

Playing it Forward

by Tanya Kennard-Campbell

The 'Playing it Forward' Well-being CD is a free resource aimed at members of the public, put together by a group of 'everyday people', supported by the Eastern Development Centre's Whole Life Programme. The resource consists of an audio CD, Well-being booklet and 'Steps to Well-being' card.

The project was driven by a group of everyday people who wanted to share what helps and what doesn't in terms of achieving 'Mental Well-being'. The group had a strong desire to shout about what has been realised in terms of what we can all do,



simply and naturally, to support, protect and develop Mental Well-being ourselves.

Background

In April 2006, I ran a two day workshop in Tendring, Essex, on 'Mental Well-being', as part of the Whole Life Programme. This was then followed by an eight week Mental Well-being workshop (two and a half hours per session) based on the 'Principle-Based Approach'.

The content of the workshops covered:

- An opportunity to challenge myths relating to mental illness, and responsibility for Well-being.
- Raised awareness of what 'we have already', in terms of health and potential, and a

body that communicates in its own individual way when things aren't right.

- The factors affecting our experience of life, Well-being and prosperity.
- An opportunity to be 'nudged', or given permission to experiment with all the above.

Several members of the group decided they wanted to continue to meet and explore the understanding that was discussed in these workshops more. The general consensus was that 'the principles' of Mental Well-being discussed were simple, yet effective, and supported the assumption that 'this was nothing new' and basic 'common sense' and that the workshops merely raised awareness of what was already there.

The group initially looked at producing a compilation of uplifting songs on a CD which could be shared with others, as one common sense way so many of us use to lift our moods.

The next thought was to be able to encourage others to believe in their own ability to heal and be in control of their mental Well-being. The group felt that, through the CD, a booklet could be produced to simply get this message across.

Everyday people feel strongly that access to information that raises awareness of 'what we have already', 'what we can do' and having the opportunity to challenge the myths about mental health, Well-being and what we can achieve, is a person's right

The enthusiasm in the group grew as it became apparent how popular such a resource could be.

However, the reality of copyright, the release of songs and record companies being 'taken over' forced the group to reconsider the musical aspect to the resource.

Despite this, the group showed a commitment to make this a reality by continuing to commit their time and energy into exploring ways of making this an effective resource.

It was eventually decided that, instead of music, the resource would feature an audio CD, in the format similar to a radio interview or 'self help' CD, that would give much more scope for communication the important messages about mental and emotional Well-Being.

Who are 'Everyday people'?

"We are a group of ordinary, everyday people, who met at a local community centre in Clacton-on-Sea, Essex. We all had one thing in common; a desire to learn about our own Mental Health and Well-being and ways to cope when things appear to get too much. With what we learned and did together, we wanted to 'play forward', what we had learnt, to help others like ourselves, hence the name of the CD 'Playing it Forward'.

"We learnt so much that we were bursting to tell everyone else. There's hopefully, you will pass it on, or rather 'Play it Forward', to others."

Everyday people feel very strongly that access to information that raises awareness of 'what we have already', 'what we can do' and having the opportunity to challenge some of the myths about mental health, Well-being and what we can achieve, is a person's right.

The group's desire is to 'Play it



C.D. McAllister

people accessing information and support for their Well-being.

others. He has enrolled on a Health and Social Care course as a result:

'Everyday people' are (not including their family and friends):

Ellen Perkins

Ellen Perkins is a single mother of three who was:

"...living day to day to day, a pretty mundane life. I went to the workshop and grasped the concept that there is more to life. I feel strongly about helping others with their emotional Well-being and believe that we all have a part to play in the Well-being of our communities. I have a particular interest in youth and helped deliver a series of 'Emotional Health' workshops at my local secondary school as a result.

"I don't grasp the principles, I can't describe them; I just live them. The way I see the principles at work in my life is in trusting yourself, outside influences will test you, but deep down you will know the way. If you don't think too much about it, it will come up. You deal with things as they come up. You don't predict what will happen. If I were to think of each thing I 'have to worry about', I'd make myself ill.

"A few years ago, I used to stress about everything. I couldn't rely on external things, like a counsellor, or pills, but that would've left me not being able to stand on my own two feet. I believe the things I've been through have made me who I am.

"How do I live the principles? I stay calm, I think things through and I do what's best. It's not that I'm churning and thinking things over; I trust myself to come up with the right answer. I know where I'm going. I know I'll be alright. A lot of the time I trust myself. I don't trust anyone else as much as me. I know who to go to for help."

Jake Race

Jake Race is a 15 year old young man who lives in the Tendring area and was involved in the Community Well-being Workshops. Jake remained engaged with 'Everyday People' because he 'enjoyed the atmosphere' and it 'opened his mind up'. Jake is currently in care and feels he has things he wants to share and a desire to help

"I want to become a Mental Health Professional, I want to make a difference. Most Mental Health Professionals I've been involved with tend to work in a textbook way. Because I have first hand experience of the things affecting young people, I believe I can make a difference as I can use my personal experiences to help, as I have a good understanding an insight into a young person's mind."

What is Well-being?

"Well-being, to me, is being happy and content. Mental health is being well in your mind, but Well-being is a step further, it's feeling good and happy in your mind".

How do you access it?

"Space, music, my friends, and cigarettes!"

Paula Entwistle

"My name is Paula and I have two children with special needs. When asked to write for this project, I didn't know where to begin, I have so much to say, but, thinking back to the workshops, it was like 'refreshing my mind'. It surprised me how much I did actually know already and gave me an insight into my own potential for happiness, and therefore Well-being. I realise now that I am doing it all subconsciously!

"When I went to the workshops, everything started to fall into place. I learnt that it is OK not to like what everybody else expects you to be, to be different is actually alright, good even. A good example of this is when my daughter chose what she wanted to wear to nursery one day. She picked up a pair of cream tights, orange shorts, pink t-shirt and a cropped denim jacket. I kept telling her that she couldn't wear tights with shorts! She was defiant. She screamed and kicked and cried and really got quite upset about it. Then I remembered what I had learnt the day before in the workshop,



Forward' and to be proactive in being the 'voice of their communities'.

"We hope to offer you some 'food for thought' that may encourage you to believe in your own wisdom (and that of those around you). We also hope that by using this resource, you will find out more about what Well-being is and the things affecting it."

The group have certainly communicated a sense of frustration about 'why weren't we told about this before now?', believing that this basic, yet

effective understanding should be widely available in the school systems, Mental Health services and wider community.

"Why is it that my children can get a wealth of information on healthy eating, exercise and sexual health, but they can't on how to deal with emotional and Mental Health? We need to know about our 'Mental Health 5-a-day!'" Workshop participant

'Everyday People' feel strongly that this resource should be freely available, as there are too many barriers that already exist to



and the fact that we always seem to try to conform to what others expect to fit in and tick the box. I thought "what am I doing? I'm trying to make my daughter conform! I am suppressing her individuality by telling her that she cannot wear what she wants! I should embrace the fact that she has chosen what she wants to wear, she doesn't do it that often, and today she has and I'm chastising her for it!

"So I watched her get dressed and, in fact, I thought she looked rather cool!

"The mind is like having a piece of equipment you haven't got a manual for, or having a picture, then finding the pieces. The principles offer you the map, or the manual, to access the within".

Sandie George

"My name is Sandie and I am a mother of two lovely children. After a traumatic birth with my youngest, I lost the use of the left side of my face. I suffered with post-natal depression and became a recluse, due to not being able to face the world with how ugly my face made me feel.

"It took a long while before I had the courage to venture out where people who didn't know me would be.

"I realised that the trauma of what happened had slowly ebbed away my self-esteem and I had lost all my self worth and confidence. With this in mind, I enrolled in some short courses that would help me gain back my self worth and some of my lost confidence.

"The workshop ignited that inner part of me that I'd lost. It reminded me that I do have the tools within, that if I stood back and gave myself some space, I

could look at it more productively. I was able to see things that made my life grow. I can see my strengths and weaknesses and do something about it, rather than seeing it was all one big black cloud and not being able to release yourself from under it. Everything used to lump together in that cloud and become overwhelming. It would lead to a nervous breakdown or depression or whatever we have. I could see no way forward. I was living a life that was out of control; it gave me back the reins.

"I can now break things down into smaller parts. That was the kick up the butt that I needed, giving me back control of my life. "If I didn't have the privilege of what that workshop gave me, I could've remained stuck under that cloud.

"I realised I could cope, I had faith and it somehow gave me the strength that you just 'know', you just 'know' you'll get through it.

"It's given me a passion for life, to somehow spread the word. I carry a torch for everyone; it's now a lifelong vision. I carry my torch in my pocket everywhere I go".

Steps to Well-being Card

The 'Steps to Well-being Card', is a credit-card sized, simple reminder to create balance on the inside by taking care of yourself and understanding what effects your internal experience of Well-being, and, on the outside, in terms of things we do to make us feel good.

When you're not feeling good on the inside, the things you usually do to make you feel good are never as effective. So understanding how your internal experience is created is a big part of the audio content of the CD, and the Well-being card is a simple reminder of this.

Well-being Booklet Insert

The Well-being Booklet includes information on what Well-being is and the connection between the mind and body. It does this by providing practical information for the reader on a 'healthy body',



'physical Well-being', healthy mind' and mental 'Well-being'.

The 'Playing it Forward' CD and booklet, are free Well-being resources. You access a copy by contacting the Eastern Development Centre, or via the Whole Life Website:

www.wholelife.org.uk
www.well-beingeast.co.uk