



Response magazine
for supporters of
Rethink Mental Illness



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DO IT! It is the most amazing experience, and it will benefit people severely affected by mental illness.

Jasmine

Inside...

Thanking our amazing supporters!



Trigger warning: discussions of eating disorders

Photo by Tom Fisk from Pexels

Response is produced by the Fundraising team at Rethink Mental Illness.

Chat to us about supporting Rethink Mental Illness, email supportercare@rethink.org or call 0121 522 7007.

Have you got an amazing fundraising story to tell? Email your photos and story to events@rethink.org

If you'd like to share your own experience of living with mental illness, then please send your story to LivedExperience@rethink.org



Leading the way to a better quality of life for everyone severely affected by mental illness.



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in this issue

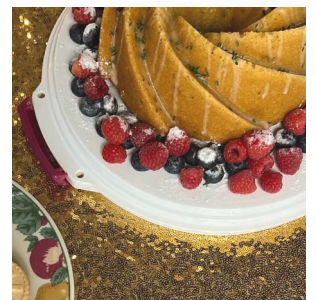


Antonia's story: Recovering from bulimia and depression

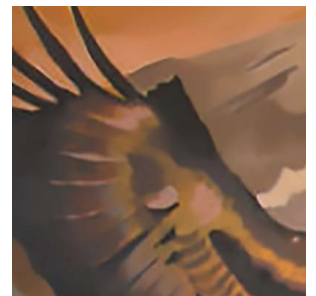
Trigger warning: Discussions of eating disorders



Scrumptious snaps:
Bake for Mental Health



The InFinnity project:
Navigating grief and finding comfort in creativity



Fundraising feats: Take to the skies for mental health!



CELEBRATING

our superstar supporters



Welcome to the spring edition of Response. This is an opportunity for us to say thank you, celebrate your support and dedication and highlight your experiences. Without you, we couldn't continue to support those living with mental illness, so we are truly grateful for everyone who supports us.

In this edition, our very own Training and Consultancy Officer, Antonia, shares her story overcoming bulimia and depression. She also includes some tips and advice for those living with an eating disorder.

For those who love to get creative, The InFinnity Project is now open for submissions. The project honours the memory of Finn Clark and asks for anyone living with mental illness to pick up their paintbrushes in his memory. The Braintree Art Group also discuss the profound effect creativity can have on mental health.

We of course have to take the opportunity to celebrate your fantastic fundraising efforts. Jasmine has taken to the skies in support of mental health by taking on a skydive. And finally, we'll leave your mouth watering with some beautiful cakes from a recent Bake for Mental Health event.

I must reiterate our thanks for your continued support and generosity, it means the world.

All the best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Mark Winstanley'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Mark Winstanley
Chief Executive



Trigger warning: discussions of eating disorders

Antonia's Story

My recovery from bulimia and depression

Antonia lived with bulimia alongside depression for around three years. She had a complicated relationship with food and exercise, but through self-compassion and understanding her body, she has now been in recovery for five years.

My eating disorder developed from lots of different things happening in my life. It first started when I was at university - I attended a top sports university and was surrounded by people who exercised a lot. Initially this inspired me, however I then became someone who exercised compulsively as a way of purging.

Leaving home and being in control of my own eating and exercise patterns was a challenge too. I didn't make friends as easily as I had hoped, and I often compared my eating and exercise patterns to others. I think I believed eating less and exercising more would make people like me more.



Eating disorders are much more common than people think.

Controlling my eating and exercise was a way of coping with my depression and to deal with situations where I didn't feel in control, such as starting university and moving away from home. It allowed me to feel good at something and in control, but it of course then took control of me.

Throughout my experience of bulimia, my relationship with food and exercise was extremely self-destructive. I would deprive myself of food I had labelled as 'bad' and attempt to eat foods that were 'good.' I would count calories, check labels and avoid any social activities that involved food. This was completely unsustainable, and because I exercised a lot, I felt hungry all the time. This resulted in binges where I would consume a very large amount of food in a very short amount of time.

The guilt would immediately take over and I would do everything in my power to get rid of the food. I would ensure I did very intense exercise every single day for at least an hour. It was very self-punishing, and I would be extremely self-critical if I struggled or got tired.

After I acknowledged that my relationship with exercise and food was unhealthy, I accepted I would need to be less critical towards myself. Exercise is a very helpful way for me to wind down after a long day, so it's important to me that I keep myself in a position to be able to do this when I want. I don't count calories or avoid food anymore either. I eat when I feel hungry and stop when I feel full, which is a fantastic feeling as throughout my eating disorder it was very hard to determine when I was hungry and full.

Eating disorders are much more common than people think. We all have a relationship with food, therefore we can all be put in a vulnerable situation with food. Just like any relationship, your relationship with food requires patience, love and enjoyment.

I think many people will go through stages in their life where they approach food differently or worry about what they're eating. We are exposed to lots of messages about food and what is good and bad for us. It's very normal to think about what you're eating and aim to be healthier, but I think people need to be more aware of their 'tipping point' or the point where their relationship with food becomes disordered.



Recovery is so worth it, and there are so many more important things in life.

To anyone who is at the start of their recovery, I know it's not an easy fix and there will be moments where you feel like you want to go back to your old ways. Be patient and kind to yourself. If you have a bad day, that's all it has to be – it doesn't have to be a bad week or a bad month. Recovery is so worth it, and there are so many more important things in life. You might not see it now because your eating disorder has a clever way of hiding those things, but you can get there.

Hear more about Antonia's story by watching the video via this QR link.



Tips and Advice for *Recovery*

Self-compassion - I read a book about self-compassion and realised that to be truly compassionate to others, I would need to show myself the same compassion.

For me, being in tune with when I am being overly self-critical and challenging those thoughts is a great place to start. I first identify them. My usual negative thoughts take the form of black and white thinking, catastrophising and jumping to conclusions. I can then look at evidence supporting the thought and evidence against the thought.

For example, if I think 'I have eaten too much today,' I might challenge this by looking at all things I have needed to do in the day that I need fuel for. This allows me to be more realistic.

Understanding I don't have to act on my thoughts - I think we can all have quite negative and self-destructive thoughts sometimes, but we don't have to necessarily do anything with those thoughts. Rather than ignoring it, it's helpful for me to acknowledge it for what it is and think 'this is how I feel right now and that's OK, it will pass.'

Having a weekly menu - It might be helpful to set out a menu for yourself for the week, so you don't have the added stress of thinking about what you're going to eat when mealtimes come around. Having some flexible options, such as quick dinners or meals where you can add whatever is in your fridge, are great when things don't go to plan, or your day is busier than expected.

Being realistic - Ask yourself what situations will make recovery difficult for you in the future and try to plan for them as much as possible. For me, it was about making sure someone else knew the challenges I might face and letting them know how they could help.

Listening to my body - It's important to understand that your body is a very powerful engine that needs fuel to do all the things you want to do. Don't ignore sensations of hunger - it's your engine asking for more fuel.

Having a distraction after meals - It can be helpful and even therapeutic to distract yourself with an activity after mealtimes to help with any negative thoughts. This can be whatever you enjoy and helps you to relax, or perhaps you want to try something new. Reading, painting, journalling, listening to music, tidying your space or giving yourself a pamper are all great ideas!



Bake

For Mental Health

Jemima, Ruth and Hannah from our Events and Community fundraising team hosted their own Bake for Mental Health event last month.

They invited friends, family and colleagues to simply come along to enjoy the delicious cakes, or to bring in their favourite baked goods.

From lemon and thyme show-stoppers to spicy cheese scones and the very popular banana bread, there was a treat for everyone!

Taking time to recharge with a slice of cake, colouring sheets and chatting with others made the event a great success and **raised over £350!**

If you are a budding baker, or simply want to host your own event, head to our website for more info and to download our resources. You can also get in touch by contacting the fundraising team at events@rethink.org

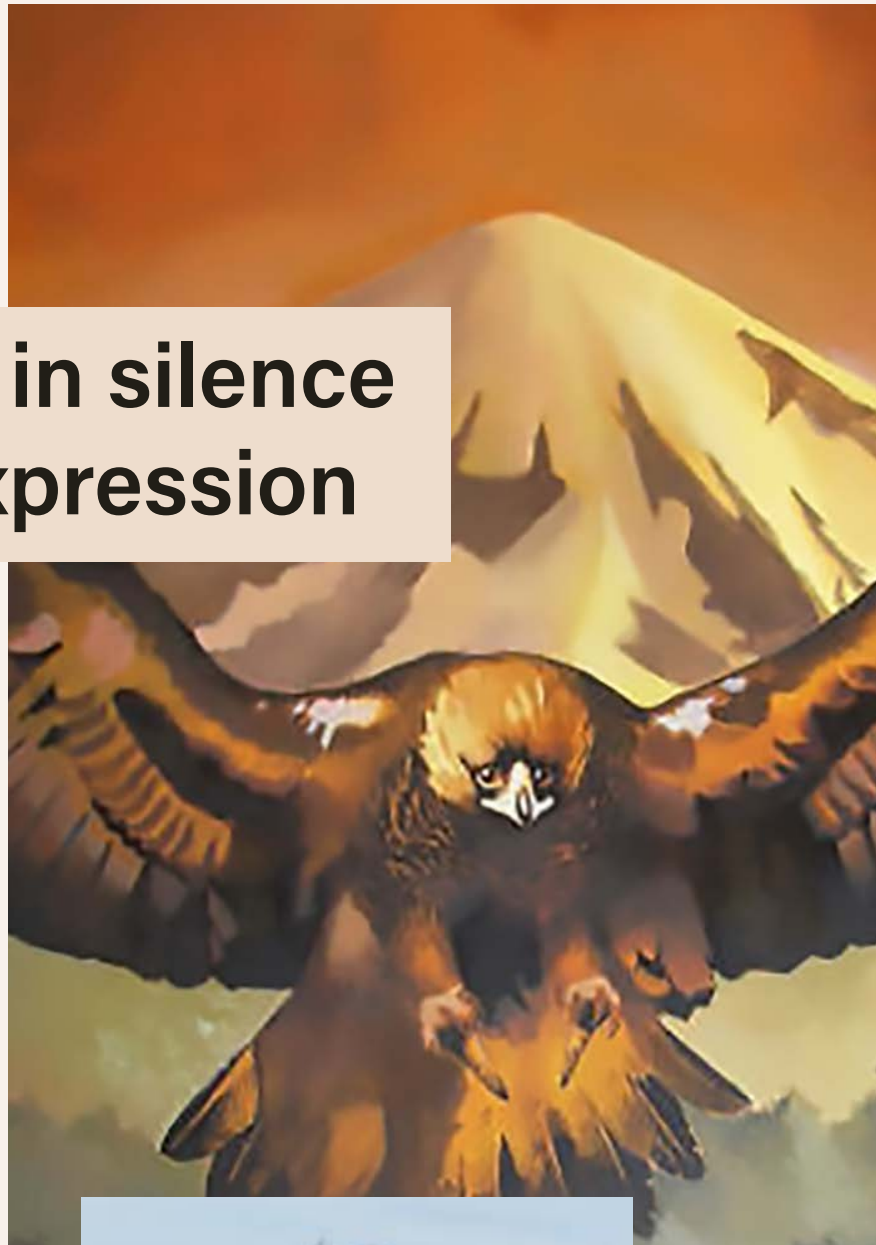


Navigating Grief:

Finding solace in silence and creative expression

Grief is a deeply personal experience, and there is no one-size-fits-all approach to dealing with it. It is crucial to understand that it is okay to not talk about feelings right away. Some individuals may find comfort in introspection and reflection before opening up to others. Encouraging a safe and non-judgmental environment allows individuals to process their emotions in their own time.

One effective way to manage your mental health when experiencing grief is by engaging in hobbies. Hobbies provide a healthy outlet for emotions, allowing individuals to channel their energy into something positive. Whether it's painting, writing, gardening, or playing an instrument, these activities can serve as therapeutic tools, helping individuals find moments of peace and distraction from their grief.



Finn Clark



The InFinity Project is an art initiative that beautifully combines the power of artistic expression with mental health support. The project was launched in 2017 during Mental Health Awareness Week as a tribute to Finn Clark - a talented professional illustrator who took his own life in late 2015, aged 25. He had been diagnosed two years before this with psychosis and depression. Each year, the project sets themes inspired by artwork created by Finn during his lifetime.

This initiative not only honours Finn's artistic legacy but also raises awareness about mental health conditions. Supporters of the project, including attendees of the Braintree Art Group, play a crucial role in keeping Finn's memory alive and promoting mental health awareness. Jackie from the art group said:

"It's been my saviour. There are times when I've not spoken to a soul for weeks on end. I've been able to come here and think I've done something. It allows you to be as you are - it might not be a good health day so you might not paint, but another day you might pick up all those wonderful paints and indulge those suppressed feelings."

Hear more from participants of the Braintree Art Group



Braintree Art
Group

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**It's been
my saviour.**

The themes for this year's competition are **Focus, Strength, Wings**, inspired by Finn's piece 'Eagle in Flight!' The InFinity Project runs from **February 25 to August 31 2024**, and we invite you to select a theme that inspires you! You can enter up to three pieces of work - either one piece for each theme or three pieces on one theme. The Project is open to adults, non-professional artists and anyone who lives with a mental health condition - diagnosed or undiagnosed.

Find out more



The InFinity
Project



Jasmine and Carl

Take to the *skies* for mental health!

"We wanted to take on the skydive because we thought it was a great challenge that neither of us had experienced before and what a better way to raise money for charity than to challenge ourselves.

The skydive experience is the most surreal experience and nothing we have ever done compares. It is an incomparable experience - nothing makes you feel more alive, and we were spurred on by the fact we knew this challenge was to better those who desperately need our help and support.

We chose to fundraise for Rethink Mental Illness for two reasons. The first being that mental illness is a topic very close to our heart and we wanted to support a charity that advocates for positive mental health and makes a real change in society.

Secondly, we chose Rethink Mental Illness specifically because of their mantra of ensuring everyone has a good quality of life. We resonated with the fact that the charity was making a personal difference and differs from the mainstream."

When it comes to fundraising, Jasmine's top tip is "Share, share and just keep sharing! Make sure you always keep your page visible to all your family and friends, tell everyone about the challenge and reiterate that any donation is incredible, no matter how big or small."

Feeling *inspired* to do something for those affected by mental illness?

Jasmine says “**DO IT!** It is the most **amazing experience**, it will benefit the charity through your donations, and it will benefit you personally by having the opportunity to experience such an immense and exciting feeling of jumping out of a plane.”

Even if you're not quite as much of a daredevil as Jasmine, there are many ways to get involved, and we appreciate everyone who takes the time to fundraise for us. Without your incredible efforts, we couldn't continue to support people severely affected by mental illness and their carers. **So, a massive thank you to Jasmine for taking on such an amazing feat!**



SIGN UP TODAY!

To take part in an organised event, or plan your own unique fundraiser today at rethink.org/fundraise

Thank you

for making a difference

Thank you for donating

Your generous donations help thousands of people every year, through our network of services, groups and helplines. Help more people today by donating at

rethink.org/donate



Thank you for fundraising

From walking to running, baking to skydiving, your events raise vital funds to support people living with mental illness. Set up your next fundraiser. Visit

rethink.org/fundraise



Thank you for campaigning

By campaigning for the fair treatment and support of everyone affected by mental illness, you are challenging attitudes and changing lives. Sign up

rethink.org/campaign



Get support

If you are struggling, our network of groups, services and advice lines are on hand to get you the support you need. Find help today rethink.org/services