

Poem: July

Fluffed pillows of warm air coast by
Whinnying horse breaks the silence
As he rolls upon the warm grass
Such bliss
Jackdaws sing a chorus, celebrating life
The wind kisses strands of my hair
A concoction to chase away any drabness
Grey, dark thoughts inhabit my mind
Caressing me, cajoling my delicate grasp on life
I brush them aside, as I survey the beauty of my world.

Sue Holt

Visit Sue's websites:

<http://www.manicpoet.shorturl.com/>

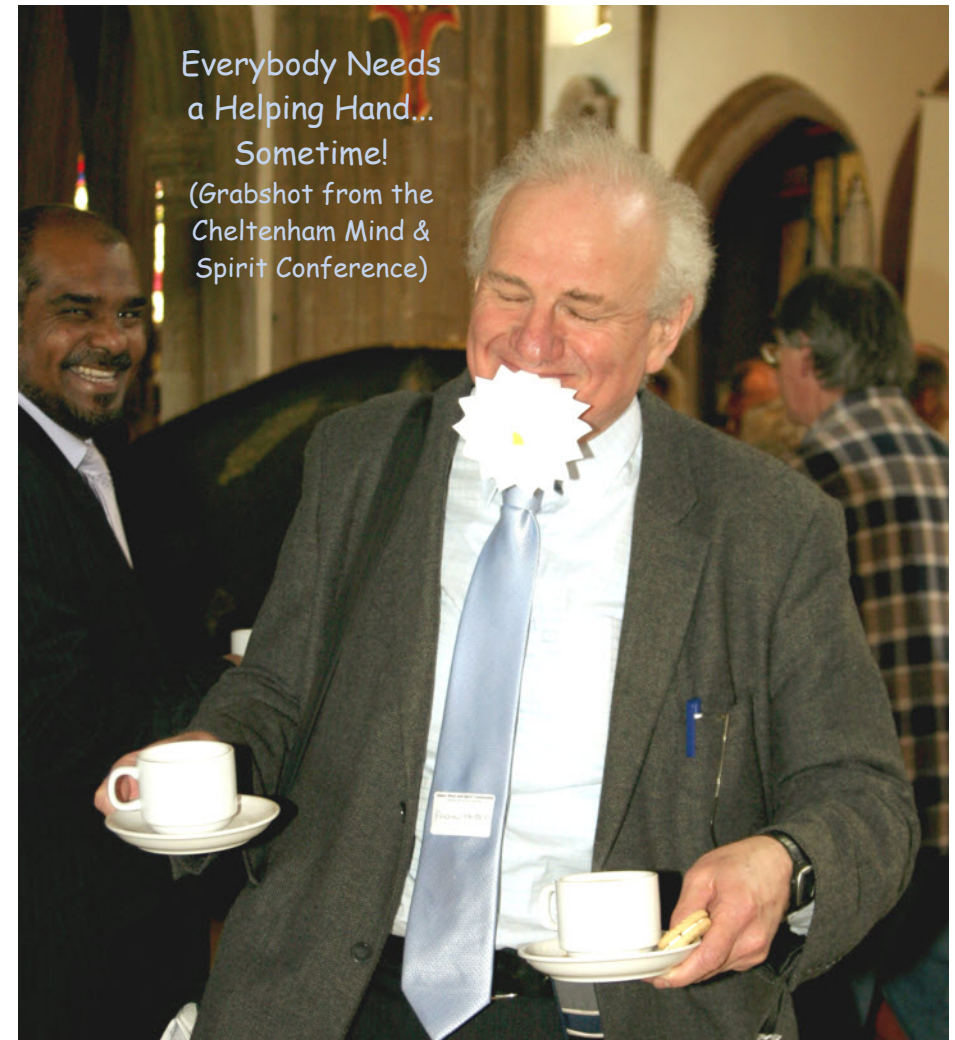
<http://www.freewebs.com/manicpoet>



Being Alongside

September -
October 2009

The Bi-Monthly magazine of *Being Alongside* / APCMH



Everybody Needs
a Helping Hand...

Sometime!

(Grabshot from the
Cheltenham Mind &
Spirit Conference)

The Barnabas Drop - In Sessions

'Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means Son of Encouragement)' Acts 4:36

St. Paul's Community Project in partnership with BA / APCMH

Mondays 2pm - 5pm

Plus various activities: Table tennis, dominoes, scrabble, art / craft, poetry reading, tea / sandwiches / cakes and chat.

Wednesday 10am - 12pm

A more reflective discussion time with tea and biscuits, an opportunity to all share concerns or to receive one-to-one support (by appointment).

Free. All Welcome.

Venue: St Paul's Church Centre, 3 Rossmore Rd, NW1
(5 mins walk from Marylebone Station; buses 139 & 189 stop outside)

call: Captain Mark Dadds, or Sister Theresa: 020 7724 8517

'When he arrived and saw the wonderful things God was doing, he was filled with excitement & joy, and encouraged the believers to stay close to The Lord whatever the cost. Barnabas was a kindly person, full of the Holy Spirit & strong in faith. As a result large numbers of people were added to the Lord. (Acts 11:19-24)

Mental Health Support Group (The Dymphna Group)

St Andrew's, Frognal, United Reformed Church NW3

2nd and 4th Friday of each month

10.00am-12noon

Aiming to provide friendship and mutual support for those living with mental health concerns, both sufferers and carers, where matters may be explored and discussion encouraged.

contact: The Rev'd Jonathan Dean: 020 7435 7920
or Jean Marsham: 020 8455 1240

Junction of Frognal Lane / West End Lane / Finchley Road.

near Finchley Rd Met / Jub;
113, 82, 13, 46, 268, 328, 139, C11 (West End Green);
Finchley Rd / Frognal (NL Metro),
Hampstead (Northern);
West Hampstead (First Capital Direct)



The Who & What of Being Alongside

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'Being Alongside' is the operational name for the 'Association for Pastoral Care in Mental Health', (APCMH), a Christian based, voluntary association of individual members and affiliated groups who recognise the importance of spiritual values and support in mental health.

It has a network of supporters throughout the United Kingdom and it welcomes and encourages people whatever their own faith or belief system.

Governed by its National Committee, APCMH is primarily concerned to promote and encourage "being alongside" people experiencing mental or emotional distress.

For Specific Contacts, see above. For General Enquiries reach us at the Registered and Administrative office at:

St Paul's Centre, 5 Rossmore Road, Marylebone, London NW1 6NJ

tel: 0844 800 9744 (calls 5p / minute) / net: www.pastoral.org.uk

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limited company: 3957730

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The views expressed in *Being Alongside* are not necessarily those of the organisation.

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Book from Sue Holt

My third came out recently: **Psychotic Interlude**.

If interested you can get it from all bookshops/online or through www.chipmunka publishing, or I can send a signed copy, all £10 or most libraries will order it.....details are

Psychotic Interlude

by Sue Holt,
published by Chipmunkapublishing
ISBN 9781847479204

One review:-

Sue Holt is very much a significant poet for me, as she raises, in stark terms, the vital question of why some mental health services seem to ignore the main motivating spark in people's lives, their spirituality and belief systems.

This new book of poems has a searing intensity as they come at a time of profound challenge and searching for Sue, and we follow her on that journey.

Sue reminds us of our own need to belong to something more, other people, nature and to the Divine.



She speaks of God 'wrapping sacred arms around', and we all need to remember our common humanity, our search for something outside ourselves, and to reconnect.

Peter Gilbert

Professor of Social Work and Spirituality at
Staffordshire University, and NIMHE lead on
Spirituality.

I hope you will consider buying it, or even just ordering through your library, so even more will have the opportunity to read it. Plus if you are interested I am looking for people to review the book.

Sue

See back cover for a poem by Sue.

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Many thanks to all our contributors whose offerings are always so vital. Contributions are welcome from all areas of the community. Whilst we appreciate a well balanced magazine, I can only put in what I receive - so I hope you're working on your next piece...!

Copy for next issue - due November 1st - to the editor by October 1st please, but sooner is always more helpful!

Front Page:

With A Little Help From My Friends

Difficult circumstances have conspired to take two Front Page contributors away from the keyboard, so the editor steps in. Normal service will hopefully be resumed next issue!

Late Summer Bank Holiday brought with it the new Autumn tv schedules and the return of open talent contests like *Britain's got Talent*, *X Factor* and *Strictly Come Dancing*. Three cheers? Hmm... They seem to be negative stigmatisers because all contestants - bar one - end up as Losers. And, subtly, it's not so much about how accomplished the contestants are, it's more about if the crowd *likes* them. Subtle and capricious. Baying audiences and media, plus moves like ousting matriarch Arlene for slick chic Alesha, says not a lot about lifetime commitment and 'above the personality' standards.

But all is not lost because Radio Two saw fit to celebrate The Beatles. Perhaps you remember *All You Need Is Love* as the first world wide live tv broadcast? I cannot help but humbly genuflect before the sentiments and lyrics - so positive, warm, hope-laden and affirming. Given Love, not mere Talent, Everyone becomes a Winner. How inclusive is that? The second verse runs:

Nothing you can make that can't be made.

No one you can save that can't be saved.

Nothing you can do but you can learn how to be you in time.

Is this not the heart and soul of Befrienders and Befriending? Is there not a beautiful process and relationship as those who are positively stigmatised as 'well' by our culture can break out of that mould to approach those who are culturally stigmatised as 'unwell'? And is it not sublime how both are benefiting? Not mere sentiment - the Science says so. See Dr Claire Pond's article p 9 & 10.

So we thank Goodness for Befrienders and Befriending, and wish the very best of luck and support to Battersea's new initiative - see Pam's article p 7. This is what Being Alongside is all about.

All you need is love (all together, now!),

All you need is love. (everybody!)

Books from Ann Morisy



Following the very successful presentation of Ann Morisy to our AGM I have purchased her three books for the resource area at St Paul's, *Rossmore Road. These books reflect the aims and ideology of St Paul's Church Centre - reflecting the importance of reaching out to the community in a fractured society.

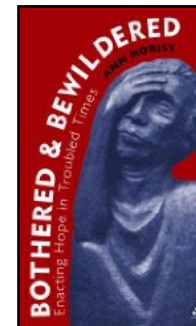
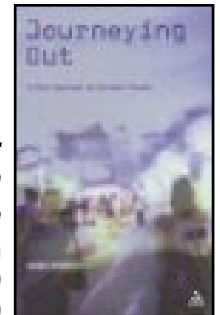


Beyond The Good Samaritan

publisher: Continuum
isbn: 0 - 8264 - 7141 - 2
price: £15.99

Journeying Out - a New Approach to Christian Mission

publisher: Continuum
isbn: 0 - 824 - 8096 - 9
price: £15.99



Bothered & Bewildered - Enacting Hope in Troubled Times

publisher: Continuum
isbn: 978 - 1 - 8470 - 480 - 6
price: £12.99

It is refreshing and encouraging that in these troubled times these books prompt us to be positive rather than negative. Many thanks to Ann for her continuing support for BA / APCMH and the church in its mission to reach out to others.

Pam Freeman

(ed: *The St Paul's Church Centre, 5 Rossmore Road, London NW1 6NJ is now both the Administrative and Registered Office of BA / APCMH)

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- 5 Can religion damage your health?
- 6 Delusion is a psychiatric term
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- 8 Inner and outer demons
- 9 Personality and personality disorder
- 10 Resolving the question

Author: Andrew Sims

The author is a former Professor of Psychiatry and President of the Royal College of Psychiatrists, and has also been Chairman of their Spirituality and Psychiatry Special Interest Group, so is exceptionally well qualified to address the subject. Although the book is technically proficient, it is aimed at the general reader and is illustrated with stories, brief case histories and anecdotes.

For more than twenty years, Andrew Sims was Professor of Psychiatry in the University of Leeds. He was consecutively Dean (1987-1990), President (1990-93) and the first Director of Continuing Professional Development (1993-97) of the Royal College of Psychiatrists. He edited *Advances in Psychiatric Treatment* from its inception in 1993 until 2003, and was founder editor of *Developing Mental Health* (2002-5).

He has chaired the *Spirituality and Psychiatry Special Interest Group of the Royal College of Psychiatrists* and has also served on the General Medical Council. The author of 12 books and over 200 papers, he has published and spoken widely on the interface between religious faith and mental illness.

Just a Reminder.

If you require **extra copies** of *Being Alongside*, or, your copy has **failed to arrive in the post**, please contact **Pam**: 02086 473678.

If your **e-mail** copy has failed, contact **Steve**: 01303 277399

If you have a query about your **membership / subscription** status, please contact **Mark Dadds**: 0207 724 8517



Being Alongside

Association for Pastoral Care
in Mental Health

Alternative Methods of Dealing with Mental Distress

a Day of Professional Talks with Q&A opportunities

Wednesday, 21 October

09.30 - 10.00	Registration
10.00 - 10.45:	Frances Treuheurz: Homeopathic Medicine
10.45 - 11.30:	Deidre King: Autogenics
10.30 - 12.15:	Isobel Clark: Spiritual Crisis Network
12.15 - 1.45:	Lunch (including drinks) provided!
1.45 - 2.30:	Roz Hewitt: Alexander Technique
2.30 - 3.15:	tba
3.15 - 4.00:	Plenary Session: Rev'd Chris MacKenna

£40 organisations, £18 individuals
£7.50 Concession Rate: Please apply.

S.A.E. please, with cheque made out to 'St Andrew's Church' to:

**Jean Marsham, 'Conference', 9 Kingscote, Hodford Road,
Golders Green, London NW1 8NH**

Tel: 0208 455 1240

Places limited to 100.

Please apply by 30 September as no tickets available on the day.



An Invitation

from Jean Marsham
to our national conference

Alternative Methods of Dealing with Mental Distress

a Day of Professional Talks with Q&A opportunities

Wednesday, 21 October

Dear All,

I'm longing to meet you all, who are giving us so much support, at the above Conference.

We have arranged a host of speakers who are very well up in their fields and I am sure we will all benefit from all they have to say.

Looking forward to seeing you all on 21 October.

Meanwhile, please spread the word and encourage as many people as possible to come along.

Jean Marsham.

Ed: Jean has worked very hard on this event from the original concept through to the final details. She, and the outstanding billing of speakers, deserve all our support. Please come along if you can.

We are in very safe hands here; this book is an assuring boon to the mentally and emotionally 'worried well' and the carers of sufferers; all the more to be treasured because there are not that many of Dr Sims's faith and calibre out there.

And now follows the publisher's detailed review.

Steve Press

Synopsis

How, in a scientifically and technologically advanced age, can people still believe in God? Andrew Sims examines both the connection and the division between Christian faith and psychiatry.

Description

Is faith delusion? Is religion bad for your health? How, in a scientifically and technologically advanced age, can people still believe in God / spirit / 'other'? Clearly not all believers are primitive and ill-educated; an alternative explanation is that they must be mad, or at least severely neurotic (as suggested by Freud).

This book starts by looking at, and giving reasons for, the connection and the division between Christian faith and psychiatry. It asks whether science challenges Christians involved with psychiatry, as patients or professionals, and whether the spiritual needs of patients are recognised. The author examines the scope and use of the neuro-sciences and considers cause and effect, natural selection and determinism. He explores the overlap (and the difference) between psychiatric symptoms and religious belief, the possible association between demon possession and mental illness, and the idea that some people are intrinsically religious and some are not. The variations of personality are examined, with their implications for belief.

Far from supporting the case that faith is delusion, outcome studies (reviewed here) show that in general religious belief and practice convey good mental health. Religious faith and mental illness are different, and their concepts come from different world-views. A consideration of them in relation to each other is long overdue.

***Far from supporting the case that faith is delusion,
outcome studies show that in general
religious belief and practice convey good mental health.***



Book from our Patron

Book: *Is Faith Delusion?*
Author: Professor Andrew Sims
Publisher: Orca Books, March 2009
Guide Price: £14.99
isbn: 9781847063403
pp: 252 pb

Available direct from:

tel: 01202 665432.
email: orders@orcabookservices.co.uk
net: www.continuumbooks.com

The title of the book asks the question: *Is Faith Delusion?* And the first point to make is that the answer, after Professor Andrew Sims's in depth review of creditable research, is a sturdy 'No'. And thankful we are as, if it were to prove otherwise, we would be 'most wretched'. However, the concession needs to be made that more research would be welcome.

A second point that needs making early on, is that this is not a theological book, ie it does not examine the logic, good sense or otherwise of faith claims. Its purpose is not to prove to us that, eg, God parted the Red Sea, Mohamed (pbuh) underwent instant geographical relocation, or that Jesus was raised from the dead. It is not a debate about the truth claims of world faiths, it is about whether having a faith, any faith, is a symptom or cause of mental illness. We are in a psychiatric milieu here, 'delusion' is used in the technical sense, so the question becomes: Have those with faith 'lost touch with reality'? Is the phenomena of believing and behaving according to a faith tradition a mark of the insane?

This book from a man of faith who has spent his prime years as a psychiatrist of considerable standing is an answer to those materialist, atheist professionals who consider 'faith' to be part of the problem instead of providing, in the main, a most beneficial and benevolent, coping strategy for life. I might be 'nuts', but having a faith does not make me so. In fact it will lessen depression, raise self esteem and potential for personal and social relationships, increase an independent lifestyle, etc etc.

Give Thanks...

The following is part of Ann Morisy's address at our AGM.

Practising gratitude

1. Keep a gratitude journal to remind you of the gifts, graces, benefits and good things you enjoy. When we are grateful we affirm there is a source of goodness that exists in our lives. By writing each day we magnify and expand upon the sources of goodness. Catalogue each day, gratitude, inspiring events. Sometimes your list will seem impoverished. But as the focus on gratitude sharpens you are more likely to notice blessings. A virtuous process develops, and if you're really desperate, you could write 'nothing too bad happened today'!

2. Remember the bad.

Remember you have got through all your worst sadness and losses and traumas! The adversities of life are associated with strong emotions and are deeply etched in our memories - and this is why they are easy to recall. Remind yourself of how much worse life might be than it is.

3. Ask yourself three questions (A Buddhist meditation technique)

- What have I received from?
- What have I given to...?
- What troubles and difficulty have I contributed to?

4. Learn prayers of gratitude

5. Consider your senses

Be grateful for the functioning of one's body, smells are often neglected, as well as breathing

An exercise recommended by Dr Frederick Luskin, he calls it the "breath of thanks".

- Two or three times a day, bring your attention to your breathing
- Notice how your breath flows in and out without you having to do anything, continue breathing this way for a short time
- For each of the next five to eight exhalations say the words "Thank you", silently to remind yourself of the gift of your breath and life.

6. Watch your language

Grateful people have a particular linguistic style: They tend to use the language of gifts, givers, blessings, blessed, fortune, fortunate, abundance. Ungrateful people on the other hand, tend to focus on deprivation, deservingness, regrets, lack, need, scarcity and loss.

7. Go through the motions by saying thank you, writing letters of thanks. It doesn't matter if the emotion is forced, gratitude will still result!

"if the only prayer you ever say in your entire life is thank you, it will be enough."

Meister Eckhardt

informed by:

Robert A. Emmons *"Thanks" How the new science of gratitude can make you happier* (2007) New York; pub. Houghton Mifflin

Ann Morisy

visit: www.pastoral.org.uk

From Ken Baker:

On emerging from the darkness into the light - if it's not too early to say - I seem to understand what it was that oppressed me for much of my life.

There was something I could not surrender, something good, which now is being added, as it were, to my account.

If you are in a dark place and you look around at others who never seem troubled by anything, then this could be why: you care about something too much.

If you who are behind can see it through you may find yourself ahead.

Ken says: *I wrote it because the thought came to me and I wondered if it would help others who have been through dark episodes. I was in the bathroom at the time. It was as if God turned the light on and I understood something.*

Two Wolves.



One evening an old Cherokee told his grandson about a battle that goes on inside people.

He said, 'My son, the battle is between two 'wolves' inside us all.

One is Evil. - It is anger, envy, jealousy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority, and ego.

The other is Good. - It is joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion and faith. '

The grandson thought about it for a minute and then asked his grandfather: ' Which wolf wins? '

The old Cherokee simply replied, ' The one you feed. '

Ed: would someone care to send in a new, differently spun parable maybe even entitled Two Wolves, about the Integration of our Shadow, rather than its annihilation, as intimated here?

Help is at Hand

Samaritans:	08457 909090
Saneline:	08457 678000
Rethink Advisory Service:	020 8974 6814
Young Minds Parents' Information Service:	08000 182138
Carers in the Community:	01642 818332
MIND:	08457 660163
Maytree	020 7263 7070

I want to end this article with a few thoughts of my own regarding other benefits of befriending:

I think it was only during my training to become a clinical psychologist that I really began to understand the social isolation experienced by some people with mental health problems. If someone I am working with therapeutically has little social contact it can be hard to focus a whole session on therapy as they may have no-one else to talk to about other things which are important to them. A befriender can provide the opportunity for that person to have those conversations elsewhere, enabling them to focus and obtain more benefit from the therapy sessions.

Often family members and other carers provide an incredible amount of support to those with severe mental health problems. By spending time with a befriender a befriender can also provide some respite and support for these carers, thus helping to prevent them from developing stress related problems and enabling them to continue being there emotionally for their loved one.

I have discussed various benefits of befriending to the befriender and just want to close by mentioning that one study identified that, in general, recipients of befriending reported high levels of satisfaction and increases in self-confidence and self-esteem. Interestingly this study also found that the bendifrienders reported experiencing similar improvements. I think it is useful to remind ourselves that the benefits can be reciprocal and that befriending can be as rewarding for the befriender as it is for the befriender.

Dr Claire Pond 2009

An Offer of Help

At 85 years Ken Bunting has now been retired for a while yet considers his work far from over. One time Manager for a Day Attendance Unit and Church Pastor, he continues to offer help in the form of little booklets - there are nearly 50 titles, all available free - on mental health issues, the life of faith, coping with stress, alcohol, social deprivation etc. Contact him for details:

Ken Bunting, 103 Devonshire Drive, Mickelover, Derby. DE3 9HE

Befriending in Battersea

After weeks of planning the Committee decided to hold a Summer Party at All Saints Church, Battersea. It took place on Friday 14 August. Many local people belonging to the various health networks came along to socialise and share their views.

The Secretary, Richard, whose idea it was to form a group, is much experienced in the mental health field through working in the Merton scheme both as a Befriender and as Secretary. The Chair, Philippe, had networked with various agencies and a lot of interest had been shown both by their staff, committees and users of mental health services.

All Saints has a high reputation for hospitality: various church members and friends rallied round. Food and drink were plentiful and there was a warm, friendly atmosphere. Church leaders Anand with wife Jessie, were very attractive in their outfits and were perfect hosts. The evening was enhanced by the excellent Pete Goodwin Jazz Band, and church member Vasanth who delighted us with a beautiful, stylish Indian dance.

Richard and Philippe introduced the Committee and told the participants the background to the Party. People were asked to give their views and stick them onto boards. These will be evaluated and discussed at a de-briefing meeting the Committee are holding at the end of August.

I found it hard to tear myself away, but with an hour's journey ahead of me, I reluctantly left at 9.30pm.

I have been very impressed with the professional way Committee members have approached the project; now that many more people have been involved and their opinions sought, I feel sure that the project will soon be up and running.

If any readers are considering setting up a project in their own locality let me know, as we have some guidelines which we can send you:

- *Setting Up a Drop In*
- *Setting Up a Be-Friending Scheme*
- *Holding Awareness Raising Meetings*
- *Challenging the Stigma*
- *Holding Public Conferences*

Pam Freeman Co-coordinator 02086 473678

following Pam's piece, here's the latest research on Befriending...

The Value of Befriending

from the perspective of a clinical psychologist

The Merton branch of APCMH operates a befriending scheme which matches volunteer befrienders with local individuals who experience mental health problems. I write as someone who has been such a befriender for almost 9 years. During this time I have also trained to become a clinical psychologist, a capacity I now work in within the NHS. This year I was invited to speak at the branch AGM on the value of befriending individuals with mental health problems who live in the community; this article was inspired by that talk.

I began preparing my speech by looking for relevant research, and was surprised that little had been published. I found one study, of women with depression, which found befriending led to an improvement in symptoms of depression compared to being on a treatment waiting list. This may seem obvious, but actually just being placed on a waiting list can lead to an improvement, perhaps because the person has hope they will receive treatment that will help! Another study was of people who experienced symptoms of schizophrenia, and compared befriending with Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT). This study found that at the time both led to an improvement in symptoms of schizophrenia and depression, although when participants were followed-up 9 months later those who had CBT continued to improve whilst those who received befriending did not. Neither of these studies explained what it was about befriending that was so helpful. However another study of people who experienced symptoms of schizophrenia concluded that it was the 'social support' provided by befriending that was beneficial.

Dr Gemma Mitchell, a clinical psychologist based in east London, wanted to find out more about what was helpful about befriending relationships. Her study has not yet been published but she has given me permission to refer to her findings here.

Dr Mitchell interviewed 8 pairs of befrienders and befriendees who she contacted via various London-based befriending schemes. These befriending pairs had been together between 4 and 8 months. She

conducted 3 interviews with each befriending pair: one with the befriender, one with the befriendeed, and one with both together. From these interviews she identified 3 main aspects of befriending which were thought to be helpful.

The first of these aspects refers to 'the relationship itself'. The social networks of people with severe mental health problems may be restricted to family members or those they have met through their experiences within the mental health 'system'. Although it can be good to have people around who understand ones experiences it can also limit opportunities to obtain different perspectives. However it can be hard to establish new relationships, with potential difficulties including identifying where to meet new people, and explaining circumstances such as perhaps being out of work due to mental health difficulties. Important themes about the befriending relationship itself included 'empathy', which was found to be easier in relationships where the befriender had some personal experience of mental health problems and to require more effort from them when this was not the case. Other themes included 'safety' (being in a non-judgemental, respectful and confidential relationship), and 'like a friend' (befriending relationships were described as similar but different to existing relationships with friends and family, and mostly developed over time into something much like a friendship).

The second aspect identified by Dr Mitchell relates to 'making meaning'. She found that befriendees appreciated being able to talk about their thoughts and feelings, although some preferred not to discuss their difficulties and instead used their time with their befriender as a distraction. Some befrienders were able to encourage befriendees to consider other options or solutions. Making meaning worked in both directions; some befrienders, especially those without experience of mental health problems, mentioned that the relationship provided a learning experience and altered their own perspective.

The third aspect identified by Dr Mitchell relates to 'bringing about change'. Befriending enabled some befriendees to try activities they had not done before or were reluctant to do alone, including engaging in the local community, for example by visiting local cafes or the library together. Befriending was also found to provide an opportunity to experience a healthy relationship, which in itself promoted change for befriendees, and indeed both parties mentioned the benefit of learning to relate to others in new ways.