



Aspiehelp / The Aspire Trust January 2018 Newsletter

Edited by Anna Melling

In this newsletter: Rata Foundation grant, Social Night Changes, AGM, Live Life Program, Mad Poets, The Conversation article on mental health for autistic people

Rata Foundation grant

The Rata Foundation have given us a generous grant for “global expenses”, which will be extremely helpful in continuing and improving our services.



**Rātā
Foundation**

Social Night Changes

The place and time of our social nights has changed.

The new venue is the Kowhai Lounge at the Cashmere Presbyterian Church, cnr. Dyers Pass Rd and MacMillanAve. This is below our offices. Use the Church House entrance (midway along the weatherboard building) to access the lounge.

The time is now 7pm - 9pm.

There are board games, drinks and biscuits. Please bring a donation of \$2 or more.

The first social nights will be on the 7th and 21st February, and they will continue on the first and third Wednesdays of each month.

Annual General Meeting

We will be holding our AGM at the first Social Night (see above) on Wednesday the 7th of February. This will include the Chairman’s Report, Financial Report and election of officers.

Everyone is welcome to attend.

Upcoming Fundraising Sausage Sizzles

Here are the dates for the upcoming Sausage Sizzles at Fresh Meats Barrington (Barrington Mall):

Saturday the 3rd of February

Saturday the 17th of February

If you’re in the area, come and visit, say hello and perhaps buy a sausage! We are always grateful for volunteers to help out with the sausage sizzles, even 2 hours now and then is very helpful (contact the office in advance if you want to help out)

In Our Office

Befuddled by heat, I hasten to dredge the pits of my brain for NEWS!

The end of year BBQ and “birthday party” was successful with no repeats of the sausage/marshmallow sandwiches from last year! Leith’s new deck and sun umbrellas made for a very congenial space with plenty of greenery around and overhead.

Julie has had a busy summer and is now taking a short break of “not being busy”.

Anna has acquired a rabbit, “Mr. Bun-bun”, and Mindy McMurray has been very busy climbing and jumping in the trees and shepherding Leith away from the dreaded letterbox (its down a long drive and Leith is perceived as running away from home)

Leith has been invited to join the Autism Consumer Panel which reports to the Minister for Disability Services. She was also awarded a Civic Award for Community Work at a special gathering in the Great Hall of the Arts Centre- one of 12 people so honoured.

We have some exciting plans for 2018, including another Aspie Roundup in November. This will be held at Cashmere Presbyterian Church this time, giving us more room, plenty of parking close to the venue, and some outdoor space should we want it.

We have a few speakers lined up already and hope Michael Woods will have another short movie to show us by then!



Leith's Civic Award



Mister Bun-bun



Our staff, clockwise from top left: Leith, Rod, Julie, and Anna

Social evenings

Our regular social evenings are on the first and the third Wednesday of the month, at The Cashmere Presbyterian Church’s Kowhai Lounge from 7pm - 9pm.

We have board games, hot drinks and biscuits, and a selection of books from the Aspiehelp library available at every meeting. Please bring a \$2 donation.

The next meetings are on the 7th and 21st of February.

You are welcome to attend, but *new members should contact Leith or Julie first.*

Conversation group

Our Conversation Group is temporarily on hold.

Our Patron is Stephen Mark Shore, PhD.

The Aspire Trust, Inc is a registered Charitable Trust. Charities Services registration number is CC46192.

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Help people Live Life, with a Grandparents help!

Sam Johnson

Head of Community Innovation, Mycare

Kia ora friends,

We are seeking referrals of people wanting to find part time to work and learn life skills from an older person.

As featured in Stuff News in December, the free month long course is designed to mutually benefit both a younger person experiencing mental health challenges and an older person wanting share their life experience in a mentoring capacity.

Referrals are now open for the January intake for the Live Life Program that bridges people experiencing mental health challenges into work with the help of a grandparent figure with similar interests.

Sessions are held twice weekly at a funky shared office space called the BizDoJo in Central Christchurch. Part time paid work is often found via the mycare.co.nz platform which connects local people with part time work. Suitable referrals want to be back “living life” and usually are on the job seeker benefit with a health condition aged 18-35. This program is supported by CDHB, MSD, Mycare and the BizDoJo. Find out more: Robyn Georgieff 0211713848 or robyn@mycare.co.nz



stuff.co.nz link:

“Live Life Programme teaches life skills...”

Mad Poetry - Open Mic Night

Mad Poets Society is back for 2018! Come along to an Open Mic night event - Friday 16th Feb, 16th March and 20th April at Beat St cafe!

<https://www.facebook.com/events/1606863999380668>

Have a listen to some brave and inspirational writers, or have a go at being brave yourself and reading/singing/performing your own writing :

The night kicks off from 7pm and we finish up by about 9pm – all welcome, sign up to read on the night if you feel like it. Beat St café is on the corner of Armagh and Barbadoes Streets in the central city.

The cafe will be open with yummy food, hot and cold drinks, and we will have our anthology and awesome t-shirts for sale as a fundraiser (\$10 and \$30).

Mad Poets Society is run by Awareness: Canterbury Action on Mental Health and Addictions as a safe, supportive space for people to share our experiences and creativity surrounding the ups and downs of life, illness, wellness and recovery.



”Autistic people aren’t really accepted – and it’s impacting their mental health”

Up to 70% of autistic people experience mental health conditions such as depression and anxiety, according to some research. Unfortunately, we still don’t know why autistic people are at a higher risk for mental health problems than non-autistic people. But one important factor is whether an individual’s autism is recognised and accepted by those around them. My colleagues and I recently published research that shows a lack of acceptance can significantly impact on the mental health of autistic adults.

While medical professionals have become much better at diagnosing autism, many people with the condition feel it is still not accepted as a potentially positive aspect of who they are. Autism is a lifelong neurodevelopmental condition, meaning that the brain develops differently. This results in differences in social communication and interactions, sensory experiences and restricted interests. For our research, we surveyed 111 cognitively able autistic adults about how their experiences of autism acceptance related to their mental health, and many commented on experiencing a negative reaction.

“Since being diagnosed I have found that mention of autism is met blankly or dismissed,” said one participant. Another explained how searching for acceptance from others could be incredibly draining: “As the years pass, I suffer increasing anxiety for lack of even casual acceptance by my species.”

Take a moment to think about a crucial part of who you are. For example, I am Scottish, and that is a very important part of me. Now think about whether other people accept that part of you. Perhaps you feel a disconnection between how much you accept yourself and how much others seem to accept you. If you feel like others don’t accept you for that part of your identity, this could impact on your mental health. As human beings, we have a natural desire to be accepted and to belong.

For people who have a diagnosis of an autism spectrum condition, autism can be an integral part of who they are. This is why many prefer the term “autistic person” rather than “person with autism” (just as I prefer to be called a Scottish person rather than a person with Scottishness). But do other people accept autistic people for who they are? Recent research suggests not, and that first impressions of autistic people tend to be negative.

Our survey found that autistic people who felt less accepted by others were more likely to experience higher symptoms of depression and stress. Lower self-acceptance was also related to higher symptoms of depression. These findings suggest that simply feeling accepted plays a key role in a person’s mental health.

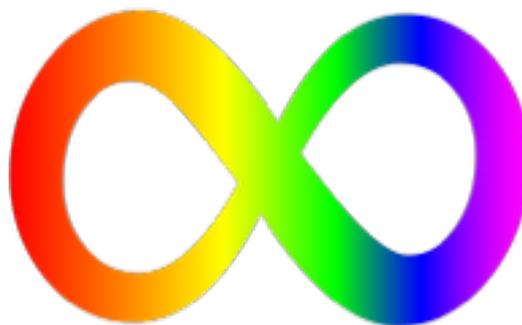


Another important aspect of our research was that we also asked participants to share any thoughts they had on their experiences of autism acceptance. Their answers revealed that many thought that they “camouflaged” or “masked” the fact they were autistic. In other words, in certain situations they tried to act “neurotypical” (non-autistic). As one participant said, “I mask so well that I am accepted, but not for being autistic”.

We found that the participants who said that they camouflaged also reported higher symptoms of depression. One participant explained that “[camouflaging] is incredibly exhausting and stressful and has ultimately led to mental and physical health problems”. Hopefully you can imagine how draining it must be to feel like you have to constantly hide a major part of yourself from others. We are just starting to learn about camouflaging in autism, and more research needs to be done to understand the impact it could have on autistic people’s lives.

Celebrating diversity

We need to accept autistic people for being who they are, and to enable them to feel like they can disclose the fact that they are autistic to others and be accepted for this. My past research with autistic adolescents found that many of these adolescents had a desire to fit in with their peers, but they also wanted to be accepted for who they were. In our societies, we should be celebrating diversity and enabling autistic people to be themselves.



Perhaps by creating a more accepting society, we might see fewer mental health difficulties in autism. But we need more work on autism acceptance to work out how we can actually do this. For example, research on online training for university students has shown that teaching them about autism and neurodiversity (the idea that autism is a part of human diversity) can improve attitudes.

Mental health research in autism is the number one research priority in this area, and autism acceptance is likely just one factor among many that could contribute to mental health difficulties in autism. But by being more accepting and positive when people are diagnosed with autism, we could make a real difference to their lives.

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THE CONVERSATION

<https://theconversation.com/autistic-people-arent-really-accepted-and-its-impacting-their-mental-health-86817>



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