

## CHESTERFIELD & NORTH DERBYSHIRE TINNITUS SUPPORT GROUP



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Newsletter

Edited by Audrey Carlin

May/June 2016

### **BREAKFAST MEETING ON THURSDAY 30<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2016 AT WHEATCROFT'S WHARF CROMFORD CANAL FROM 10.30 AM TO 12.30 PM**

We have booked the upstairs room at Wheatcroft's Wharf, situated in the Derwent Valley. This lovely canal-side café and bookshop is located across the road from the main mill site. The



photograph shows the café on the left.

Enclosed with the newsletter is a menu of options that are available at the café which you may wish to choose beforehand and a Booking Form. **It is essential to book a place so that we can let the café know how many people to expect.** After the meeting there are lots to see and do. There are walks, trails, shops and a gallery. There is also an interactive scale model of the World Heritage Site along with a film. There are guided tours, plants sales, Heritage antiques and collectables and more to see and do. Or you can take a walk along the canal. So you could make it a full day out.

If you wish to bring along your partners, they are welcome too.

### **HELEN'S STORY**

Thank you to everyone who returned our Feedback Questionnaire. One of the requests was for more personal stories and we have taken this on board. At our conference, we had two personal stories, both mine and Joy's. However, a young lady who was first in touch with us about 3 years ago, is coming along to tell us of her own unique personal journey. Helen, who lives in Leicestershire, is very articulate and I know her story will be peppered with interesting and inspirational anecdotes.

### **HELEN'S BIOGRAPHY**

Helen is a careers and life coach, facilitator and busy mum of two. In her work she likes to help people make positive changes in their lives, by



Helen in beautiful surroundings overcoming obstacles. She works for herself which involves being at home

quite a bit. She has yet to achieve the perfect work/life balance, but strives for this on a daily basis!

Helen enjoys being outside as much as she can and is regularly to be seen round her town running or cycling, anywhere with trees and a path. She is also re-learning piano after a pretty long time and enjoys listening to music.

Helen noticed she had tinnitus around three years ago. She will be talking about some of the things she has done since then and sharing some of her story. She is being enticed to talk by the offer of coffee and cake and admits this is taking her out of her own comfort zone!

## What does happiness mean to you?

It occurred to me many years ago that if I was “happy” with my tinnitus rather than “sad” I would feel much better. This worked and from then onwards tinnitus has lived with me, not me with tinnitus (allowing me to be in control of my emotions). Happiness is an emotion that has far-reaching effects on our bodies. I know we all have bad times but if we can inject happiness into our lives on a daily basis, this will help us along life's way.

### CALOW PRIMARY SCHOOL –



#### Winners of our “Happiness” project

With thoughts of  
“happiness” in  
mind and whilst  
celebrating our  
30<sup>th</sup> year, we

decided to see if we could encourage schools to become involved in a project of “what does happiness mean to you”. Calow Church of England (VC) Primary School responded with wonderful inspirational drawings and words from the children. Children as young as 4/5 year olds up to 10/11 year olds took part.

On a sunny morning in April we went along to look at their work and after photographs in each class, the winners



of each section were photographed with us outside in the sunshine.



Muriel had worked very hard knitting outfits for Teddy Bears which were presented to the winners in each

section and each child who took part was presented with a colourful certificate for their hard work. The bear in the photograph is wearing the school uniform.



We are grateful to the Head Teacher, Mr Martin Thacker, and his staff for allowing the children to take part in this project and also to the children for working so hard on their drawings.

One little girl said “*this is my best day ever at school*”. Whilst another little boy, whose father said his son never discussed what he does at school, suddenly produced a certificate and Teddy Bear in recognition of his drawing. His father hadn’t seen the drawing so we made sure he did so and he was very proud of his son. All the winning children’s drawings were on display at our Conference.

The winning picture is in the process of being made into our group T-shirt with our new bee logo on the front and the drawing on the back. We chose one that summed up what “happiness” is as seen through the eyes of a child. This is a picture of how it will look.



**India Smith's drawing and inspirational words for our T-shirt**

## What does happiness mean to us?

In addition to making us feel good, studies have found that happiness actually improves other aspects of our lives. Here are some of the good things that research has linked to happiness.

- ***Happiness is good for our health: Happy people are less likely to get sick, and they live longer.***
- ***Happy people cope better with stress and trauma***

## How to cultivate happiness

The following is based on research.

- ***Awe Narrative:*** Recall and describe a time when you experienced awe.



- ***Best Possible Self:*** Imagine your life going as well as it possibly could, then write about this best possible future.
- ***Meaningful Photos:*** Photograph, then write about, things that are meaningful to you.
- ***Build relationships:*** The dominant finding from happiness research is that social connections are key to happiness. Studies show that close

relationships are especially important, suggesting we should make time for those closest to us – people in whom we can confide and who'll support us when we're down.

- **Give Thanks:** Research has revealed the power of simply counting our blessings on a regular basis. People who keep “gratitude journals” feel more optimism and greater satisfaction with their lives.
- **Research** also shows that writing a “gratitude letter” to someone you’ve never properly thanked brings a major boost of happiness. (*Researchers Michael McCullough, Robert Emmons, Lyubomirsky*)
- **Practise Kindness:** Research by Elizabeth Dunn and her colleagues finds that people report greater happiness when they spend money on others than when they spend it on themselves. Similarly, neuroscience research shows that when we do nice things for others, our brains light up in areas associated with pleasure and reward.
- **Give up grudges:** Groundbreaking studies by Everett Worthington, Michael McCullough and their colleagues show that when we forgive those who have wronged us, we feel better about ourselves, experience more positive emotions and feel closer to others.
- **Get Physical:** Exercise isn’t just good for our bodies, it’s good for our minds. Studies show that regular physical activity increases happiness and self-esteem, reduces anxiety and stress and can even lift symptoms of depression. “Exercise may very well be the most effective instant happiness booster of all activities”, writes Lyubomirsky in “The How of Happiness.”

*Joanne getting physical on the 30 mile walk. A burst of energy with the finishing line in sight!!*



- **Get Rest:** Research has consistently linked lower sleep to lower happiness. What’s more, a study of more than 900 women, led by Nobel Prize-winning psychologist, Daniel Kahneman, found that getting just one more hour of sleep each night might have a greater effect on happiness.
- **Pay attention:** Studies show that people who practise Mindfulness – the moment-by-moment awareness of our thoughts, feelings and external circumstances – not only have stronger immune systems but are more likely to be happy and enjoy greater life satisfaction, and they are less likely to be anxious. Researchers Richard Davidson, Jon Kabat-Zinn and others, found that mindfulness training can significantly improve our physical and psychological well-being.

## **WRITE A LETTER by Joanne**

Building on the suggestions about how to cultivate happiness, Joanne has written an article and we hope you will wish to take part.



We often hear people talk about the 'good old days' and I have often wondered if there is really such a thing. Progress has made our lives easier and increased our leisure time; therefore, aren't people just looking at the past through rose-tinted glasses. However, after reading an article in Psychologies magazine, I'm starting to realise that some of the activities we undertook in the past, which for many are now forgotten, can be therapeutic and beneficial to our wellbeing.

The article was about handwriting letters. Do many people write letters to friends and family? Perhaps a few words at the bottom of a Christmas or Birthday card. I know my mail never contains a personal letter, never mind one that is handwritten. On returning home after a day at work, the floor in front of the letter box is strewn with envelopes containing bills or circulars and take-away flyers. Everything today is about expediency, doing more in a short space of time so we e-mail or send a text message. Even if I want to say thank you to a friend, I'd send a text not a letter.

The Psychologies article mentions the beneficial effects of letter writing on our happiness as well as helping to improve symptoms of depression. The journalist quotes from Harley Street Psychologist, Dr Becky Spelman, who says "The simple act of writing a letter can be incredibly healing and cathartic for both sender and receiver, as it taps into a very personal part of our psyche and opens up a side of many people that often stays locked away."

I would add that even if the letter is not sent, it can still be cathartic. I have known people write letters to a loved one following a bereavement; all that bottled up emotion is written down on paper and can have beneficial effects at such an emotional time.

I am reminded of the last time I wrote a letter, which was in the 'mindfulness' workshop we organised a couple of years ago. David Oldham asked us to write a letter to our tinnitus. Everyone found it beneficial putting their feelings about tinnitus onto paper. Muriel wrote her letter in verse, with a poem to her tinnitus. This has got me thinking further, we ought to replicate a similar activity.

Therefore, we have decided to run a competition for members. We would like you to write a 'Letter to a stranger'. This letter can include how tinnitus makes you feel but what positive steps you take to manage your tinnitus and any activity that makes you feel happy. This could be reading, going for a walk or if you have discovered the new craze for adults, the colouring books.

From the feedback questionnaires you returned to us we have realised that you wish to read more stories about members. This is a great way to share your story, without feeling you need to fill pages. We will try and publish as many letters as possible in forthcoming newsletters and the star letter will receive a Jack the Bear mascot. It is up to you how you send your letter hand-written or typed. If you wish to send it typed, it may be worth hand-writing it first. If it is hand-written we may need to type it out to share with members. However, with hand-written letters this is part of their beauty and attraction.

**HAPPY WRITING!**

**ENTRY DEADLINE** – we should be grateful if you would please have your



entries in by the **30<sup>th</sup> September 2016**. We will ask someone independent of our organisation to decide on the winners.

### **JOANNE'S SPONSORED WALK**

It was a sunny day for the 30 mile hobo walk which Joanne finished in 8 hours. Her sister-in-law a little after but Simon, her husband, ran the 30 miles in 4



hours 28 minutes. Thank you very much for your sponsorship which has raised £150.00 for our group.

### **MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTION, DONATIONS AND FEEDBACK**

Thank you very much for your membership subscriptions, kind donations and feedback questionnaire, all of which we were very happy with.

### **MAY DAY**



The Urban Gypsies

Many thanks for donations for our stall which looked brilliant.

The morning was fine so the customary march took place with the bands, the Urban Gypsies and other entertainment. However, by 2.00pm there was a downpour. Nevertheless, we are happy that £253.30 was raised on the day. Thank you to Joy for organising the stall and to Muriel, Gail and Philip for helping Joy on the day.

### **CONFERENCE**

Our Conference, attended by about 100 people, was very successful and we are happy with the feedback received from the delegates. The Conference Edition Newsletter is currently being produced but as it will be a bigger edition than normal, it will be sent out as the July/August edition.

### **The Spirit Within by Iris Hesselden**

When the road lies dark before you  
And it's hard to find the way,  
Keep your spirit strong within you,  
Hope will help you through each day.

When your worries overwhelm you  
And the walls are closing in,  
Seek that hidden strength inside you,  
Feel a healing peace begin.

When the world looks vast and empty  
And you're feeling quite alone,  
Reach out for all your memories,  
And the kindness you have known.

When you see a ray of sunshine  
Never let it slip away,  
Hold fast to all that you believe,  
And you'll find a brighter day.

*[Courtesy of 'Grace' published by the Editor and Owner of Grace Magazine (Mr R Bartram) – Spring 2016]*

When I read this poem it had an impact on me as I was experiencing some personal anxiety about health issues with family members. A few days' later I was sitting in the hospital waiting room feeling very anxious and I picked up a gardening magazine to try to focus my attention on something else rather than let my mind run riot. I tried to use the time (which wasn't long but seemed an eternity) to write out the following from a magazine.

"Colour is a sensory experience. It can make us feel uplifted or relaxed, confused or discomfited, imparting all sorts of symbolism in the process – 'danger' 'purity' 'envy'. Flowers are nature's main purveyor of colour which gives them a special power and currency and is why gardeners hold them with such awe and affection."

Over the years I have collected lots of gardening books so on returning home I found one called "Healing Gardens". Reading a section on "Colour Therapy" reminded me that one of our fact sheets talks about distraction techniques which encourages you to focus your attention on the world around you.

**"Sight"** is the most immediate of all the physical senses. We do not have to do anything other than open our eyes to experience an ever-changing kaleidoscope of light and colour, which has a profound effect upon our wellbeing. Decades of research show that colour influences our thoughts, our actions, our health, and even our relationships with others. Colour therapy is an ancient approach to healing that has been used since the earliest of times. As with other holistic treatments, it aims to restore harmony and stimulate the patient's inner resources to aid the recovery of health, the fundamental belief being that illness

develops from imbalances of energies or emotional, spiritual or physical levels.

While some of the theory behind colour therapy remains scientifically unproven, studies have demonstrated that colours can profoundly affect mood and often have a measurable effect on the emotional and physical behaviour of human beings. Colour treatment has been found to be especially useful in stress-related disorders such as eczema and mild depression. Our psychological response plays a vital role in colour healing, many colours having powerful emotional and spiritual undertones as well as physical implications. Throughout our lives we attach feelings, memories and meanings to our experience of colour and these associations build up our personal colour preferences."

Red – Helps you cope with the demands of life, removes negativity and provides courage.

Orange – promotes a feeling of wellbeing by providing a release from the everyday worries of life.

Yellow – A great aid to concentration and study, helps to sort out difficulties.

Green – Restful and relaxing, believed to



encourage hope

Blue – Encourages relaxation and tranquility; conducive to

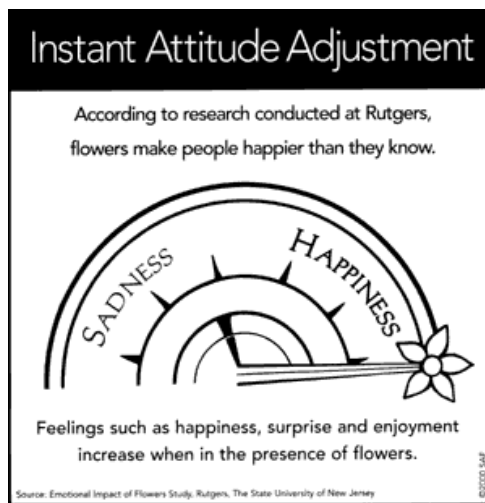
meditation, inspiring patience

and calm thought.

Violet – Brings feelings of self-worth and is a good colour to use if you need to learn to love yourself.

## Rutgers: Flowers Improve Emotional Health

In a survey about how flowers improve our emotional health



undertaken by Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, it challenged established scientific beliefs about how people can manage their day-to-day moods in a healthy and natural way.

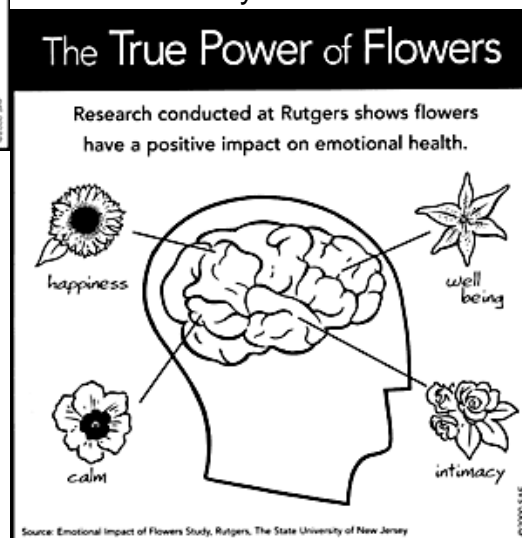
### Research Findings

A team of researchers explored the link between flowers and life satisfaction in a 10-month study of participants' behavioural and emotional responses to receiving flowers. The results show that flowers are a natural and healthful moderator of moods.

1. Flowers have an immediate impact on happiness. All study participants expressed "true" or "excited" smiles upon receiving flowers, demonstrating extraordinary delight and gratitude. This reaction was universal, occurring in all age groups.
2. Flowers have a long-term positive effect on moods. Specifically, study participants

reported feeling less depressed, anxious and agitated after receiving flowers, and demonstrated a higher sense of enjoyment and life satisfaction.

3. Flowers make intimate connections. The presence of flowers led to increased contact with family and friends.



"Common sense tells us that flowers make us happy," said Dr. Haviland-Jones. "Now, science shows that not only do flowers make us happier than we know, they have strong positive effects on our emotional wellbeing."

**Source: Society of American Florists (website)**

So if you don't already do so, treat yourself to a bunch of flowers every week or better still, pick a bunch from your garden.



*Best Wishes*