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Family Connections

EDITED BY JUSTUN MILLER. DECEMBER 2016

By Justun Miller

This month's edition of the Family Connections Newsletter is focusing on reflection, what it is, and ways in which we can use it more effectively in our roles as caregivers and loved ones of those struggling with mental health diagnosis, concurrent disorders, and addiction. To keep with the theme of reflection we will be reviewing the material from this year's previous newsletters .



Sometimes providing the appropriate care for your loved one requires you to acknowledge that you are not able and/or capable of providing them with what they need.

Please remember that if your loved one is at risk to themselves or others, the best resources are your local Emergency Department, and 911. For non-emergencies please contact the Access and Assessment Center (AAC).

AAC Contact Information

Hours: 7 days/week; 24 hours/day; 365 days/year

Phone: 604-875- 8289

Address: 711 West 12th Ave

Reflection, Mindfulness and Awareness

By Isabella Mori

Mindfulness ... is a practice of giving deep attention to what is happening in the present moment – what is happening in the mind and body of the observer and also what is going on in our surroundings. We might practice being mindful of the body, the breath ... We can also experience being mindful of our responses – the feelings that arise in reaction to pleasure or discomfort – and watching them arise and disappear. (Joan Halifax)

I am one of the facilitators of the Family Connections Support group. The topic of mindfulness often comes up in that group. Lately, we decided to begin each group with a brief mindfulness exercise; it seems to ground us after rushing in to the group, leaving the day's frantic busyness behind us just a bit.

Mindfulness and its cousins meditation, relaxation and visualizations come in many forms. Reflection is one of them. I appreciate how Joan Halifax talks about "deep attention" – a wonderful way to describe reflection. It happens when we stop, or at least slow down, the runaway train of thoughts and actions: "Wait! What's going on here?" Reflection and mindfulness help us to whittle away at all those automatic things we do, and to make them a bit more intentional. "Do I really want to eat another cookie? Do I really want to watch more TV, even though I'm dead tired? Do I really need to assert that I'm right in this squabble with my wife?"

As we ask these questions, we are naturally led to more self awareness. As caregivers, this can also easily lead to understanding our loved ones better. The curiosity we develop about what's really going on with us can take us curiosity about the other, about entering their world more fully. What is it that *they* truly want, feel, think?

But I find it useful to always come back to myself, because in the end I am the only person I can really hope to know. Try these questions. Ask them with curiosity, and with as little judgment as you can muster:

What is my body doing right now? How am I moving/sitting etc.?

What am I feeling in my body?

What am I feeling emotionally?

What words am I using as I talk to myself and others?

What stories am I telling myself about something that troubles me, and are those stories true?

What do I want?

How am I living my values?

This article was inspired by Michelle O'Rourke RN, MA, a nurse who works in Palliative Care. (Mindfulness and Reflective Practice: Enriching personal and professional growth, available at goo.gl/g0YN72) The thoughtful, compassionate and creative approach taken by many palliative care practitioners has been an inspiration throughout my career in the helpful profession.

*Mindfulness and its
cousins meditation,
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The Family Connections Support Group

The Family Support and Involvement Team has a support group for family and friends of individuals with mental illness and/or substance use concerns.

The group is being held at the CIBC Centre for Patients and Families at the Jim Pattison Pavilion at VGH and is co-facilitated by a family member. We are very grateful to the CIBC Centre for Patients and Families for partnering with us on this exciting endeavor.

We aim to create a welcoming and supportive space in which family members can share their experiences with each other and feel supported and strengthened in their efforts to help their loved ones.

The group runs twice a month and family members are free to attend on a regular basis or drop in as needed. We hope that having the group on the VGH campus will make it easier for families to attend who are supporting a loved one at the Psychiatric Assessment Unit (PAU), Inpatient Psychiatry or Willow Pavilion, though all family members and supporters are welcome.

DATE: Every first Thursday and third Monday of the month

TIME: 6:00 – 8:00 p.m.

PLACE: CIBC Center for Patients and Families at the Jim Pattison Pavilion, Vancouver General Hospital, 899 W. 12th Ave (behind the Information Center)

For questions or more information please contact:

isabella.mori@vch.ca, 604 290-3817 or

becky.hynes@vch.ca , 604 313-1918

“We aim to create a welcoming and supportive space in which family members can share their experiences with each other and feel supported and strengthened”



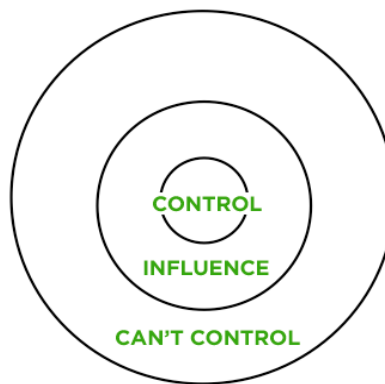
**FOCUS
MORE
ON THINGS
YOU
CAN
CONTROL**

Focus on What You CAN Do

God grant me the serenity
to accept the things I cannot change;
courage to change the things I can;
and wisdom to know the difference.

~Reinhold Niebuhr

The above is a quote that is very well known within the Alcoholics Anonymous community. But its application is not limited to that community alone, we all have the capacity to be proactive. We can focus on the things that we can actually do something about, or we can add to the stress in our lives by worrying over the things we have no control over. This may sound like a very simple concept, but it is something that everyone will have had trouble with at some point in their lives. Reflecting on our worries and determining the degree of control we have over something can help us to decide how much energy we commit to it. If we are experiencing a lot of worry/stress and the negative consequences that come along with those states of mind, it is not a bad idea for us to take a step back and evaluate whether we are worrying about something that we have control over (practicing self care), can influence (Our loved ones self care), or can't control (Whether or not our loved one takes their medication). Here is a sphere of control model which may help with visualizing this concept:



Once we have decided that the worry is something that we do have control or influence over we can set a SMART goal to help us move forward.

By Justun Miller

S.M.A.R.T Goals

When we are setting goals it is not unusual for them to take on a very vague form. This can be one of the biggest barriers to being successful in achieving goals.

There is a “tool” that many professionals use to support their clients in setting and achieving goals, but its use is not limited to that setting. As you may have guessed, it is called the S.M.A.R.T goal setting tool.

S.M.A.R.T is an acronym which is broken down as follows:

S	M	A	R	T
Specific	Measurable	Attainable	Realistic	Timely
What <u>specifically</u> do you want to do?	How will you know when you've reached it?	Is it in your power to accomplish it?	Can you realistically achieve it?	<u>When exactly</u> do you want to accomplish it?

As you can see, this tool does not let us get away with goals like “I will look after myself better this year”. The SMART version of this goal will look more like this:

S I will attend 1 of the 2 Family Connections Support groups offered by the Family Support and Involvement Team in January 2016 (You could be even more specific and pick which session. The group times are listed in this Newsletter’s calendar).

M I will keep track of my attendance on the calendar in the kitchen.

A I am able to attend the group after work, and I am able to take the bus to the group.

R There are no present reasons why I can not achieve this goal.

T I will accomplish this goal in January 2016.

You may find it helpful to keep SMART in mind as you read through this newsletter.

By Justun Miller

Reflection is not always an easy task, especially if we are spending a lot of time focusing on problem solving, as can often be the case when caring for loved ones. Below is a chart that we first shared in the June 2016 newsletter. It is designed to assist you in identifying your families strengths.

Discovering our Family Strengths Chart

Strength Area	Very Strong	Some Growth Needed	Much Growth Needed
Love and Appreciation: Caring for each other Friendship Respect for individuality Playfulness Humor			
Time Together Quality time in great quantity Good things take time Enjoying each other's company Simple good times Sharing fun times			
Commitment Trust Honesty Dependability Faithfulness Sharing			
Communication Encouragement Sharing feelings Giving compliments Agreeing to disagree Avoiding blame Being able to compromise			
Adaptability: Coping with change Seeing crises as challenges and opportunities Growing through crises together Openness to change Resilience			
Connection and Well-being Hope Faith/spirituality/purpose/meaning Compassion Shared ethical values Connections to community and family			

This chart is the next step in that it is designed to help us set specific goals to improve in areas that we feel may need some attention. You may notice similarities to the SMART goal setting tool here.

Family Goal Setting Worksheet

Strength Area	Our goals	Activities we will do	When
Love and Appreciation: Caring for each other Friendship Respect for individuality Playfulness Humor			
Time Together Quality time in great quantity Good things take time Enjoying each other's company Simple good times Sharing fun times			
Commitment Trust Honesty Dependability Faithfulness Sharing			
Communication Encouragement Sharing feelings Giving compliments Agreeing to disagree Avoiding blame Being able to compromise			
Adaptability: Coping with Change Seeing crises as challenges and opportunities Growing through crises together Openness to change Resilience			
Connection and Well-being Hope Faith/spirituality/purpose/meaning Compassion Shared ethical values Connections to community and family			

FAMILIES DEALING WITH MENTAL ILLNESS

Family-to-Family Education
An intensive 12-session course

February 8 — April 26, 2017

7:00 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. Wednesday evenings

NS Disability Resource Centre
3158 Mountain Hwy. North Vancouver

TOPICS COVERED INCLUDE:


- Symptoms of the illnesses - bipolar, schizophrenia, clinical depression, anxiety
- Medications and communication
- Problem solving
- Advice on working with the system
- Looking after yourself as a caregiver

OFFERED FREE OF CHARGE!

Register Early! Class size is limited.

For information and to register call:
Kathryn (604-926-0856)

Course outline and details:
[www.northshoreschizophrenia.org/
education/family-to-family-course/](http://www.northshoreschizophrenia.org/education/family-to-family-course/)



The course is taught by trained family members who themselves have ill relatives and many years' experience dealing with the system. It will be of particular interest to families whose relatives have recently been diagnosed.



Hosted by North Shore Schizophrenia Society
in partnership with NSDRC
Funding provided by: Vancouver Foundation





First Nations Talking Circle

Carnegie Community Centre

401-Main Street/ Hastings.

Third Floor



Starts: Wednesday's at 10:00am.

Please join us for this weekly Talking Circle (Co-ed group for adults).

Coffee and snacks

Open to everyone

Come and learn more about culture, share, and express your thoughts, as well as experience traditional ceremonies.

Facilitator's Perry Omeasoo (VCH) 604-306-7474

Family Support Groups

Mood Disorders Association of BC – Mutual support groups for families of individuals living with a mood disorder. 2nd and 4th Tuesday each month, 7 - 9 p.m., Mount St. Joseph Hospital, 3080 Prince Edward St, Harvest Room A.
Contact Suemay Black @ 604-251-2179

Raven Song Family Support Group– Support group for families who have a loved one living with mental illness. 2nd Wednesday of each month 6:30 – 8:30 p.m. at Raven Song Community Health Centre, 2450 Ontario Street, Vancouver.
Contact Sally @ Tel: (604)270 7841 ext 2126

St Paul's Hospital Family Support Group- Support for families who have a loved one living with mental illness. Last Thursday of each month, 6-7:30pm. St Paul's Hospital, 1081 Burrard Street, Room # 451, 4th floor, Burrard Building. Please pre-register by calling 604-682-2344 local 62403

VCH Eating Disorder Program – Family Support Group – for friends and family members of individuals living with an eating disorder. 1st Wednesday of each month, 6 – 7:30 p.m., 3rd Floor, 2750 East Hastings, Vancouver. Contact Hella @ 604-675-2531 ext 20689.

Parents Forever – Support group for families of adult children living with addiction. Group meets every 2nd Friday at St. Mary's Kerrisdale, 2490 W 37th Ave., Vancouver. Contact Frances Kenny, 604-524-4230 or fkenny@uniserve.com

Pathways Clubhouse Chinese Family Support Group – Education sessions for Chinese families who have a loved one living with mental illness. 2nd Saturday of each month. 1 – 4:00 p.m., Room 345/50, 7000 Minoru Blvd, Richmond.
Contact Bessie.wang@pathwaysclubhouse.com
or 604-276-8834, ext 12.

Family Support Groups

GRASP Support Group – GRASP offers peer-led mutual support groups for families or individuals who have had a loved one die as a result of substance abuse or addiction.

2nd Thursday of each month, 7-9 p.m. at Gilmore Community School 50 South Gilmore Ave, Rm 207. Please email graspvancouverarea@gmail.com to register.

SMART, Family and Friends - Support group for family and friends to learn and implement self care, boundary setting, and compassionate communication tools. Every Tuesday 6:30-8:00PM at Three Bridges Addictions 1290 Hornby Street, Rm 310. Thursday 6:00-7:00PM at Raven Song 2450 Ontario Street, 1st floor. Call Oona @ 604-714-3480.

Family Connections Support Group —Every first Thursday and third Monday of the month in the CIBC Center for Patients and Families at the Jim Pattison Pavilion, Vancouver General Hospital, 899 W. 12th Ave (behind the Information Center) For questions or more information please contact: isabella.mori@vch.ca, 604 290-3817 or becky.hynes@vch.ca , 604 313-1918

First Nations Talking Circle - Weekly Talking Circle co-ed group for adult family and client's interested in learning more about First Nations Culture, sharing, expressing thoughts, and experiencing traditional ceremonies. Every Wednesday from 10:00 at the Carnegie Community Centre. Third floor 401 Main Street/Hastings, Vancouver. Contact Perry Omeasoo @ 604-306-7474



The *Family Connections* newsletter is available electronically, direct to your email inbox each month. If you don't already receive *Family Connections* via email and would like to stay up-to-date about programs and services supporting families with a loved one with mental illness and/or addiction, sign up at www.spotlightonmentalhealth.com

NOTES