Being, the peace of God."* (From "The Power of Now", by Eckhart Tolle). Tolle offers countless ways of cultivating "presence" in order to "live in the moment", live in "the Now."(Internet website [www.eckhart-tolle.com/](http://www.eckhart-tolle.com/) )

### Illness and Re- Awakening

My spiritual journey has been clouded by long periods of illness: 12 years of ME/Fibromyalgia, a major psychosis, following a routine hip operation caused by sleep loss and more recently, the ME etc has flared up again causing severe loss of brain function and acute depression for months at a time. Many others have had similar difficulties or worse, but their inner spirit leads them on. Like the Sunflower seed, "you have to die to be reborn."(From an earlier poem of mine symbolising the death of the ego and the awakening to **Self-awareness**, "in order to come forth into light," like a seed in metamorphosis.) The content of various practices and worship then, becomes relatively unimportant, as we have to go beyond all beliefs and concepts to know ourselves as spirit. Buddha, the "awakened one" promised an end to all suffering to those who were willing to become more "awake".

### The Purpose of Life Is the Expansion of Happiness

Forty years ago, I heard Maharishi, the founder of the TM movement, say on television: "The purpose of life is the expansion of happiness, man only suffers through ignorance of his own nature which is, "Sat-Chit-Ananda" (pure energy, intelligence, bliss) The solution to this dilemma, he said was to go to the "source of thought" (experience transcendence) on a systematic basis: meditation, then gradually, the fullness of Being, or **Self-Awareness** is experienced at the same time as activity: "200% of life". I am now studying and practising healing therapy, and also have creative interests and find time for cycling, gardening, swimming etc as well as practising daily meditation and other disciplines in order to find a little balance and stability on the way.

### The Truth Is Not Out There!

The truth is not out there, it is within us! In the words of the Quakers: we have to **Let go and let God**.

### The Ultimate Pay – Off

in an individual means gradually awakening to inner joy, peace of mind and contentment, a more loving, caring disposition, more energy and creativity; becoming what Abraham Maslow, the distinguished psychologist described as "self actualised." It is what every human being would wish to aspire to. But of course, much more than this, in its fullness: **enlightenment.**

### **Finding Our Way Home**

Creativity, of course: art, music, poetry, drama etc is in itself another pathway into inner stillness. Healing, relaxation, the martial arts and other disciplines too. Spirituality exists in many different shapes and forms. W.B. Yeats defined Art as that which creates a sense of **stasis**, (stillness) in the observer, (and of course the creator). There are many pathways, and we learn from our experiences on which ever ones we tread. The journey for every one is different and difficult, but the truth is "one", resting in and behind "the many":

*Does a wave know separateness  
from the ocean as it subsides?  
Or that it always was and ever will  
be an expression of the One Reality:  
"I am the Dancer and the Dance, Oh  
Ocean of Spirit, I Am He!"*

(From, "The One and the Many", N. Webley )

Our journey is one towards Self-remembrance and a road along which we all have to travel, albeit along the path we have chosen, and at our own pace. All blessings on your journey.

**Norman Webley**



1. I am a tenant at Keward House and I do believe there is a place for spirituality in mental health care therefore I don't believe it is a private matter not to be discussed at stressful times.
2. When at Phoenix House, I met a minister who suggested that I could receive healing at her Church about four years ago and I've continued to attend these sessions and it has made a big difference.
3. When I was taken advantage of and felt few people believed me.
4. Yes recently since I've been to Keward House my life has changed.
5. I like Taize chants, Gospel songs, and I like religious videos.

When in Milan in Rome I saw the original of 'The Last Supper' which greatly impressed me. When I had my first breakdown I was encouraged to draw out my moods (hence my picture above and the poem below which I love).

### **Sheelagh**

#### ***When I became a Christian by Adrian Plass***

When I became a Christian I said now fill me in - tell me what I'll suffer in this world of shame and sin. He said your body may be killed and left to rot and stink, do you still want to follow me?

I said Amen, I think.

But Lord there must be other ways to follow you I said? I really would prefer to end up dying in my bed.

and scorn and spit, do you still want to follow me?  
I said Amen a bit.

Well I sat back and thought a while and tried a different ploy. Now then Lord I said Christians live in joy. Yes that's truth he said and you'll see the joy to bear the pain and sorrow, so do you want to follow me? I said Amen, tomorrow. He said, look I'm not asking you to spend an hour with me, a quick salvation sandwich and cup of tea of sanctity. The cost is you, not half of you but every single bit, now tell me will you follow me.

I said Amen, no I quit.

I said I'm very sorry Lord I'd like to follow you but I don't think religion is a manly thing to do. He said forget religion then and think about my son and you tell me if you're man enough to do what he has done. Are you man enough to see to the need and man enough to go, are you man enough to care for those who no-one wants to know? Are you man enough to say the things that people hate to hear and battle through in loneliness and fear. And listen - are you man enough to stand it at the end? Are you man enough to hold your tongue just like a trusting friend? Are you man enough to follow me I ask you once again. I said Oh Lord I'm frightened and I also said Amen, Amen, Amen, Amen, Amen. I said, I'm so frightened But I also said - Amen.

*(One of my favourites)*

## **Divine Madness: Spirituality and Psychosis by John Foskett**

*Religious mysticism is only one half of mysticism. The other half has no accumulated traditions except that which the text-books of insanity supply. Open one of these and you will find abundant cases in which 'mystical ideas' are cited as characteristic symptoms of deluded states of mind...It is evident from the point of view of their psychological mechanism, the classic mysticisms and these lower mysticisms spring from the same mental level....seraph and snake abide there side by side. (James 1902:426).*

### **Spirituality and childhood**

In tracing the roots of our own spirituality it is useful to try and remember what moved and effected us as a child. The author Monica Furlong writes of an experience of being a rose.

*I could remember in very early childhood, feeling what I can only describe as a 'relationship' with a rose. I stood and gazed at it, moved in and out of it, felt that I was it, and was filled with wonder which would have been remarkable if I had been old enough to know that this was not a common feeling. But perhaps at two or three year old it is a common feeling. The rose was sacred (1997).*

Some of us may have similar and very positive experiences from our childhood and at the same time

recognise that it was not easy to share those experiences with others because like Monica Furlong we were not really aware of their significance or we feared being laughed at. When plans were being laid to introduce spirituality into the national curriculum for education some research was done to find out about children's spirituality.

*Once we started our research it became apparent that spirituality was massively present in the lives of children. At the same time, however, it is hidden, because of a culturally constructed forgetfulness which allows us to ignore the obvious. (Hay & Nye 1998:vi)*

*Some children admitted that they were afraid of being laughed at or thought stupid or even mad. (Hay & Nye p.105).*

The children interviewed were 6 and 10 year olds, who had never dared to speak about their spirituality before the invitation which the research afforded them. So I wonder if all of us have suffered this kind of 'spiritual abuse' or oppression in some way in our childhoods. This in turn has affected us through out our lives making it harder for us to be naturally and freely spiritual, except very privately and with people who we trust. Or has led us to adapt our spirituality to fit what others find acceptable in our religious or faith group. For some their experience of 'madness' has unlocked their spiritu-

ality in frightening and exciting ways.

### **The mysteries of spirituality and 'madness'**

William James, as the first quotation makes clear, identified a strong similarity between religious and psychotic experience. To him it was a mystery inviting exploration. If the mystery can be imagined as in a cloud on a mountain top, the ways to exploring and understanding it can be thought of as different paths from the bottom of the mountain towards the top. Paths of – medicine, psychology, sociology, politics, religion and spirituality. Currently people on any one of these paths can and do ignore the others, claiming theirs' to be the best or only way to the top. In the last few years the 'spiritual' path has been more regularly trodden and James's question more thoroughly explored.

*I suppose I found a lot inside myself that I didn't know existed....But I am very happy with what I found inside...OK it's not perfect, but it'll do for me. I can stop trying to achieve perfection, it's impossible, I'm a human being. (MHF 2002).*

*The psychosis was to bring back those memories into consciousness and at last things made sense....chronic depression made sense.....There were so many things that offered me a way forward....I am happier, more content and more alive than I can remember being...and of course having been*



through it gives you a kind of strength. (MHF 2002)

So are these experiences the same? Do they as James suggests have the same source or root? A

clinical psychologist Michael Jackson recently completed some research at the Alister Hardy Centre in Oxford. He examined the experience of people whose mystical and psychotic experiences had much in common.

Half had been treated for mental illness (pathological group) and half had not (benign group) although all exhibited first rank symptoms of psychosis. The similarities and differences were as follows:

**Benign group**

Less early family trauma  
Mystical experiences affirmed  
Celebrated and encouraged  
Grandiose humanitarian plans

**Pathological group**

More early family trauma  
Mystical experiences rejected  
Pathologised and demonised  
More realistic humanitarian plans

**Examples**

Sara (44) at 35 she left her marketing career  
Percy (48) is an artist who had because she had a call from Jesus to work for Him, literally hearing his voice in her car. She believed she was given special psychic powers to do God's work and a strong sense of the synchronicity of events. Her vicar endorsed her beliefs and she is now a counsellor and spiritual director. She stills hears the voice.

Percy (48) is an artist who has his first psychotic experience in his 20s. He believed he was divinely ordained for a prophetic mission. He tried to pluck his eye out to atone for his sins. He was treated with insulin, ECT and neuroleptics. He has been stable for four years following a profound spiritual experience of forgiveness. He has a steady relationship and some success as an artist.

Jackson found these similarities and distinctions in spiritual and psychotic experience (2001:170).

	<b>Similarities</b>	<b>Distinctions</b> <b>Spiritual/psychotic experience</b>
<b>Content:</b>	Religious or paranormal	Sub-culturally based and accepted/ <i>idiosyncratic, bizarre, alienating</i>
	Belief in personal mission, divine calling	Humility, recognise personal fallibility/ <i>grandiosity, sense of infallibility</i>
	Being guided by higher power	In control/ <i>no control</i>
	Experience of a separate presence	Benign, recognised presence/ <i>malignant presence</i>
	Intense emotional experience	<i>Positive emotion/negative emotion</i>
<b>Form:</b>	Hallucinations - voices and visions	<i>Pseudo/true hallucinations</i> <i>Visual/auditory hallucinations</i> Mood coherent, friendly/ <i>chaotic, critical, first rank hallucinations</i>
	Delusions/ revelations	Comprehensible/ <i>bizarre beliefs</i> Presence/ <i>absence of 'insight'</i>
<b>Process:</b>	Duration Creative problem-solving process	Transient/ <i>extended in time</i> Spiritual fruits (humility, altruism, creativity)/ <i>illness, inability to function, self-centredness</i>

## The story of Anton Boisen

In his forties this man, a social-scientist, began to have strong religious feelings and concerns about the moral state of the USA where he lived.

*There came flashing into my mind, as though from a source without myself, that this little planet of ours was about to undergo a metamorphosis. It was a seed or egg in the process of germinating. We were starting to grow, and we had begun to draw upon our natural resources to such an extent that they were likely to be exhausted. I became absorbed in the task, so much so that I lay awake at night and the ideas took shape of their own. First of all came the thought that I give up the hope which meant everything to me. Following this there came upon me a terrifying idea of a coming world catastrophe. I myself was more important than I had ever dreamed of being; I was a zero quantity. Strange and mysterious forces of evil were revealed to me. I was terrified beyond measure and in my terror I talked.*

*I soon found myself in a psychiatric hospital. There followed three weeks of violent delirium. I was diagnosed as having schizophrenia, and my family were told that there was no hope of recovery. When I did recover I had difficulty convincing them that I was well enough to leave. I was interested in what had happened to me and what I observed in other patients. I arrived at the conclusion that what happened to all of us was the same. Our inner worlds had come crashing down. In a flash I knew that if inner conflicts, like that of St Paul and George Fox, can have happy solutions, there must be unhappy ones which the church ignores...Most patients would be in hospital for spiritual problems.*

Anton Boisen was soon ordained as a minister and worked as a psychiatric hospital chaplain from 1928-1959. He had recurrences of his 'illness/spiritual crisis' through out his life and was hospitalised. But he also taught generations of clergy in USA about mental health and spirituality.

*ences of the mentally ill, the more I am convinced that in so far as we attain to any true understanding of them, so far shall we be able to see the meaning and end of human life, both individual and collective. And in so far as we attain to such an understanding we should be well on the way toward building the city of brotherhood and co-operation on the place where the jungle now stands and greed and ruthless competition rule.*

## Somerset spirituality project

In the report Taken seriously (MHF 2002) and Macmin & Foskett (2004) there are sections on psychosis and spirituality, which confirm the evidence above as relevant to people in Somerset.

*The report's recommendations (p. 52) on spirituality and psychosis were to:*

Respond sensitively to people in a state of heightened awareness – be open minded and gentle.

Recognise that crisis and breakdown can be an opportunity for breakthrough.

Be aware that shifts in consciousness can be spiritual and religious and not just pathological.

Support people in working through and integrating their experience.

Recognise the value of people's creativity expressed in music, art, poetry, story telling etc.

## Useful resources

Boisen, A. (1952) Explorations of the inner world, New York: Harper Torch

Clarke, I (ed) (2001) Psychosis and spirituality, London: Whurr.

Copsey, N.. (2001) Forward in faith, London: Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health. The record of a multi-faith spiritual care service in a London NHS Trust.

Furlong, M. (1997) The flight of the Kingfisher, London: Harper/Collins.

Hay, D. & Nye, R. (1998) The spirit of the child, London: Fount.

Jackson, M. (2001) 'Psychosis and spirituality: a case study comparison' in Clarke, I above pp 165-190.

James, W. (1902) Varieties of religious experience, New York: Longmans.

Macmin, L. & Foskett, J. (2004) 'Don't be afraid to tell,' Mental health, religion & culture, 7:1: 23-40.

Mental Health Foundation (1999)

The courage to bare our souls, London: MHF

Mental Health Foundation (2002)

Taken seriously: the Somerset spirituality project, London: MHF.

The Bishop John Robinson Fellowship Newsletter on Mental Health and Religion. Maudsley SE5 8AX

Mental Health, Religion and Culture Journal, see Macmin & Foskett above.

The Association for pastoral and spiritual care and counselling. BACP Rugby CV21 2SG

The Association for pastoral care in mental health. St Marylebone Parish Church NW1 5LT

*John Foskett, Victoria Cottage, 8, Cornwall Road, Dorchester, DT1 1RT Email: jfoskett@btinternet.com*



**“WHERE’S THE WISDOM IN THIS?”**  
by Williamson Timothy

Where’s the wisdom in this?” asked one of my friends after being in a mental hospital for a year. She’s no better now than when she went in. There are many delusions, but where is the wisdom, spirit or God? Some people think they hear the voices of living or dead pop singers or other stars: is this clairvoyance or just an ego problem? Others think that their lives are threatened or that they are being shadowed by M15. Some of these delusions sound absolutely absurd - I personally have thought that the CIA had a telepathic boosting machine and were listening in to my thoughts. (I think whilst telepathy is theoretically possible one definitely has to avoid using the ego which is the psychiatric term for ‘pride’ and also, if one is to send messages it should be done in the form of a telegram with “End of message. Stop.” This is my advice but I digress). Where is the wisdom? What is wisdom? It is experience and knowledge together with the power of applying them critically and practically. The friend I quoted at the beginning of the article, like myself, has read many religious books so she definitely has plenty of knowledge of how gurus such as Jesus, Buddha, and Krishna perceived the world but how does she perceive it herself? Personally I think what is lacking is a sense of responsibility and the critical and practical side of wisdom. A fair degree of the teachings of the enlightened are basically impractical if you feel like going the

whole spiritual hog whilst at the same time longing for the pleasures of this world. My dear grandmother taught that everything should be taken with a pinch of salt. She also said God says you can have what you want but you’ll have to pay for it! What about the authorities? Well, I think they tend to view the mixture of madness and religion in a dim light. In the Tao Te Ching it says that you can’t change the world and, if you did, the psychiatrists would be out of a job!

Looking back on my illness I find that, although there was a basis of truth in all my delusions, I was definitely manic and not in the pristine state that gurus such as Sri Ramana Maharshi were. Although I meant no harm I must have been a trial to my friends and family. Of course, the very involvement of the mental health profession suggests that they are somehow, at least partially, to blame. I think as far as they are concerned ‘heaven can wait’.

Part of the problem is financial: you don’t meet many rich mental patients and when a psychiatrist shows you a graph to prove why you should be on medication you can’t help thinking it’s a graph of his wages! Where is the wisdom in the rich torturing the poor? Well, it’s not all as black and white as some people think it is and God loves us all. If you believe this and put in the effort, the grace will be there. You will recover from your illness if you stick to giving. St.

Francis of Assisi said ‘It is in giving that we receive’. We are like clay in the hands of the potter. Jesus said the kingdom of heaven is within but

he didn’t just mean the mind (unless you are a Buddhist). Spirituality is more than just being psychic. Whether manic or depressed, our worst enemy is our own selfish pride (the ego).

What has all this got to prove? It is the critical or practical application of a combination of experience and knowledge that is the answer to this question. It proves that the mentally ill need to be able to contribute to the well being of others even if they don’t want to! They need to be able to give in a responsible and unfoolhardy way. This means realising their own limitations as well as those of the system that they so often despise. Personally, my life has twisted and turned but I am still on course with my own plans. This is another vital factor in recovery: a plan. Whilst the Rethink literature is right to say life is a journey, it’s no good just moping about without any idea of what you want to do.

Some of the delusions I discussed earlier in the article have religious content and all thought has a basis in truth unless there is an intention to deceive. Therefore I conclude that, although the road to hell may be paved with the best intentions, it is wise to be good. Even if the law of karma were a myth, the psychological and spiritual damage from thinking, speaking or enacting evil is a terrible thing. The wisdom in this article and my friend’s suffering is in the good that comes out of it.

May we all live to see the good that comes out of our suffering.



## Why do we need to love?

by T.M. Liddy, Feb 2004.

Why do we need to love if we are incapable of achieving a state of grace large enough to cope with loving someone else? We fall into fear and we try our hardest to shut out the person responsible for making us feel vulnerable to their moods and emotions. We've spent too long coping with our own to take anyone else's on board. We resent them for making that a condition of love. We resent love for presenting us with a challenge that dares us to leave aside our self-protective survivor's overcoat for one minute and let someone else protect us with their feelings for a change. We worry that we can't trust them. We have been inwardly focused on our own wellbeing and welfare for as long as we have been in recovery or between episodes and it isn't surprising that we feel confused. We are being offered the opportunity and challenge of a lifetime: to let ourselves be loved.

Next to our fear stands the big word: risk. We are used to minimising risk in our lives because we are supposed, we tell ourselves, to be constantly aware of the potential damage it can cause and we have to be responsible for ourselves because no one else can do that job for us. We have become cautious even fearful of new things. We do our best to look after No 1 and we do not really pay attention to anyone else's life story unless they are survivors too. We begin to feel that us survivors are a small and self determined army standing up to the rest of the world armed with foreknowledge and armoured with our determination to stay well, not be hospitalised or drugged or debased by personal failure ever again. We know how far we've fallen by so called normal society's standards and we haven't clawed our way back from the above in order to be brought down again by the chaotic and messy emotion called Love. Too much self sacrifice required, too much openness, too much vulnerability.

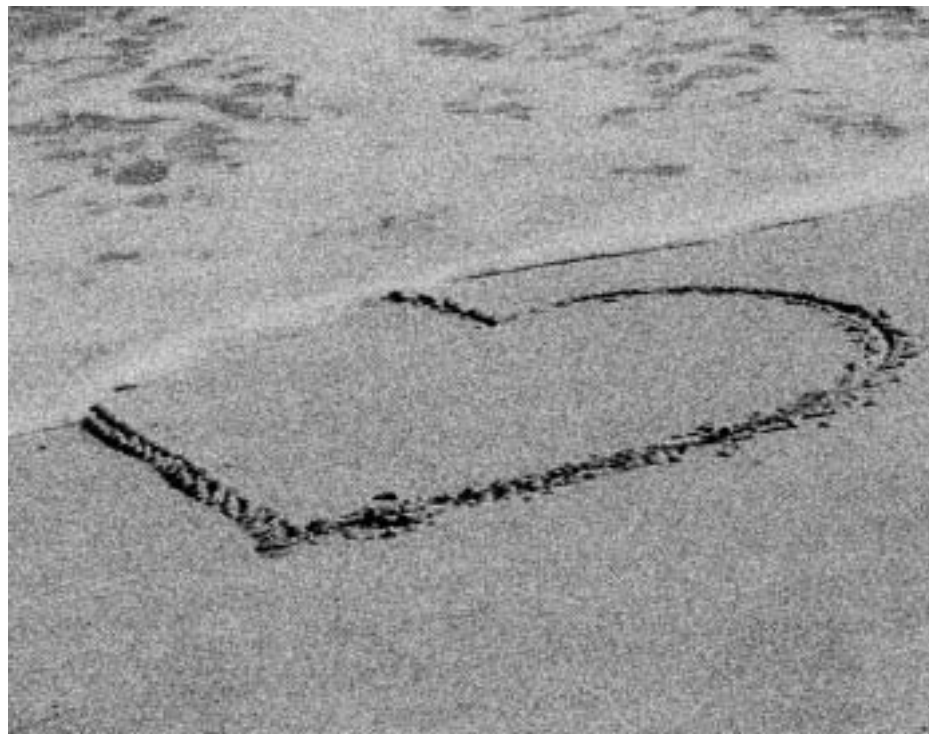
We have won our armour after a long battle with ourselves. Many lonely days and dawns it has been

the path and yet stands directly in the way of our happiness. It keeps us aloof and afraid to be vulnerable to one another. It frustrates our partners especially if they are not survivors too. They see that giving in to love is only a stage on the path that everyone goes through sooner or later, risking pain and loss for a chance of lifelong happiness. We see love as the battering ram of our tower of self sufficiency and self management. We have congratulated ourselves for getting through the bad times and for being able to take care of ourselves at home. We swallow the pills and they poison our minds with with dependence. Survivors can never take living on the outside for granted so we accept second best and thank God we have our autonomy.

Small wonder that we see love as a virus that infects our controlled lifestyles invading our routine with unwanted feelings that just won't go away and spontaneous gestures that confuse us and lead to misunderstandings. These things we have taught ourselves are dangerous to our mental health. They bring chaos and the perceived certainty of personal failure, something we would like at all costs to avoid. We have been in those places before and possibly still have flashbacks. We have reasoned to ourselves that such things do not work for us. We control our emotions and do not let them control us. We are frugal with

our caring, preferring to focus inwards on our own self development and largely censoring the outside world as it filters into our consciousness. We are locked into our small safe world so securely that it's a wonder that anyone found the key to us in the first place. We probably wish they'd return it and go away quietly! But by a miracle they found us and they wanted us and won't let go until we open up our hearts to them. They feel they are worth that much and cannot understand and indeed may be hurt that we cannot appreciate this. At this point we have to decide quickly if we are alive to life or dead to our full potential. Not just our undoubted ability to keep ourselves sane and manage our illness but alive to the possibility of enriching someone else's life and actually loving it.

*(Many apologies to Therese. In her article 'Is my glass half empty or full?' in the March edition of SUS, the line in the third paragraph (p5) reads ..."They are certainly a rich scam when I am mining for creative ideas". The line should have read – "They are certainly a rich seam when I am mining for creative ideas". We are extremely sorry for this error).*



## LOST FAITH

I have been where trees are green  
And knew their sap within my frame,  
I have been where strong winds blow  
And my breath was of the wind,  
I have watched a living fire  
When my eyes have danced their flames  
And I have swum in heaving seas  
When my body was a wave.

Now, though summer leaves are green  
I am flesh and blood apart,  
Now the wind is strong and sweet  
My breath is warm but solely mine;  
A living fire is dancing still  
And I perceive the tongues of flame;  
Indeed I swim the rising sea  
But my body rides the waves.

*Patricia Hannah*

### **I am a white witch.**

I find it positively painful when I say it out loud. I hate to see people on TV come across as tree loving hippies who say predictable, obvious and trite platitudes.

I think that everyone's faith is incredibly personal and specific to each individual, even though they might share the same religion. I know that my faith in the Goddess and the respect I have for the earth on which we live had enabled me to come through a drug habit and bi-polar disorder with my dignity intact.

If it wasn't for her and my strong belief in universal consciousness I know I wouldn't be here now, and for that I shall always love her.

Most people find it easy to dismiss my faith because it is seen as obscure and part of my problem, rather than part of my solution. It can be terribly difficult to find anyone to talk to about the theology, especially when issues of importance arise. I think that part of the strength that my faith gives me is derived from the fact that it is from a lonely aspect. My personal develop-

ment has been neither hindered nor helped by it. It just is.

Blessed be.

FROM GUILT AND FEAR  
SET ME FREE  
AND GUIDE MY STEPS OH  
GAIA TO THEE

*Jo Hickey*  
*Support worker*



## MY PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF MENTAL ILLNESS AND KNOWING GOD by Joyce Passmore

When this opportunity arose to write of being ill mentally and the question of spirituality and is there a place for it, I really wanted to contribute. I believe 100% that if I did not believe in the Lord, I would not be alive today. It was my faith that kept me going to where I am now. No medication and no longer in the mental health system.

I do understand it can be difficult for people to believe, especially when our minds are in so much havoc. It is also quite common for people to blame God for all that goes wrong in their lives. Yet, I know that when I look back on the cause of my problems, it was because of humans, not God.

I know people have difficulty in sharing what they believe. Yet it can be such a strength and comfort to know, when our lives seem to be falling apart, that God loves us and, as for me, what the Lord will do for us if we trust Him.

As the years started to increase in Tone Vale, my desperation grew. I only had God to turn to. I really thank God for being there to hear everything I felt. Though the years were horrific and my mind never stopping in its torment there was always that special place in my mind that the Lord was there and I could go to Him.

I painted a picture in hospital. It was black all over. Yet in the right hand top corner was a small yellow round blob. The black resembled the hell I was in. The yellow represented the hope and trust I had in God that one day the black would be completely obliterated and all will be the bright yellow. I can say now, I know the sunshine of the yellow which is of God. I describe it now as having sunshine in my mind - it's wonderful.

I have realised when I was ill that there are a few do's and don'ts for people who do try to help. One example of the don'ts, was being

with it, and a friend came from away to visit me. For a good ten minutes he did not stop preaching. It was like a battering ram hardly stopping for breath. It left me even more mentally exhausted and even set me back a bit.

The (do) that happened on that same admittance, was a husband and wife who have seen me at my worst and can now rejoice in my full recovery. When they visited me in hospital, their love, understanding, compassion, support and helpful advice was so reassuring. Knowing every day they prayed for me was so good to know. They never judged me, but loved and accepted me. These Christian friends of mine helped so much and did it in the right way.

The direction of my life has changed in every way. My 46 years of experience is now being used. I speak at meetings and intend to speak whenever I am asked. I have individuals come to my home for help and advice.

I have aims I want to achieve. I want to educate people on the real suffering of those ill. To stop those who ridicule those unwell. I want to encourage in the little and big ways to help those who need it. Everyone needs to be loved and accepted.

*The mentally unwell are no different.*

## INSPIRING HOPE

The National Institute for Mental Health in England (NIMHE) and the Mental Health Foundation are in the first year of a partnership aiming to bring together and develop current thinking and practice in the area of spirituality and mental health. This is an abridged version of some of the hoped-for outcomes:

Recognition and practical application of the importance of the spiritual dimension in people's lives.

Increased appreciation of the resources of people with experience of distress, and support for their roles in moving mental health services towards being genuinely holistic.

Individuals in mental distress or with a mental illness to experience care approaches which recognise them as whole persons functioning within a living, whole system.

Religious Organisations and Faith Communities to have increased capacity to support people in a way which promotes positive mental health and assists recovery. Support for individual staff and staff groups, across all organisations.

The writers of the "Inspiring Hope" booklet observe that –

"Recent studies appear to show that people who recognise and who are in touch with their own spirituality have a better chance of staying mentally healthy and/or recovering if they become ill. Belief in a transcendent being(s) also appears to help as does membership of an accepting and supporting faith community. On the other hand, unbalanced beliefs can be harmful as can be stigmatising or rejecting communities ... if an effective coalition can be built between faith groupings and mental health services, and if the spiritual dimension can be recognised for individual service users, then this could have a profound and positive effect on sound mental health in England."

*With thanks to Peter Gilbert (NIMHE) and Vicky Nicholls (MHF) for permission to include this infor-*

## From Fay Wilson-Rudd – Chaplain – East Region

It was a privilege to be invited to speak at the recent Annual Meeting and I enjoyed meeting new people and discussing various aspects of chaplaincy and why I got involved.

Let me explain! I was 18 when my mother first expressed a desire 'to end it all' -something she continued to do for a further 40 years! Her first threat came at the beginning of a time of major disturbance in my life. In a five year period two major accidents robbed me of 26 friends and a further 11 people, both family and friends died, some from old age, some from illness. All of this had a major impact on me mentally as well as spiritually. I had to grapple with developing an understanding of why such things happen and where was God in these events.

For me it was important to discover that it was OK to be angry with God, that it was OK to say to those people who believe that everything that happens to us is part of God's plan for our lives that I didn't – and don't – see it like that. I do believe, however, that we can learn something about God in times of distress and disturbance. I learned to live through the very dark times and to be grateful for all that was good in my life: for being able to work, to earn money to provide myself with a home, for my faith and my many friends – in Christian jargon I learned to count my blessings!

Part of the process of counting my blessings was to seek to help others – many years ago I did this via a church youth group which regularly visited the homeless in Bristol with sandwiches, hot drinks, blankets etc. When I moved to London I became a volunteer at Centre Point (a night shelter for homeless young people) and learned that many young people were homeless because of issues associated with mental ill health.

When I moved back to the West Country in 1984 I had little time to undertake such activity – I had a very demanding job and some responsibility for elderly parents. My father died in 1989 and my mother

last as I wouldn't revert to being 'a good girl' doing all that she wanted! In the end she moved into a retirement home where she had constant company and all the attention she needed.

In 1999 I started looking towards my own retirement from fulltime employment and this coincided with the discovery that the Mental Health Units in the Mendip Locality were looking for a very part-time Chaplain – just one session a week. I was successful in being appointed to the post and found the work rewarding but also frustrating: rewarding because I met so many interesting people and frustrating because there was so little time to spend with people. In April 2001 the chaplaincy was extended to two sessions per week. By that time I had established a good relationship with most of the staff and was much more involved with taking users to Church Services when that was appropriate as well as taking Services onto the units. I have also been involved with users in discussions on various aspects of the Christian faith as well as exploring the main aspects of other world faiths, in this I was grateful that I had worked for a large Saudi Arabian company for 8 years so have had first hand experience of those who adhere to the teachings of Islam.

I was interviewed and appointed for a further day a week in December 2002 – that day is spent in the Yeovil/Chard area where many of the activities outlined above also take place although being available on a Sunday to accompany people to a place of worship is more difficult.

## Size Matters

Within myself I am so small  
Take up no space at all.  
I hide so deep within my skin  
You'll never know that I am in.  
You'll hear no sigh and see no shrug  
And arms clasp nothing in a hug.  
If you had time to wait all day  
You'd think, maybe, I'd gone away  
And left this shell unoccupied  
Or that some spark inside had died.

I have no wish to cause some hurt,  
By seeming empty, cold, inert.  
The problem is I've lost the key  
To get me back to where I'm me.  
There's so much space behind this door  
And though I'm small as mushroom spore  
There is no gap to let me out,  
My voice too small to hear my shout.

*Pete Rawlins*

## The Lord's Prayer

*A translation from the Aramaic into English rather than from Aramaic to Greek to Latin to English*

O cosmic birther of all radiance and vibration!  
Soften the ground of our being  
And carve out a space within us  
Where your presence can abide.  
Fill us with your creativity so that we may be empowered  
to bear the fruit of your mission.  
Let each of our actions bear fruit in accordance with our desire.  
Endow us with the wisdom to produce and share what each being needs  
to grow and flourish.  
Untie the tangled threads of destiny that bind us, as we release  
others from the entanglement of past mistakes.  
Do not let us be seduced by that which would divert us  
from our true purpose,  
but illuminate the opportunities of the present moment.  
For you are the ground and the fruitful vision,  
the birth of power and the fulfilment,  
As all is gathered and made whole once again.



*Display at Acacia retreat  
in February*

*Mark Hathaway's version based on the Neil Douglas Klotz translation from Aramaic*

## A blessing

May the light of your soul guide you.  
May the light of your soul bless the work you do with the secret love  
and warmth of your heart.  
May you see in what you do the beauty of your own soul.  
May the sacredness of your work bring healing, light and renewal to  
those who work with you and to those who see and receive your work.  
May your work never weary you.  
May it release within you wellsprings of refreshment, inspiration and  
excitement.  
May you be present in what you do.  
May you never become lost in the bland absences.  
May the day never burden.  
May dawn find you awake and alert,  
Approaching your new day with dreams, possibilities and promises.  
May evening find you gracious and fulfilled.  
May you go to the night blessed, sheltered and protected.  
May your soul calm, console and renew you.

*From Anam Cara 'Spiritual Wisdom from the Celtic World' John O'Donohue*

## Wild geese

You do not have to be good.  
You do not have to walk on your knees for a hundred miles through  
the desert repenting.  
You only have to let the soft animal of your body love what it loves.  
Tell me about despair, yours and I will tell you about mine.  
Meanwhile the world goes on.  
Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of the rain are moving across  
the landscapes, over the prairies and the deep trees, the mountains  
and the rivers.  
Meanwhile, the wild geese, high in the clean blue air are heading home  
again.  
Whoever you are, no matter how lonely, the world offers itself to your  
imagination, calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting - over  
and over announcing your place in the family of things.

*Mary Oliver*



## Direct Payments in Somerset

A Direct Payment is a new way for you to organise your care. Instead of providing care directly, Social Services give you money to pay someone you choose to help you. Direct Payments were introduced by the Government to enable people to build more choice, control and flexibility into their care arrangements to help them become more independent. It is not a benefit since it is money given in lieu of services, therefore, it is not treated as income by the Benefits Agency and has no effect on benefits.

The law clearly states that Social Services have a duty to give you a Direct Payment if you request one, provided you are eligible and your needs can be adequately met with the Direct Payment. To be eligible you must have had an assessment of care needs carried out by a Social Worker. You must consent to the Direct Payment and you must be able to manage the money and complete some simple forms. The rules allow someone else to manage the Direct Payment on your behalf, provided your wishes are central to how the money is spent.

In Somerset a Direct Payment can be used to pay for personal care and for domestic help. It may be possible for you to have a Direct Payment to replace other services but this would need to be discussed with your Social Worker.

You can stop a Direct Payment and go back to receiving care directly from Social Services if you find it does not suit you. It is possible to have some care met through a Direct



Payment and to have the remainder provided directly by Social Services. This would be a good way to see whether or not a Direct Payment is what you really want. If you wish, you can use a Direct Payment to pay agency staff or to pay a self-employed carer. Current policy in Somerset does not permit family members or their spouses to be paid using a Direct Payment except in exceptional circumstances.

Managing a Direct Payment is easy. You will be asked to open a bank account specifically for the Direct Payment to be paid into and to complete forms to show how you have spent the money. The forms plus bank statements would then be sent to the finance team at County Hall every three months for auditing. If you pay a contribution towards your care you may still have to continue to do so with a Direct Payment.

There is plenty of help should you decide to go down the Direct Payment route. The Direct Payment Advisory Service at DIAS offers the following types of support:

" **Direct Payment Advisor** visits people at home to explain how the

Direct Payment Scheme in Somerset works and helps with opening a bank account, advertising for and recruiting a carer.

" **Direct Payment Advocate** helps people to remain at the centre of the arrangements made using the Direct Payment.

" **Records Support Worker** offers practical help with the forms and with the simplified tax deduction scheme, if relevant.

The **Finance Team** at County Hall can also be contacted directly with queries about audits amongst other things.

If you would like to participate in a pilot study for mental health service users, contact Angie Gammon on 01458 259341 or email her at [aegammon@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:aegammon@somerset.gov.uk). If you have questions you would like answered you can telephone DIAS on 01823 327453 or ask your social worker about what services you may be eligible to have a Direct Payment for.

*Catherine Logan,  
Direct Payment Development Worker,  
Direct Payment Advisory Service @  
DIAS*

### **South Somerset Mind are holding a Stakeholder Meeting on Personality Disorder Training.**

Wed 28th July 10 - 2pm

Lunch provided

The aims will be to discuss:

- The training project on Personality Disorders
- Identify the training needs of workers and service users
- Form a small development group of interested people

Anyone working with individuals given this diagnosis and service users/survivors & carers are all welcome to attend. To be held at South Somerset Mind, The Markwick Centre, Dampier St, Yeovil. Please ring Diane 01935 410138 if you

## A GUIDING HAND

This is my first attempt at writing anything for your excellent magazine which I have just discovered.

My name is Jane Carpenter and I have lived in Taunton for 40 years and I used to be a nurse then moved into management. Five years ago I joined the many on the list of mental health sufferers.

A year ago I was diagnosed with Bipolar. My life has changed dramatically. Over the last few years I lost my husband, my home and my sanity - on many occasions leading to inpatient care at Rydon House.

Throughout the various stages of my illness I have maintained my belief that spirituality can mean a lot during times of distress.

But where do you find it? The answer is different for everyone.

I find it in music, writing, listening to other people and through prayer. My spirituality centres around the wholeness of prayer and through holy communion. There is a beautiful space when you are one with God. Around this of course there are the people who help to make spirituality work. At Rydon House there is Ken Coles and Sister Margaret, and the weekly service helps to provide a central focus where prayers and communion are given. But they provide much more, along with my parish priest Jonathan Morris. Combined together their thoughts and prayers helped me to feel that I am not alone and that at least once a week there was a light at the end of the tunnel.

While my prayer life is very important to me, when the crisis comes prayers are often of little help as is the thought of reading the little blue bible. In times of distress and turmoil I try hard to hold on to my beliefs knowing that God will walk with me to the end of the darkness and along the way we will meet others also in need of prayers and whose prayers stay with you as you move into recovery and beyond.

If you are brave enough to explore prayer go with it when you can, and when the going gets tough know that you are being held by others until the storm passes. It's not for everyone but for me it has literally been a lifesaver.

*Jane Carpenter*

### May 2004

I'm writing this account of just a tiny part of my experience as I want to try and show how, whilst knowing that our spiritual state is extremely important, our physical needs deserve attention just as much.

What good is it to say to someone who is starving, (both spiritually and physically) to go and pray about their situation, for that is what some Christians told me to do, without offering to do anything at all to help me? Some would say that they'd be praying for me and, although quite comforting in a sense, it actually wasn't much help to me if I needed some practical help; for example, if I needed a lift somewhere if there was no other way for me to get there, as happened on a few occasions. Why do schools hold open evenings when there is no public transport available?

It is all too easy for well-heeled members of society to say that they would pray for me. What I really needed was help. However, that would mean giving up time, that would mean being willing, if able, to get involved and that is something of which people are afraid, it seems. Please don't misunderstand me;

actually being there for someone in need.

I have suffered or, dependent on your point of view, have been blessed with depression for many, many years. The suffering of being labelled, misunderstood and condemned. The blessing of developing deep compassion, sensitivity and awareness to a level that perhaps not many have to experience. Whatever depression is to the person who has it, blessing or curse, it is always there: above, below, over, under, around, inside, outside, deep, deep within us.

However, depression is not meant to be part of a Christian's experience, it seems. When I first became ill with it again, this time as a Christian, I was informed that I must be out of God's will. My life should be joyous and happy—apparently, the hallmark of a good Christian! I shouldn't be feeling the way I was feeling—despair, desolation and the overwhelming sense of hopelessness which has enveloped me. I must have taken my eyes of 'the Lord' and my heart-ache and my pain were self-inflicted.

Well, if that was the truth, it was not my truth! My truth was that, in the midst of my blackness, there was the tiniest spark of light and I know that one God and that God was in it

with me. I felt abandoned by most of my fellow-Christians but not by God. Although my faith was tested to the utmost, and I turned away angrily from the Church, I knew God was there for me. To this day, I am still reconciling myself to God's people.

So, feeling rejected, misunderstood and alone, I stopped asking for help from the Church. The people I turned to instead were my wonderful, female GP, my friendly, helpful social worker, the Social Services, the CVS and Community Cars and anyone else who could, and would, listen to me and help me. These people were wonderful—helping me with shopping, offering me lifts, arranging breaks for me and I am so grateful to them all.

Whilst Christians tended to be more concerned about the state of my spiritual life and the state of my soul, these other people, both paid and unpaid, were there for me and walked the extra mile with me. I will be forever grateful to them for that.

I know that I have to ask God to help me to forgive, forget and move on but it is easier said than done. I will be trying though. I do not want to behave in the same way as those people who were not there for me. May God grant me the grace to live accordingly.

## All change at Evercreech Junction

Do you have a golden moment stored away in your memory ready for a delicious wallow in nostalgia. I do it's a Summer Saturday Morning at what was for me the mecca of the universe, namely Evercreech Junction station on the never to be forgotten Somerset and Dorset Railway. Golden days when train after train would glide into the station and a banking engine would be attached to tackle the fearsome Mendip gradients ahead. But an even more golden moment was to come, a moment of sheer ecstasy when I clambered aboard the footplate and got a ride as far as the next station. A moment of my journey in life never to be forgotten.

Had I continued to follow that path then perhaps I might have ended up working on the railways although, sadly, not on the wonderful S & D - it closed in 1966. I have followed a very different path, one in which times of dark depression have alternated with periods of manic elation and some times of "normality" in between. Has my life changed course and direction because of my illness? This is difficult if not impossible, to be sure about. How can I know what would have happened to me had I not suffered, still do, from what I still call Manic depressive Illness - I don't go for this Bipolar jazz.

But 30 years after I was first labelled "Manic Depressive" I feel reasonably confident about saying where my illness has led me.

### The "Bad"

*It has had a bad effect on how I see the natural world. My medication, first Lithium and then (now) Sodium Valproate, has taken off the tops and bottoms of sensory enjoyment. The pleasure in looking at the world at 6am on a fine summer morning is not what it was. Equally the heart-breaking sadness and grief at the loss of a loved one is not what it was either. Or is it just that the process of ageing dulls the senses anyway?*



reasonable response to stress and when is it an unreasonable response?

When I feel "off" there is always the temptation to excuse my attitudes and behaviour by acting as if I am a prisoner of my disease. The "I can't help it syndrome". Actually, illness or no illness I remain responsible for my actions. I have to recognise that everyone gets depressed, elated sometimes, fed up on occasions and so on. But if I am honest there are times when I invoke my illness to unreasonably excuse my behaviour.

### The "Good"

*At 18 I was a cocky, arrogant young man.*

*At 28 I was still a cocky young man but perhaps slightly less arrogant.*

*At 58 I am no longer young, not at all cocky and - I hope - not at all arrogant.*

Is this just the result of getting older or is it more to do with the experience of being a manic depressive?

I suggest it is more the latter. My illness forced me to need other people and the care of other people. Instead of being someone on the giving end of caring (and sometimes of organising other people's lives) I became someone on the receiving end. It didn't all work out right. My marriage broke up for starters but I am sure as I can be that I am a much "nicer" person for it all. No longer someone who knows all the answers.

On balance horrific though the manic phases have been and very frightening and utterly miserable though the depressive phases have been the experience as I look at it today is on balance for the good.

***My life could be described as the good, the bad and the ugly. Today it's good. Tomorrow it could be bad or even ugly. Life without risk or change isn't life at all.***

**Chris Hudson**

**May 2004**

### What's so great about hugs

There's no such thing as a bad hug – only good ones and great ones.

They are not fattening and they don't cause cancer – with no preservatives, artificial ingredients or pesticide residue.

They are also cholesterol free, naturally sweet and 100% wholesome.

They are a completely renewable natural resource.

They don't require batteries, tune-ups or X-rays.

They are non-taxable, fully returnable and energy efficient.

They're safe in all kinds of weather – in fact, they are especially good for cold or rainy days. And they are exceptionally effective in treating problems like bad dreams or the Monday blues.

Moral?

Never wait until tomorrow to hug someone you could hug today!

*(With thanks to a Speak Up Somerset reader for sending this to us)*

The idea of a source means that the source is greater than that which comes from the source, it is something higher than that which needs to feed from the source, something more potent than our potency. True personal happiness comes from superpersonal happiness. When we pray and worship God, we open up our nature and receive that which is higher than our nature, that which is wiser than our nature, that which is happier than our nature; we open up our nature to receive a portion of the happiness of all Happiness. We eat and drink of an absolute universal joy. It is the God in us that desires to eat and drink the god of life. We only live when we turn toward our source. But we must create the conditions within ourselves in which we can receive this life. And part of the act of prayer is the clearing, the washing away of the waste matter of negative thoughts and feeling, so that the live rays can enter us.

Prayer ought to be an eternal fact in our lives, independent of mood, or inclination, or inspiration. Creating in us a continuity of orientation towards our source, the Holy Sun of Life.

*From the book: "The Vision of the Fool and Other Writings" by Cecil Collins.*

(Kindly sent to us by Glenda Huggins)

### Finding a True Path

In June 2002 I was visiting London and came across by chance the Royal Academy of Arts and experienced the Qingzhou Discoveries, a remarkable story of Chinese Buddhist sculptures that had been buried for 900 years.

Whilst enjoying the beauty of the craftsmanship I started to feel that I was gaining an insight into something rather special. At the end of the tour I believe that I was meant to view the display and so start myself on a spiritual journey towards finding Enlightenment.

I have read several books by the Dali Lama and with each passing sentence I have become immersed in a cloak of belonging.

I was not religious before finding Buddhism and believe that it is more a way of life than a religion. Taking

small but important steps in making me a better person and bringing quality to those I know, allows the world to become a better place.

The main advantages for me that Buddhism has, is that it accepts nature as being there and learning to live with it, and whilst Buddhists take a path to Enlightenment there is no deity to worship.

Since finding Buddhism I have become a much calmer person who looks for the reaction to my actions. (I try and see other people's perspective before carrying out an action or saying something to them).

I accept that other religions have a very important role to play in people's lives, but Buddhism is right for me.

*John Murphy*

## 'IT IS ME' by Jane Ridout

Some of those who read 'Speak Up Somerset' will understand my meaning when I say that, with the closure of Acacia in May 2003, I really believed my existence would have to end. I lived on Acacia for seven years, and sincerely believed I could not survive elsewhere else. Well, I'm here to say, one year later, the God I believe in as my God had other plans for me.

I'm not here to say that life is easy, on the outside, in the community. I still have days I wish my life was ending, depression lurks in every set-back, but I have more to live for than I have reason to die for.

I've always believed in God, though at times in my troubled life I sincerely believed He was not a God of love. I prayed, and agonised, went to church or didn't. I hated Sundays, and made no secret of it, and wanted nothing to do with the 'new' Christianity of Born-Again churches.

My deepest crisis of faith came when I knew for a sure fact Acacia was closing. I knew I could not live

alone, or be independent, so I knew it meant leaving Yeovil for some other venue.

I was angry, with professionals, with circumstances, with my own enduring mental health needs, and above all, with God. I berated Him in my mind, I heard His voice, as I always tended to do in times of severe stress, I felt great fear and real despair.

It was about this time that my life was taken over, not by a shining miracle, not by any reversal of decision by the Partnership, but by a little, funny black object that came into my knowing via an open window of all things - a small, persistent, satin-nosed cat. God had sent me my miracle.

Once the cat was in my life other things fell into place. The cat stayed on the ward, was fed on the ward, and became 'my' job.

Where could I go to take a cat with me. I could not leave her, she needed me. Without really thinking too deeply, I asked in total terror if I could be found a quiet flat locally for me, plus cat.

And that is how I came into the fellowship of those who believe in God's promises and Jesus' infinite love. I have been, plus cat, in my flat for a year now. I am better than I have ever been, thanks to the support of community agencies, and I know God loves me. And I love Him, Creator, Saviour, Redeemer and Friend.



### **My faith helped us through by JP**

We were so happy to have a little girl born six weeks early - quite healthy at 5lb 9ozs (we already had a little boy). She was so good, no trouble and would have her feeds and lie back down quite content. At five months we had to take her to the doctors on a Monday, by Wednesday she was dead. She was treated with Penicillium which she was allergic to. This was 45 years ago. After that we had another two sons and a daughter. No one has ever replaced our first little girl and we'll never forget her. We had her for five months.

Just after we lost her I was going to church: a lady said to me "How can you go to church after what happened to you?" However, it's a comfort to know there's something after life. Some time after the mother-in-law of this lady was taken ill with a heart attack. She was over 80 and the family wanted to know why she couldn't have a heart transplant.

80 years is a lifetime, compared with 5 months.

### **A SMILE**

A smile costs nothing but gives much. It enriches those who receive, without making poorer those who give. It takes but a moment, but the memory of it sometimes lasts for ever. None is so rich or mighty that he can get along without it, and none is so poor but that he can be made rich by it. A SMILE creates happiness in the home, fosters goodwill in business, and is the countersign of Friendship. It brings rest to the weary, cheer to the discouraged, sunshine to the sad and it is nature's best antidote for trouble. Yet it cannot be bought, begged, borrowed or stolen, for it is something which is of no value to anyone until it is given away. Some people are too tired to give you a SMILE - give them one of yours, as none needs a SMILE so much as he who has no more to give.

" A friend is one who believes in you before you believe in yourself"

## HOW TO DISCOVER YOUR SPIRITUAL SELF

Dom Antony Sutch - Downside Abbey writing in The Times - 1 January 2003

Spirituality is simply the search for the truth, but this is not as easy as it sounds. If talk of the spiritual has never been part of your education or home life, but you feel that you want to be more spiritually aware, I would suggest that you learn the art of listening. Listen to yourself and others, and become open to all your senses. Be honest and open in your own life and speak the truth when you can.

In Britain people are either frenetic and over-busy, or lonely, with nothing to do and nothing, it seems, to live for. So often the mind and heart appear to disagree with each other. The mind is preoccupied with bringing up a family, getting things one enjoys, and worrying about security in this world. But the heart is looking for love. When you reach a point of spiritual integrity, the heart and the mind can work together.

One of the difficulties of exploring our spiritual selves is that our secular world is incredibly noisy. It is as though everyone wants to be distracted the whole time. So make a decision to sit in silence for five minutes every morning before your day begins. Don't be afraid of silence. Go into a church or a mosque where other people have built up an atmosphere of prayer and just sit. Your heart will talk to you if you

allow it. Be quiet, see what happens.

I believe that when you see a wonderful painting, read great literature, listen to marvellous music or even have a conversation where you touch the spirit of the other person, you reach something expansive and exciting, because it leads to God and it is infinite.

Try reading St Augustine's Confessions or the diaries of Mother Teresa. If they feel too heavy, read about Martin Luther King or Nelson Mandela: people who have gone through pain and difficulty and coped with it. Their wisdom will begin to feed your mind. Always be open and tolerant of others, and when you see evil, recognise it. Don't condemn it, because frequently the person who has perpetrated an evil act is in a state of turmoil. Don't be judgmental.

Probably you are already surrounded by holy people - people who have overcome pain and challenges - and people who really know how to love. They may not be able to describe it vocally, but just watch them and see love in action. Men and women who have coped with tragedy and hard times are coming to terms with what life is about.

Try looking seriously at the human condition, but don't forget your sense of humour. Ask yourself: is this a world that has come out of nothing and is going nowhere - a place where we protect ourselves, indulge our senses and then die? Or is it something much

more than that?

The desire to be at one with oneself and with Creation is the search of all the great spiritual masters, and it can be your quest too.

*(Kindly forwarded to us by Fay Wilson Rudd)*

### WHERE NO NEW BEGINNING SEEMS POSSIBLE.

When there is total darkness surrounding you it is possible to imagine the darkness further away is so much lighter, that the twilight and the birdsong are the beginnings of a new day and the remnants of a Dawn Chorus. It is possible to emerge from your afternoon sleep and believe the day out there is beginning not ending. But it is an illusion. Anything even a shade different will seem lighter, better, more hopeful than where you are.

Is it then that we are all in the same darkness? No. But it is that you cannot hope ever to find light or hope from physical presences or beings nearby. The illusion is lovely, sweet, comforting, like a mirage in the desert. But so very temporary. And in time the lightness in the distance fades to match your own shade of darkness. It is only when you can reach into your own space and switch on a light that you may lessen the blackness, to greyness, to soft blue and yellow shades gently reassuring of your own self knowledge, your own survival, and the survival of spirit, not species, through deeper understanding, greater love of self, greater accommodation for your own being, your own weakness, your own strength always and forever in God's care.

nmjs 2004

## Living with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

It was way back in January 1978 that I experienced something that was to affect me for the last 10 years.

I had just returned from a patrol as a serving submariner in the Royal Navy. The Firemen were on strike and I was informed that I had been selected to be part of a Search and Rescue team in the Govan area of Glasgow.

I had two days notice and was given no additional training. I was to wear standard issue green combat gear with anti flash hood and gloves.

It was a particularly bad winter with snow on the ground.

We worked a 12 hour shift unless additional cover was required or we were already at a fire then the hours were longer.

The event that was to change my life occurred on the 7th January.

We were called out to a fire in Linwood a long way from Govan and even traveling in the police escort Jaguar was too long a trip to be of any use. We could see the fire from the motorway, the house was totally ablaze.

When we arrived on the scene I was warned by an on strike Fire Officer not to go into the blaze as it was too dangerous. There were children trapped in the house so I had no choice.

I managed to pull out two of the children but they were pronounced dead at the scene. A third child was trapped at the rear of the house, I climbed through the bedroom window (the glass had long been blown out by the fire) the heat was intense and the smoke so thick I could not see any thing.

I fell through a hole in the floor and was only saved from falling into the heart of the fire by my air bottles on my back. I managed to pull myself clear. I realised it was probably too late to save the boy and made my way out of the house. When I got down from the ladder somebody threw a blanket over me, my back was burning, I realised that my Wellington boots had become very hot, they were very soft due to the

The boy was found later when the fire was out. He had fallen through the same hole as I had. The boy's Father was also dead. Probable cause of fire was a cigarette in the sofa.

Nothing about the incident affected me for many years, until I had a stroke in 1994 and was given counselling to help me cope with such a life-changing event. It was then that the subject of the fire incident was raised. Even though I went to many other fires where rescues were made and people had died it was the Linwood fire that affected me the worst.

I felt guilt, shame and unworthy to live because I had failed to rescue any of the children. I started having nightmares, flash backs, hearing voices and hallucinations ( or visits as I preferred to call them).

The symptoms did not manifest themselves all at once but grew like a cancer in my vulnerable condition. I found that I had a very high tolerance to medication, probably due to the damage the stroke had caused to my brain.

There is no medication, to date, that can get me to sleep more than two hours without my awakening through nightmares about the fire. I have conversations with the children's voices, thinking my wife is speaking to me. She has been extremely supportive over the years and always reassures me when I wake up and when I am talking to the children.

When the children visit me I can clearly see them and they smell of burnt flesh. Their appearance is always in the state that I found them in. The little boy is particularly unsightly. They visit me any time any place, whether I am on my own or with someone, indoors or out.

My sense of guilt has grown over the years. I think of what lives they would be living now had they survived. They would probably have their own families by now.

I have had lots of help over the years but because I have a short-term memory problem I find it extremely difficult to maintain the

There is an organisation called Combat Stress that supports and treats Armed Forces personnel with PTSD something not readily available during the time of my fire fighting. PTSD was not really recognized, at the time of the Firemen's strike, within the Royal Navy. There was no opportunity to talk to a counsellor, one just got on with things.

I have a one-week appointment in June for assessment, with Combat Stress, to see if I am suitable for further treatment. The cost is borne from the Armed Forces Benevolent Fund. There will be other ex Armed Forces personnel at the hospital in Leatherhead who will have gone through their own traumas, hopefully, we shall not only benefit from the specialized medical staff but also help each other along the way. The feeling of being alone with the problem should hopefully go. To date I have not met anyone who suffers with PTSD.

I am realistic in my expectations and believe that at best I will learn coping skills to help me through life with the memories I have. I must admit though it would be nice to have an untroubled eight hours sleep!

*JOHN*

## RED ALERT

Sleepless nights following endless days  
Praying softly through cloudy haze  
Pacing room to room in a flowing nightshirt  
A charge nurse approaches this could be **red alert**.

Is there somewhere to hide or another way to turn?  
No where to hide from a man I must not spurn  
"I'm not going anywhere", I quickly blurt  
Still charge beckons God, it's **red alert**.

He says, "Don't rush away, here is your medication!"  
No dodging this man's dedicated determination  
It does not matter if your name is John or Bert  
He has primed the needle - too late now, another **alert**.

Cloud cuckoos fly to and fro in endless waves  
Emotionally drained by a drug that enslaves ...  
As morning finally breaks staff seem snug yet pert  
A lull perhaps before the storm signals another **red alert**?

Why am I here, did I do something terribly wrong?  
No, it seems more 'downs' than 'ups' just came along  
The mad rushing workplace had taken its toll  
I must now slow down reversing my previous role.

Why did I rush along the highway of life  
Just moderating my pace could have minimised the strife  
In more relaxed surroundings now I am on the Up  
I'm feeling less old, more like a young pup.

The feeling is receding that I am disregarded  
I am just unwell - temporarily retarded ....?  
The nurses are compressing so caring they don't hurt  
If Ups turn to Downs after discharge, I shall spot **red alert**

*Alan John Squibb*

## On riding waves by Verity Johnson

I have never lost my faith. It's been a dim and pathetic little flicker from time to time but has never really disappeared altogether. This should worry me a little - the fact that I have never experienced that terrible state of inner isolation and emptiness which seems to be par for the spiritual course.

Instead, and in spite of which, I've pretty much lost my sanity at times. Despair, burn-out, insomnia, shaking, crying, physical illness and a fabulous assortment of other stress related conditions - all these have come home to roost on my emotional perches, with more frequency than I care to admit.

Sharing the journey with someone who has a diagnosis of psychosis was never going to be easy. Trying to ride the rolling and plunging wave of tumultuous symptoms is a precarious and precious undertaking - get sucked into your own equally tumultuous feelings and just about everything crashes down, or that's how it seems. The battle for emotional control is both gruelling and ongoing.

The journey is desolate and very, very lonely.

Spiritual wounds? They are legion. The church leader who said my relative was lazy and sacked him from his job. The minister who said we had brought darkness and evil into his house and who put us out, homeless and sick, onto the streets. The priest who said that the illness was about sin and who was instrumental in hastening another admission. The congregation who tip-toed around us, polite but always distant and wary - these, and more, have been the scars and weals that have, probably permanently, marked us.

Spiritual unctions? Again, they are legion. The minister and his wife who, although at a distance, have carried us along by the grace of their prayers and their love over many years. The young Quaker couple who gave us a home when we had none. The friend who has always been there, blessing us with her peace and her profound trust of the process, even in her own advancing years. The church leader who would sit with us and who would simply listen, saying little, and never judge. The vicar who bumbled through life and for whom mental illness, in his friendship towards us, was never an

issue. And the loyalty of those few friends who are still here, still kind, still responsive, still sharing the journey with us after all these years - not surprisingly, most of these have also experienced the darkness of human isolation and mental fragility at some point in their own lives.

This is not a journey we would have chosen and not one we would have wished on anyone else in the world. In a culture in which both the person who experiences the symptoms and the carer undergo the dual oppressions of stigma and prejudice, it surprises me that my faith is so intact. It ought to be shredded to pieces and blown away by the winds of despair. But it is not, though it has disengaged pretty much from dogmas and buildings. What is left is the feeling that these experiences have cauterised us deeply. Out of which, in a very shaky and vulnerable way, we have been able to see some gentle and miraculous grace at work, particularly when even the human safety nets have been taken away. Some agency of love has been hanging in there, sharing the pain and the terror.

Some task, that. Some love.



## HAIKU POETRY

In the snow  
a little flower  
how brave.

Cherry pink  
apple blossom white  
caught me looking.

Passing my window  
amidst the swirling blossoms  
young men and women -  
like the cherry tree  
soon they too will be naked.

another season  
Carrying peach blossoms  
I pass by the Lords and Ladies  
and, into an empty vase,  
I place the flowers.

In the zen-garden  
echoes of the lotus sutra -  
on the plum blossom  
a baby bush warbler  
learns how to sing.

In the moonlight -  
morning dew on spring buds  
on the grass - a bamboo flute.

On the golden bough  
the leaves of a thousand years  
within the petals - a virgin blossom.

fingertips touching  
the lotus blossom and I  
drink in the starlight.

Autumn windfall  
in the light from Tokyo windows  
as many leaves as stars.

Storm light  
glancing off the rattling trees  
bursts into a rainbow.

*Williamson Timothy*

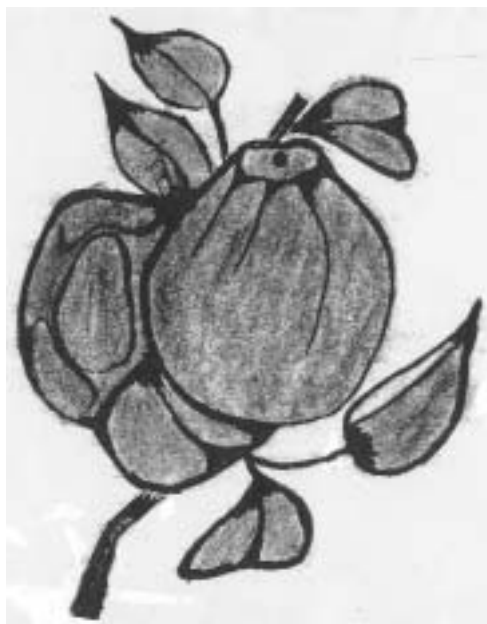
## Trouble with Words

Here, at the edge of the deep darkness,  
Words tremble and fear to step in.  
Like small ghosts, but less substantial,  
They gather in groups,  
Whispering the one sound that is their  
name,  
Having no sense of meaning,  
Of the power and beauty of conjugation.

Should they, on some instant, gather  
courage  
They'd pour like mercury into a great bowl  
of jet,  
Flashing about its surface, silver fish, all  
glide and motion  
Without effort.

Overcome too soon by some pull beyond  
their comprehension  
They'd settle, a shimmering, silver pool  
Awaiting utterance.

*Pete Rawlings*



## Life Love Happiness Peace Zen

Well here I am now 46. Born April 3rd 1958 in Canada a very snowy place. Now I can look back on my 46 years as years. Of learning and growing, and also finding Zen. My Father Walton was a very big influence on my life

Born in 1899 New York State and passed away from this world in Crewkerne, Somerset November 1985. Then my life went wrong. Stella my mother was beautiful and sweet and stuck with me while I went downhill, I put on weight withdrew from a normal life in some ways not accepting help. With all kinds of things money and health

problems.

Feeling I was a failure and no good to anyone. The one thing that kept me going was music and friends. I did not open up to my friends very much, but most of them are still with me. 1985 I gave up eating meat, except fish. My family were great and very loving, but after November 1985 I let my mother down by not caring about myself or her. I feel I did not show her enough love. But she stuck by me helping me travel and live with her. A few years after my father passed away mothers sister my aunt passed away. I should have helped her more when that happened but I was falling apart myself being normal with friends but

cracking up underneath can we help you they would say if they saw me and felt I needed help but just said I can do it or I am ok and withdrew deeper into my own world. Then one day I felt I had had enough of life other times it passed but this time it did not I rang the helpline then later went out in the garden shed to end my life. Lucky for me one of my best friends found me and coaxed me back indoors, where we sat with my mother. That was not the end though I still feel bad about myself, although music helped me.

(More next time in part two).

*Adrien Van Clute*

## When Spiritual Emergence becomes an Emergency...

Spiritual Emergency was the term coined by Stanislov Grof in his pioneering work with individuals going through profound psychological transformation. And it was the theme of a recent conference held at Hawkwood, Stroud. Under the umbrella title 'Revisioning Mental Health' we looked at a 'Mindfulness Based Approach to Spiritual Emergency'. For us 'revisioning' means taking a more soul-ful approach to mental health, bringing in the spiritual dimension. Every mental health crisis has a spiritual dimension to it. A point made by one of the speakers, Suzanna Dobson, a consultant psychiatrist who works in the Somerset area.

Mindfulness is an ancient Buddhist approach which has caught on in the mainstream of the NHS in a more secular guise. Within cognitive behavioural therapy it has been used to work with stress reduction thanks to the work of Jon Kabat-Zinn in the United States. Mindfulness has also been used to work in a preventative way with depression and is one component of dialectical behavioural programmes. Now mindfulness is beginning to be seen as helpful in working with more extreme states. One of the workshop leaders at the conference, Nigel Mills, a clinical psychologist based in Wales, has been using mindfulness techniques with those who have a diagnosis of psychosis.

Ajahn Sumedho, the Abbot of Amaravati Buddhist Monastery talked about how the monks work with and help individuals who go into crisis or become psychotic when on retreat at the monastery. He said that one thing they do is to see what is happening as part of the individual's spiritual growth and journey. People find this very helpful, rather than their experience being pathologised. Ajahn Sumedho also said that, depending on the severity of the crisis, there are times when they have to call in the professionals. He talked about his own experience of hallucinations when meditating and how, rather than labelling them as 'bad' or reacting to them with fear he simply observed them and in time they stopped.

Other speakers and workshop facilitators included Isabel Clarke, editor of 'Psychosis & Spirituality: Exploring the New Frontier', Rosamund Oliver, a registered UKCP psychotherapist and Liz Andrew, a clinical psychologist. The conference was attended by counsel-

lors and therapists, complementary practitioners, several GP's and psychiatrists and individuals with personal experience of mental health/spiritual crisis. The conference went very well indeed, with participants commenting on the friendly, relaxed atmosphere, the lovely venue and how stimulating and inspiring they found the whole event. Also participants found the support of meeting like minded others very valuable. Several people asked whether we were planning anything for next year. The answer is a resounding 'yes', this time with a deeper experiential component.

Out of the conference there has also come an initiative to establish a spiritual crisis network to provide information about spiritual emergency and for individuals and professionals to find out what is available in their local area. If you would like details of either next year's conference or the network please get in touch with Catherine Lucas, one of the conference organisers, at: [catherine\\_lucas@hotmail.com](mailto:catherine_lucas@hotmail.com)



## Aspergers 'Pub Group'

I am a care assistant in a residential home for adults with learning disabilities. I have been in this field of work for about a year now and have developed a special interest in this syndrome. This has come about because of caring for two or three people who have the syndrome. I attended a conference last year on the subject at which Andrew Powell, author of "Taking Responsibilities" was a guest speaker. He has set up something called 'The Bristol pub group, which has been running successfully for some time now. This inspired me to see if I could do something similar in Yeovil.

At present there are four people and myself who meet the first Wednesday of every month at one of the pubs in Yeovil and socialise for a couple of hours. It is very informal and has been very interesting for me to be able to spend time with people who have Aspergers Syndrome, and for them it is a chance to meet new people who can relate to their own problems, make friends and get some social contact in the evening.

Anyone who would be interested in coming along to these monthly meetings can contact Sadie for details on 07966660250. Parents and carers welcome!

*Sadie Bourne*

## 'GOD IS'

Whether we believe in him or not, whether we like it or not, 'God Is'. Belief in the accepted facts of science, especially Darwinism, and belief in God are not mutually exclusive. Some people do not believe because they cannot 'prove' that 'God Is' by rational logic. True believers may have started life with some form of indoctrination but if they keep faith they will sooner or later have an intuitive experience of Jesus in their lives, a kind of 'conversion', not necessarily of the Road to Damascus type, but significant enough to make them realise that something out of the ordinary has happened to them and they will never be the same again.

as the people who follow it. In my case, as a later diagnosed manic-depressive, I went rather over the top and was hospitalised. I started to produce art work of how I felt and read religious books. My later manic attacks usually had a religious element and I became increasingly frustrated as no one seemed to understand me except similar-minded patients and more recently some members of the clergy. I produced more 'mental' pictures and wrote a lot of mainly religious poetry, some of which I not understand at the time.

For the last few years I have had ongoing alternating mood swings. I'd go to Church occasionally, usually when high and feeling 'at one' with God. Then a day or so later I'd be depressed again and God wasn't there. I couldn't understand it. I eventually gave up the mental argument and decided to start reading the Bible again and saying my prayers. Not much happened. However I continued and my Faith gradually came back and the depressions were less black. During all this time I was having support from cognitive therapy (and still am) and seeing my priest when I needed to. I have read a lot more about depression (and mania) and spirituality and I can agree with those writers who see depression as a time of trial or test of Faith when God is hidden from the soul (see "The Dark Night of the Soul" by St. John of the Cross).

The soul has to search out its sin and seek forgiveness, and always remember that God is with it in its torments. The light of God's felt presence will return again.

*JSS  
Ilminster*

## Somerset and Wessex Eating Disorders Association

Working with Comic Relief

### ARE YOU

Aged between 18 and 25?  
In education or Vocational Training or about to be?  
Is your home or Training in the South West?  
Motivated and wanting help?

### DO YOU

Have an eating disorder that is getting in the way of your life?  
Want help and support to maintain your life and studies at your Training, University or College?

### IF SO AND YOU WOULD LIKE UNDERSTANDING AND SUPPORT

Please CONTACT Nicky TO FIND OUT MORE on 01458 837900

Or  
[nicky.linfield@btconnect.com](mailto:nicky.linfield@btconnect.com)  
Or look up on the website  
<http://home.btconnect.com/18-25>



## NEWS AND VIEWS In Somerset

\* **This time last year we mentioned some papers written by David Waddilove, late of the Virtual College and now National Development Officer at Topss England, though still based in Somerset.** It may be remembered that at the end of David's powerful critique of health care services he included positive alternatives. All of these papers have now been produced as a booklet entitled "Occasional Peaces" and can be obtained from the address below. Additionally, David has written three small books of poetry - "Mask Theory", "Settings" and "Osiris" - in which words, sometimes angry and edgy and sometimes gentle and tender, are used to powerful effect. Topss England, incidentally, has been commissioned by the Department of Health to work with the intention of modernising services around the needs of service users and to support social care employers who are developing new ways of delivering care services and designing new job roles. David says that it is now possible to identify national trends in new social care roles in mental health. These he suggests are:-

*"The Community Access worker  
"Recovery Educators, or user/survivor trainers  
"Skills outreach workers, educationally inclined and working across service user groups  
"Reconfigured teams and structures to enable these to happen  
"Service user-led roles incorporating some elements of support and some of buddying*

All this is interesting reading and if you would like to obtain copies of the Occasional Peaces, the poetry or further information about Topss, then write directly to: *David Waddilove, 23 Hamp Green Rise, Bridgewater, Somerset. TA6 6AZ*

\* **David Williamson, who becomes a convenor in the House of Lords in July,** tells us that the proposed **Mental Health Bill** will be brought before Parliament **before the summer recess.** He reports that there are "good people" both in the Lords

bill and that he is "relatively optimistic" that important amendments will be made. (The bill is currently under pre-legislative scrutiny).

\* **In the new "birthday edition" of 'The Caretaker' there is news of Michael Bainbridge.** Many of us met Michael when he was the Mental Health Development Worker (Carers) for Somerset. Michael then became the Regional Mental Health Carer Development Consultant for much of the south west - an exhausting job which required spending a lot of time at the Department of Health in London. He explains that the toll on his health was heavy and that he became involved in meditation which became more and more important to him. He is now a full-time student of Buddhist philosophy and meditation teacher having turned down a secondment opportunity to learn how to be a NHS senior manager. He writes, "The worldly life had its moments but fundamentally we need a peaceful mind. If we have this we can cope with whatever life throws at us. Without a peaceful mind, we cannot enjoy life no matter how successful we are".

\* **In November Anne Roberts helped to run a workshop ('The Somerset Experience') being presented by Vicky Nicholls (MHF) at the "Breath of Life" conference in London.** Anne is also a user representative on the steering group of the national spiritual and mental health project.

\* **March saw the publication in Mental Health, Religion & Culture of three research reports which emerged from the spirituality project in Somerset.** The first, 'From research to practice: The first tentative step' (John Foskett, Anne Roberts, Rita Matthews, Liz Macmin, Phil Cracknell and Vicky Nicholls), traces the history of the project from the research findings to the application of these in practice. It is set "within a Christian Liberation Theology's analysis of social and political systems, it's bias to the poor and their understanding of the human drive to health of mind and soul". The second report "Don't be afraid to tell". The spiritual and reli-

service users in Somerset. (Liz Macmin and John Foskett) outlines the process of the research and also the conclusions. The last report is called Mental health, religion and spirituality: Attitudes, experience and expertise among mental health professionals and religious leaders in Somerset (John Foskett, James Marriott and Fay Wilson-Rudd). It is to be hoped that, with the wide dissemination of these papers and the possibility of international recognition for the Somerset project, the initiative will continue to gather support for the next stage of its development. (*More information may be obtained from John Foskett whose address appears elsewhere in this edition*).

\* **In April, John Foskett and Anne Roberts were invited by Bournemouth Mind to contribute to the conference 'Spirituality and Mental Health in Dorset'.** (John has kindly given us the talk he gave at Kingston Maurward for publication in this edition).

\* **In May, Susanna Dobson gave a talk "Spiritual Crisis - breakthrough or breakdown: a psychiatrist's vision" at the Revisioning Mental Health conference in Stroud.**

### Other recent news:

\***The Social Exclusion Unit's Mental Health and Social Exclusion Report** was launched on 14 June 2004.

The report addresses what can be done to enable adults with mental health problems to enter and retain work, and how to ensure that adults with mental health problems have the same opportunities for social participation and access to services as the general population. For further information, go to [http://www.socialexclusionunit.gov.uk/mental\\_health/mental\\_health.htm](http://www.socialexclusionunit.gov.uk/mental_health/mental_health.htm)

## Other recent news (continue):

\* **Frank Bruno** says he is back to his usual self and is no longer taking medication. *The Sun*

\* **The number of people claiming incapacity benefit for stress has risen 40% since 1997.** *The Mail*

\* **Health chiefs in Berkshire** have admitted that a new privately funded treatment centre could force mental health day patients out of their ward. *IC Berkshire*

\* **British Medical Journal publishing is launching a new site for patients.** *BMJ*

\* **Icelandic researchers** have identified the location of a gene that may cause a fearful or anxious personality. *Sunday Times*

\* **Lithium** appears to reverse some of the damage caused by Alzheimers, researchers have found. *The Mail*

\* **Victor Meldrew** suffer from 'querulous paranoia', Australian researchers say. *The Times*

\* **30 million teenagers** in China under 17 have mental health problems the government said.

### Reuters

\* **While stroking a pet** is a good way to ease anxiety and depression, research from Sainsbury's Bank pet insurers has shown that 270,000 cats and dogs have obsessive compulsive disorder and 62,000 suffer master separation disorder. *News of the world*

\* **Danish research** has identified coeliac disease as a predictor of schizophrenia. Eliminating cereal gluten improved remission rates. Related genetic markers have been linked to both illnesses. *Scrip*

\* **80% of GP's surveyed admit to over-prescribing anti-depressants,** citing a lack of alternative treatments. *Pulse*

\* **NIMHE has reported that inpatient admissions still have occupancy rates of over 100%.**

\* **MIND says** that two people in three people with mental health problems are failing to get the benefits to which they are entitled.

\* **Rethink said that more than 50,000 people in the UK were not receiving the care they need** because they were being left behind by government reforms that focus on the young and the acutely ill. *(Rethink's 'Forgotten Generation'*

\* **The Electoral Commission** has been castigated for using the words 'idiots' and 'lunatics' to describe people with mental health difficulties. *Financial Times*

\* **More than half the women** in the UK have taken some form of anti-depressant according to a survey. *The Sun, Mirror and Telegraph*

\* **Trusts** providing mental health services are now facing a backlog of nearly £500 million in maintenance bills. *H.S. Journal*

\* **The Association of Mental Health Advocates** has been set up to provide a national voice for mental health advocates in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. *Community Care*

\* **The treatment of people** with mental illness needs to address their spiritual well-being. *Community Care*

\* **Editorial comment** on why access to talking therapies on the NHS is needed. *Observer*.

\* **A Swindon GP** is using software called 'Beating the Blues' to help patients with depression. The programme is based on cognitive behavioural therapy. *Doctor*

\* **Dr David Serran-Schreiber**, a professor of psychiatry and founding member of Medecins Sans Frontieres is launching his campaign stressing that exercise can be as curative as anti-depressants. *Observer*

\* **The Royal College of Psychiatrists** has developed a video teaching pack to improve the understanding of the needs of children whose parents have mental illness.

\* **The prison service** is facing a mental health crisis with rates of severe mental illness there 10 times higher among male inmates than in the general population. *Society Guardian*

\* **Mind claims that 3 in 4 prisoners** have mental health problems.

\* **A study has highlighted the contradiction between the new Mental Health Bill and current research which shows that compulsory treatment is ineffective.** *Hospital Doctor*

*(With thanks to Rethink media service for much of this information)*

## West Somerset Inclusion Project

The West Somerset inclusion project aims to promote social inclusion for people marginalised as a result of mental ill health.

West Somerset Inclusion Project, The Connexions Building, The Vennland Centre, Ponsford Road, Minehead, Somerset TA24 5DX

Tel: 01643 708765 email: [mind.inwestsomerset@virgin.net](mailto:mind.inwestsomerset@virgin.net)

## MindLine Somerset

Do you need someone to talk to? Mindline is there Friday, Saturday and Sunday from 8pm-12midnight on 01823 276892.

Mindline is a service for anyone who is experiencing or has experienced emotional or mental distress. Mindline also offers help to family members, carers and friends. We will listen and hear what you are saying without our opinions getting in the way.

We are here to provide a friendly ear, to empower you to make your own choices. We can signpost you to other services or agencies that may be of help.

The volunteers who answer the telephone are all carefully selected, fully trained and receive ongoing training and supervision. They are people who have had personal experience of mental distress or have an understanding of what mental distress may mean for others.

Confidentiality—you do not need to say who you are. It's up to you.

Mindline is seeking additional volunteers. If you would like to know more, please call our Helpline co-ordinator on 01823 286001.

Mindline is part of Mind Taunton & West Somerset, 32a North Street, Taunton TA1 1LW.

## South Somerset Mind Training

All run in the Training Room at South Somerset Mind, The Markwick Centre, Dampier Street, Yeovil. Contact Diane Brodie on 01935 410138.

<b>Name of course</b>	<b>Venue</b>	<b>Date</b>
Self Harm and Suicide	South Somerset Mind's Markwick Centre	29th June
Colour Therapy	South Somerset Mind's Markwick Centre	6th July
Personality Disorder	South Somerset Mind's Markwick Centre	22th July
Schizophrenia	South Somerset Mind's Markwick Centre	22th September
Cognitive Analytic Therapy	South Somerset Mind's Markwick Centre	3rd November
Recovery	South Somerset Mind's Markwick Centre	10th November
Depression	South Somerset Mind's Markwick Centre	14th December

Other events at the Markwick Centre Yeovil

Circus Skills every Saturday morning from 10am to 12.00 noon.

U in Mind every second Monday of the month from 6.15pm.

### **Triumph Over Phobia (TOP UK)**

Gareth Sharman

TOP UK

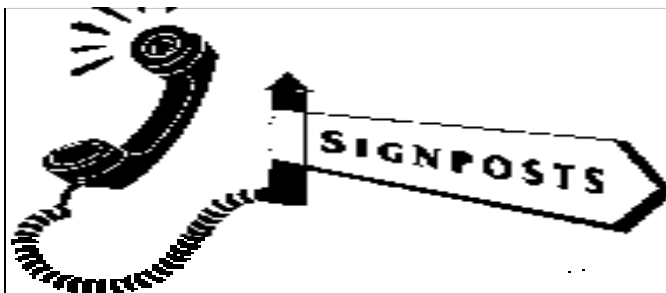
PO Box 344

BRISTOL BS34 8ZR

0845 600 9601

[triumphoverphobia@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:triumphoverphobia@blueyonder.co.uk)

[www.triumphoverphobia.com](http://www.triumphoverphobia.com)



**Somerset's Health & Community Care Information Service**  
FREEPHONE 0800 317220

**Yeovil Outreach Project**

If you are feeling down and don't know where to turn.  
Call 01935 414170 and speak to Angela  
Mental Health Outreach Worker for the Yeovil area

**Somerset's Mental Health Participation Workers:**

**Somerset Coast:** Veronica Murray 01984 634745

**Manager of the project:** Krista Felek 01278 733626

**South Somerset:** Julia D'Allen 01935 840137

**Mendip:** Kate Wilkins 01749 343481

**Taunton:** Alexandra Simson 01643 702853

**PALS—Somerset Partnership & Social Care NHS Trust**

Andy Jones has taken over the role of PALS officer, and will also work on patient information. His phone number is 01278 720222, and he can be contacted at Broadway House, Barclay Street, Bridgwater TA6 5YA.

**New Directions**

Broadway Park, Barclay Street, Bridgwater, Tues - Sunday inclusive offering a range of activities including Saturday and Sunday lunch Phone 01278 446935 for more details.

**The Manic Depression Fellowship Somerset**

A countywide organisation run for and by people who experience manic depression.

For further info contact Phil Cracknell on 01823 323363

**Carers Voice** is a group of mental health carers who advise on and facilitate carer involvement in Somerset's mental health services. Membership is open to any carer of someone with mental health needs, and Carers Voice helps ensure that carers are involved in decisions about how to plan, provide and evaluate the services. Contact Angie Gammon, c/o County Hall, on Mondays on 01823 356711

**SUCH** project offers complementary therapy treatment for anyone experiencing mental distress or carers, volunteers and people working within the mental health system. The project is based at the Mind Centre, Taunton on 01823 334906.

**Somerset Autistic Support Group** - Advice and Friendship line. If you are coping with problems on the Autistic Spectrum please do not feel alone, we are here to help. Contact our new Somerset Communication Line on 01823 324997, or

**Somerset Partnership Patient and Public Forum (PPI)**

Contact Emma Westbrook Forum Support Co-ordinator on 01225 701120.

**Commission for Patient and Public Involvement in Health (CPPIH)** www.cppi.org or telephone 01392 332100

**Manic Depression self-help group for Yeovil area.** The group meets every three weeks in Yeovil on a Tuesday. For further information about the group and details about joining the next meeting, please telephone 01460 73932 (evenings).

**Somerset Counselling Centre (Taunton)** provides weekly psychodynamic counselling. Contact Somerset Counselling Centre at 38 Belvedere Road, Taunton, Somerset TA1 1HD, or telephone 01823 337049.

**South Somerset Mind** run a drop-in based in Dampier Street, Yeovil from 10 to 3.30 Monday to Thursday and Friday from 10 to 12.30pm. They also run a befriending & volunteer scheme. Circus Skills runs on Saturday 10 to 12.00. Call Peter Hill on 01935 474875.

**Mind in Taunton and West Somerset** run a day project Peace of Mind on Mon, Wed & Fri 9.30 - 3.30 for details phone 01823 327094. The Hope Group, a self-help group for people experiencing anxiety and/or depression meets Tuesdays at the Albemarle Centre, Albemarle Rd, Taunton. For info phone 01823 334906. MINDLINE 0183 276892-offering out of hours telephone support, Fri & Sat 8.00pm to midnight. The co-ordinator Liz Simmons can be contacted on 01823 334906.

**Advocacy in Somerset** Call Tim on 01823 324762

**Mendip Advocacy** Call 01749 683300

**Taunton & West Somerset NSF group for carers**

The group meets at 2 The Crescent, Taunton every second Tuesday of each month. 12-2pm. 01823 354879

**U-In-Mind**

An informal gathering of users, carers and others to discuss ideas and to share some food. We meet on the second Monday of the month at 6.15pm at The Mind Centre, Dampier Street in Yeovil. For details phone Maureen Street on 01935 850979.

**Crispin Community Centre Street Self-Help Centre**

"We aim to help people help themselves" Drop-in Monday, Wednesday, Friday 12-3.00pm Thursday 6.30-9.30pm. Computer workshops & facilities for groups Phone 01458 447248 for more details

**Release Support Group** supports adult female survivors of child abuse. The group meets Wednesday at Sydenham Family Centre, Bridgwater from 2 to 4pm. Contact Kerry, the co-ordinator, on 01278 434023

**The Wincanton Community Venture** at the Balsam Centre, Wincanton have a drop-in open on Wednesdays 1pm to 3pm Call Brian on 01963-31842, or e-mail balsambrian@hotmail.com.

**Speak Up Somerset**

Speak Up Somerset is a county-wide coalition of groups and individuals interested in mental health issues. The group includes service users, workers, carers and others. Our email is speakupsomerset@talk21.com Our next meeting is at Taunton library on 6 July at 10.00am. All welcome. Please contact Maureen Street on 01935 850979