

Photovoice



One Small Step. . . .

By Anna H.

“Every great journey, begins with one small step.”

I now agree and accept that quote.

I’ve always had this goal of becoming a doctor and the only way to get there is by taking a step forward even if it is small.

Things may not always fall in your favor, but you’ve just got to work with what you’ve got and take that step forward.

About The Program

These projects were completed through TRACS, Transition Resources and Community Supports, at Aspire Health Alliance. TRACS offers multimodal outlets for young adults and their caregivers to receive support and to find meaning and connection in their lives to promote the recovery process. Services are available to those between the ages of 16 and 25.



Photovoice

A grassroots method involving the use of photography for social change. The images shown in this book offer insight into the world as the photographers see it, that is, through the lens of the young adults and parents affected by and working to overcome the emotional challenges they face.

A special thank you to all the participants of Photovoice who shared their journey to recovery.



Loose Footing

By: Hannah

The ocean cuts through the sand and leaves canyon-like structures behind. Unlike canyons, these are not solid rock and the ground I walk on is not so sturdy.

Living with someone with a mental illness is like walking on those sand canyons.

One minute things are good, but suddenly it falls apart.

Paralyzing fears and problems arise out of nowhere and what worked yesterday suddenly does not work today.

The support services you thought were going to help keep her safe and on track, suddenly disappear because she has turned 18.

How can I help her? Will anyone help her? Will she be able to help herself?

Finding firm ground when dealing with mental illness can be difficult.



Keys

By: Claudia

A set of keys: these represent independence, a means of travel to work, to school, to therapy.

What a significant accomplishment to pass one's driver's test and driving school and to have organized oneself to complete the paperwork to receive your license.

You have achieved a level of maturity that makes us proud.

Yet, these keys cause worry for parents of adolescents with mental illness.

When you say, "Tonight, I felt so bad I caught myself picking out a tree along the road", I murmur sadly, "Hang up the keys, my dear, hang up the keys."



Hydrangea

By: Susan

Beautiful,
Nourished,
Healthy,
Abundant,
Cared for.

I loved planting this Hydrangea.

I cared for it and watched it mature.

I have control over its care.

I know it will die or wilt if I don't take care of it.

I enjoy all the phases, from flowering to becoming dry and ready for winter.

I cut them and bring them in to my home to enjoy as long as possible.

I haven't the same control over either of my sons' mental health issues.



Havoc

By: Deborah

The tar on the pavement is all mixed up reminding me of my life.

The lines are extending in different directions creating conflict.

A side effect of the mental illness is constant conflict within our family.

We take each hour at a time not knowing when a crisis or conflict will arise, and outbursts will follow due to the oscillating emotions.



Rocky Road

By: Hannah

I love to walk barefoot on the sandy beach. It can relax me or give me a good aerobic workout.

The rocks hurt my tender feet. Sometimes, when the tide is high, there are too many rocks and pebbles.

I can only focus on what my next step will be, never being able to enjoy the ocean, the scenery or build to a healthy pace.

I love my daughter very much. Sometimes I need to focus so much on her, her doctors' appointments, her eating habits, therapy and the nutritionist; it's hard to enjoy her growing up.

All of this focus takes a lot of attention away from the other children and the family is strained. Not enough time, attention and resources to go around.

Life is difficult when there are so many rocks in your path.



HELP

By Cathy

It looks overwhelming because it is. These are all the medications my son has tried and failed.

It is extremely costly and can financially cripple you.

It is isolating for the patient and his or her family because of the stigma.

It is very frustrating because there is a shortage of qualified psychiatrists and therapists.

It is exhausting because patients and families need support, respite and help navigating the convoluted system.

It is a biological disorder that you are born with called Mental Illness.



Isolation

By: Deborah

This rock is isolated in the middle of the pond.

The rock seems unreachable.

I feel isolated from the world because society treats mental illness like a poison, something not to talk about or deal with, something to ignore.

I feel very isolated because of the stigma and how we get treated.

I also sometimes wish I could isolate away from others because of the pain I feel.



Boiling Point

By: Arielle

I get very intense emotions whether it be anger, sadness, or happiness. Often when I become very upset, little triggers have been building up inside me.

Then all the emotions that have been pent up, and will explode. They boil over just like the water boiling over in the pan.

I have learned when this feeling happens, breathing can help me to simmer down.

It is not a magic wand, but it can help me from feeling worse, or acting on my emotions.

Trying to use new coping skills is very difficult. It is a process that becomes easier as you practice.

I learned it is important to keep working, and not beat yourself up if you're unhappy with how a situation happened. You always have a chance to do things differently next time.



Holding Hands Then Letting Go

By: Vanessa

When we start our road to recovery, we can't always do it on our own. Like a child, you have to start off with small steps.

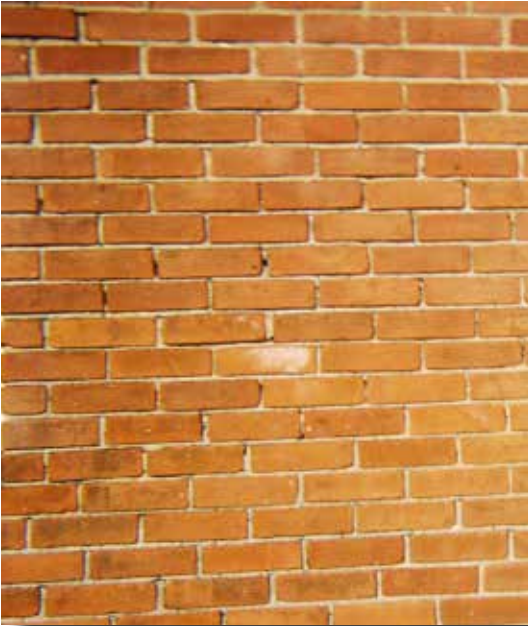
I was in awe watching my nephew start to walk. He would take a couple of steps, and then he would fall.

What amazed me the most was that he didn't seem fazed by slamming his bottom on the hardwood floor with full force.

Instead of crying and giving up, he got right up with a smile on his face and kept going.

I truly believe that this is how recovery works.

We may slip a couple of times and relapse, but the idea is to get back up and try again. While putting a smile on our face.



House of Bricks

By: Steph

These bricks represent the fact that I can't be broken.

Like the wolf in "The Three Little Pigs," society will constantly try to "blow your house down".

I am a very strong willed woman and intend on getting the most out of life and would never allow that to happen.

People look down on those who are different and deviate from the norm. I think it's important to have confidence in the person you are and not change for anyone.

We need to stand up to society and let them know they can't break us.



Let the Sun Shine In

By: Claudia

Gazing upward at the sun through the canopy of our front tree, kindles in me a feeling of hope.

Our family stands below, bravely gazing up at this strong, rooted tree - a swaying metaphor for the mental illness that grows up and surrounds our daughter.

Its roots, trunk and reaching branches envelop her and us as we struggle to understand this illness.

We look to the sunlight - those who selected careers in the mental health field, researchers, psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers and counselors - to shed light on the management of this illness, for there is no cure.



Prized Painting

By: Amy

This was a painting that was going to be thrown out.

It is in my living room now.

I like it.

It's a picture of about seven or eight tulips.

The specks don't bother me - I think they add to the character of the painting.

Sometimes we think we're worthless because of our imperfections.

Let's try to accept our imperfections and see them as assets.



A Second Look

By Lauren C.

This is a picture of my shadow reflecting off the window of a pizza place.

This photo represents taking a second look.

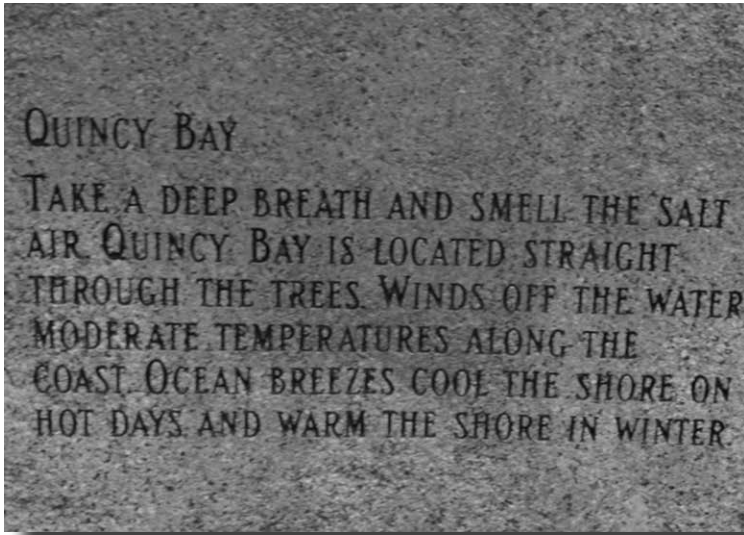
I feel like sometimes everyone needs to take a second look at how life is going. This is a time to reflect on how my life has gone and how I want to change it for the future.



Moving Forward

By Pat L.

The hands of the clock are completely obscured giving the feeling of time standing still. When my mind is in a difficult place I often feel that time is not moving and that I am stuck in that negative moment. Although it feels that way, time never stops and is always moving. It is a reminder that even when I feel like I am stuck, I must keep going towards my goal like the unstoppable movement of time.



Positive Quotes

By Ann B.

Finding the Quincy Bay rock with the writings in the park reminds me of quotes that I find throughout the day.

Finding quotes is a good idea because they are both encouraging and positive. I enjoy learning and finding about quotes everyday because it makes my life less stressful.



Cross To Bear

By: Susan

My husband will tell me that having a child with Mental Illness is our cross to bear.

I have trouble accepting this as I feel that this is a rather large cross to bear.

In addition to the treating of the patient who has the mental illness, the side effects are tremendous as many of the problems associated with the illness are invisible and gradual: like the broken relationships we find within families, among friends and in society.

Mental Illness is an invisible illness because the Symptoms are generally not visible, making it difficult to treat it like an illness, rather than a burden.



Our Mission

We are making emotional well-being essential to overall health and building a supportive community for all, through effective, integrated care that is tailored to the way you live.

Our Vision

There can be no health without mental health; it is integral to the well-being of the whole community.

Our Core Values

- 1. Your well-being is essential.** We nurture the whole you, focused on your well-being, to help you achieve a life worthwhile—as defined by you.
- 2. Health is about trust.** We foster an environment that is safe and supportive and we are committed to ending the societal stigma around behavioral health.
- 3. Community matters.** We are committed to providing access to services where you live, appropriate to your cultural background, near the people and organizations you know, in partnership with our community service providers.

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