

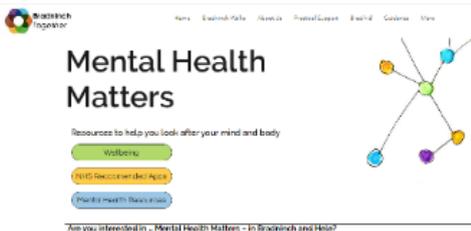


Mental Health Matters: Attending to our intention ...

MHM is part of BradTog, which came together to enable us to offer practical and mutual support to one another as neighbours, as peers. Our posting last week reflected on how approaching the one year anniversary of lockdown may lead us take stock, remember losses, be sensitive to grief and try to look ahead with hope.

Now we are 20

Today we offer our 20th weekly posting seeking to promote interest and understanding of mental health matters and enable us to be more aware of the many available sources of help and support. Over the last 5 months we have focused on a broad range of issues, including the ways in which we can grow in care and



kindness and take action in our own lives. These led us towards, 'learning to listen' and 'awareness of suicide risk' and much else. All of these previous posts remain available at

<https://www.bradninchtogether.org.uk/health-and-wellbeing>

So where are we in all this?

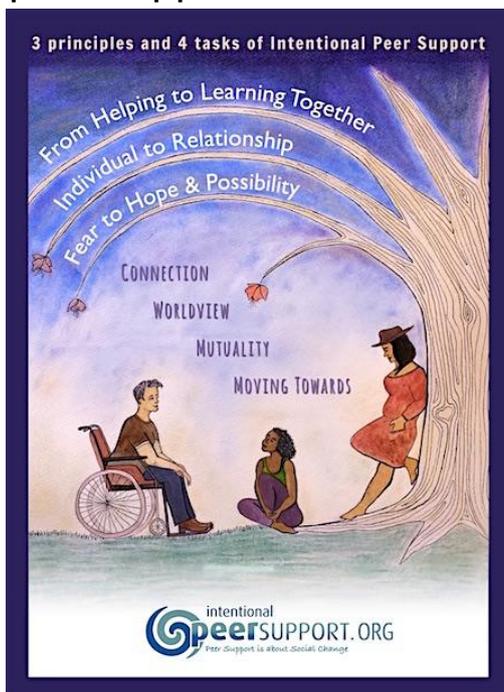
Mental health, like physical health, is not something you have or do not have but is a constantly changing dimension of living, intimately interconnected to everything else. We are all somewhere on a sliding scale, from resilient and healthy to struggling and poorly. Many things affect where we are on the scale at any one time and whether we're going up or down. Reflecting on this can help us understand how we are reacting to what is happening in our lives and carries hope we can learn how to look after ourselves better.

And so what are we trying to do?

It is heart-warming to see and hear of people helping one another. But what are we trying to do? Now, you may think that in the

context of mutual support it is inappropriate to be trying to do anything ... but our intentions give shape to so much of what happens in our lives and it's good to be aware of what they are ...

Some years ago Devon hosted a visit from two leading trainers on how best to support one another as peers*. They observed that sometimes, for the best of reasons we can inadvertently support one another in staying stuck. They had developed an approach to peer support that intentionally focused on health and recovery.



They saw 'Intentional Peer Support' as a process of social change, a threefold shift involving a transition from: helping to learning together, from a focus on individuals to cultivating relationships and from an experience of fear to that of hope and possibility. This highly respected peer training programme (www.intentionalpeersupport.org) may be well beyond our current interests but its approach has had a big influence on our local mental health services.

Their emphasis on becoming more aware of our intentions and choosing how to focusing our effort in seeking to live well also links closely with ancient wisdom teachings on, 'The four great efforts' which suggest the benefit of focusing on:

1. **preventing** harmful things arising in the first place
2. **reducing** the harm from things that are already harmful
3. **enabling** beneficial things to come into being
4. **increasing** the benefits from things that are already beneficial

As we take stock and look forwards, our intention is that whatever efforts we make, we may go some way towards this wholesome hope of cultivating care, kindness and social change ... Together.

Take care, and with all good wishes

Glenn, Kate and Sophie

For BradTog MHM

*see <https://library.recoverydevon.co.uk/document/peer-to-peer-mental-health-today-feb-2008/>