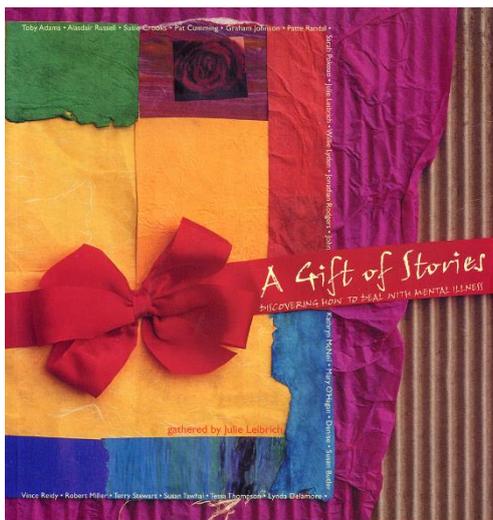




**Bradninch
Together**

Mental Health Matters: The gift of ‘Recovery Stories’

The community that receives this may have little difficulty valuing stories, but that’s not always the case. In the wider world of health care there’s often a demand for ‘evidence’ and evidence usually means numbers. Numbers can be very helpful ... rates of recovery in response to a treatment *do* provide some evidence of benefit and effect ... but rarely offer any sense of the experience of the people involved. Numbers also fall well short of illustrating and illuminating what is involved in the struggle for health and healing.



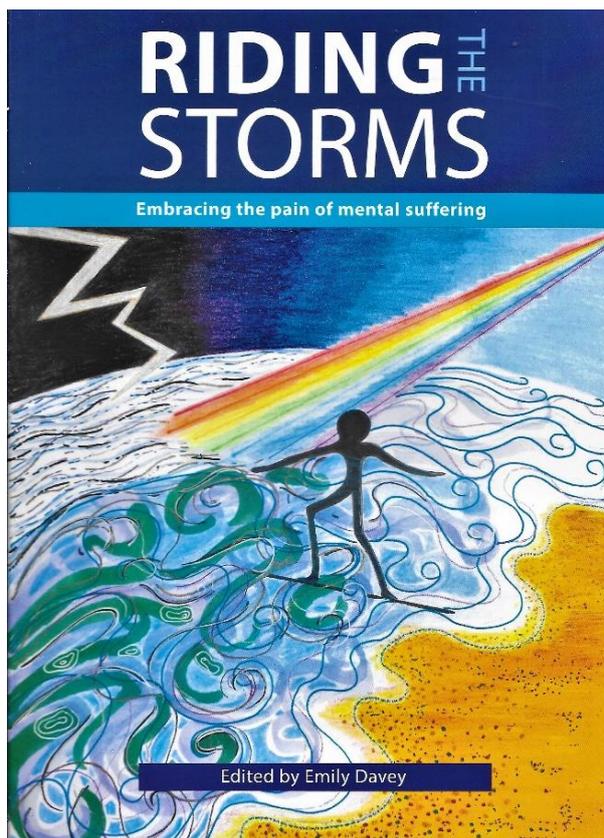
It is therefore through stories, narrative representations, that we find human connection and through that can be informed, touched and inspired. Stories of personal recovery sit at the heart of what has come to be known as the mental health recovery movement. One of the first collections (1999) was produced for a national anti-stigma campaign and presented as ‘A gift of stories’. Collections of recovery stories

are often felt to be offers of hope and opportunities for identification ... ‘if you then maybe me also’. Some find a sense of companionship and acceptance through reading such stories ... a bit like dipping into a peer group held between two covers. There are many such collections around the world and they have often been used in teaching or in campaigns against the ignorance, misunderstanding and discrimination that frequently accompany significant mental health challenges. Just such an anthology was



gathered and published a decade ago in Devon as, 'Beyond the Storms', It was offered free by our local health care Trust and its popularity has led to it being reprinted by Recovery Devon. More recently another wave of interest in 'Recovery stories' arose, this time

wanting to hear about the experience and search for hope for those who continued to struggle with or within recurrent storms in their lives. This led to a further collection, 'Riding the Storms:



embracing the pain of mental suffering' ... briefer reflections, poems, images from people doing just that and who's key message was that, 'However it looks and feels to you right now, please know that you are not alone' ... Both continue to be available free and can be ordered from recoverydevon.co.uk/ and we have a supply of printed copies to give away ... So, please get in touch if you'd like this, 'gift of stories' or would like to pass them on to another.

All good wishes

Glenn, Kate and Sophie, for BradTog MHM

Ps. Do let us know if you have suggestions or offers to make for future postings